

UTC Portsmouth

Address: London Road, PO2 9DU

Unique reference number (URN): 143430

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Exceptional

Personal development and well-being

Exceptional 

Pupils belong to a vibrant, thriving community at school, which makes sure that they develop and achieve incredibly high aspirations. Disadvantaged pupils benefit greatly. The school's work to support pupils' progression into further training, education or employment is highly effective, resulting in all pupils moving on to very ambitious destinations when they leave the school. Leaders establish productive, valuable, sustained relationships with a very wide range of employers and higher education partners. Leaders' close liaison with these partners makes a pivotal contribution to making sure that the school's provision meets the very best standards required by industry and universities.

The school's 'science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) habits of mind' underpin all aspects of pupils' experiences but are anchored within the personal development programme. These 'habits' of communication, creative problem-solving, curiosity, responsibility, resilience and teamwork were developed through working with experts from STEM employers and university representatives. Consequently, pupils gain the knowledge, skills and character traits that the STEM sector prizes, as well as those which underpin fundamental British values. Pupils develop these habits through activities such as very regular real-world projects set by employers. For example, pupils from the school designed Portsmouth's current sea defences. These habits have a tangible impact on how they learn about leading healthy, successful lives, including by forming very positive, respectful relationships.

As well as having a transformative impact on the pupils at the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the school's support for young people's personal development extends far beyond its walls. Leaders and staff are ambitious about engaging as many young people as possible in STEM education. For example, last year the school worked with over 18,000 children and young people who attend other schools in the area. The school also keeps in contact with pupils who have left the school, continuing to support them when necessary.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard 

Pupils progress through the curriculum extremely well. They are very well prepared to go on to sustained and extremely ambitious destinations when they leave school. When they join the school, most pupils have not achieved well previously. Published data does not, therefore, fully reflect pupils' progress. However, pupils' attainment is above national and local averages over time, even though they have only sometimes been at the school for two years. Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics, which supports their learning strongly in other subjects.

Although disadvantaged pupils' attainment dipped in 2024, leaders' effective actions mean that they are now achieving well and gaps are closing rapidly. In post-16 provision, leaders

have had a clear impact on improving students' outcomes. Some post-16 students achieve very highly indeed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school and benefit greatly from the support that they receive.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils value their education greatly. Current attendance rates are, therefore, high. Rates of pupils' absence over recent years have been below or close to national averages, with persistent absence below average. Effective, robust systems are in place to check and follow up on any pupil absence swiftly every day. Leaders' well-chosen strategies have a clearly positive impact on improving pupils' overall attendance. Staff use a range of approaches to support individual pupils into school, which have a significant impact. These pupils often have had a history of previously low attendance before they join the school.

Pupils behave superbly. Relationships around the school create an ethos of professionalism and pride. Pupils show high levels of respect for each other and completely commit to the ethos of a professional learning environment that operates using industry standards and expectations. There is no derogatory behaviour or discrimination, including online. Pupils work and socialise together extremely well. Staff use rewards and consequences appropriately and consistently, underpinned by the school's 'science, technology, engineering and mathematics habits of mind'. Pupils rightly trust staff to deal with any concerns effectively. Leaders support any pupils with specific needs really well so that these pupils' behaviour improves very rapidly.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The highly ambitious curriculum has a core and substantial focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). It is designed effectively by leaders to furnish pupils with the deep knowledge and skills required to support pupils' high aspirations. Leaders review and revise the curriculum in liaison with a wide range of employers and higher education partners to ensure that it meets the current economic and academic requirements of the STEM sector. Leaders have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of curriculum and teaching, taking the right action to make any improvements required. They provide highly effective training for staff.

Teachers demonstrate highly developed, and at times expert, subject knowledge, which makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils have a detailed understanding about how secure they are in different aspects of their learning and what they need to improve. Teachers address these areas swiftly, which has a very positive impact on pupils' progress through the curriculum. Teachers adapt teaching very effectively to help pupils overcome gaps in their knowledge and basic skills. Pupils are adept at studying independently, developing essential skills to support their learning later in life. Teachers develop pupils' language and communication skills really well.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

All pupils follow the full curriculum, regardless of any barriers to learning or vulnerabilities that they might have. The school is, understandably, very popular, but applications do not rely on previous academic outcomes. Leaders and staff identify individual pupils' needs quickly when they join the school in Year 10 or Year 12, reviewing them carefully and making sure that the right effective support is in place to ensure that pupils succeed. The school takes a precise and bespoke approach to supporting each pupil's needs, working with external professionals when necessary. Leaders use additional funding effectively so that pupils who are disadvantaged achieve well, as do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders communicate pupils' additional needs effectively to staff. Staff use this information to make sure that these needs are met. The school supports all pupils to develop very positive attitudes to learning and high levels of engagement, especially where these may have been issues when pupils joined the school. Pupils are able to tackle challenging tasks with confidence. Leaders provide very effective training, which ensures that staff have the right skills and knowledge to support pupils. Leaders check that additional support for pupils has the right intended impact.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders and trustees set a highly ambitious vision for the school. They know the school's many strengths and what needs to be done to improve it further, taking effective action when necessary. Leaders have pupils' best interests firmly at the centre of all of their decisions. They seek to make sure that all pupils flourish and thrive, academically and personally. This aim is realised in practice, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have successfully reduced achievement gaps for disadvantaged pupils and are, rightly, focused fully on eliminating them completely. Leaders are refining further the school's excellent approach to supporting pupils into sustained and successful future destinations when they leave the school. Leaders are united in these efforts. They share aspects of the school's highly effective practice nationally.

Staff are highly motivated. Leaders engage with staff very productively to seek their views and act on their feedback. Leaders take a careful approach to managing staff's workload, keeping pupils at the core of considerations while ensuring staff achieve a very healthy balance between work and their personal lives. Leaders provide a wide range of appropriate and innovative training for staff, which makes a significant contribution to their work with pupils.

Trustees are highly skilled and have very relevant experience. This shines through in the way that they manage the strategic direction of the school and meet all statutory requirements. They are firmly focused on achieving high ambitions and on continually driving for further improvements to extend the school's transformative impact on pupils' lives.

Students benefit greatly from a carefully designed, tailored and relevant curriculum. Although A-level results in 2024 were not high overall, some students achieved very well indeed. Students' attainment in vocational and technical qualifications was stronger. Leaders identified the issues quickly and their subsequent effective actions mean that students are currently achieving well, with some producing excellent work. All pupils achieve high-quality places either at universities, or on higher-level apprenticeships or in employment. Around 90% of students are accepted into their first-choice universities, and nearly a third go to Russell Group universities.

Teachers use their high levels of expertise to extend and deepen students' learning very effectively. Staff know about the specific needs of individual vulnerable students and meet these fully. Disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress very well through the curriculum. Students engage fully with the very wide range of enrichment activities. Provision for their personal development is a particular strength. For example, a large proportion of students participate in the Turing Scheme, which involves them studying, working or volunteering abroad. Support for students' wellbeing is very effective. Students are happy, ambitious and highly motivated.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

The school makes a significantly positive contribution to pupils' lives. Staff and leaders instil very high aspirations quickly in all pupils when they join, either in Year 10 or Year 12. The school's tangible culture of respect, ambition and high levels of commitment is built on pupils' very positive relationships with each other and with staff. The school's central focus is, rightly, on ensuring that pupils secure high-quality training, education and employment in the future when they leave the school. There is an ethos of professionalism that prepares pupils very effectively for their subsequent education and careers. Pupils gain the skills, knowledge and personal traits to enable them to flourish. One pupil, reflective of many, said, 'The whole place is geared towards helping us to succeed and go on to realise our dreams.'

Pupils' personal development is superb. Pupils are extremely engaged in their learning and are very motivated. They rightly recognise and value the high-quality provision that the school makes for them. Pupils develop independence. They are mature young people focused on achieving highly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Pupils make a significant contribution to school life. They enjoy the very wide range of excellent enrichment activities that extend and really deepen their experiences and learning.

Leaders' and staff's expectations of pupils are high, both in terms of behaviour and their achievement. Pupils rise to these expectations admirably. Barriers to learning are expertly reduced so that pupils progress very well through the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils thrive. Pupils feel safe and trust adults with any concerns or worries that they might have, knowing that staff will address these effectively and swiftly. Any unkindness is incredibly rare. Staff support pupils' wellbeing fully. Pupils want to be in school and attend regularly. They are incredibly proud to be members of the school.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain their work to ensure continued improvement and high standards. They should focus on creating a transformational impact on the outcomes and experiences of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.
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About this inspection

The school is a single academy trust. The principal is also the accounting officer. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mr Charles Parker.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal, senior leaders, other leaders, trustees, staff and pupils during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school is a university technical college, focusing on education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Principal: Mr James Doherty

Lead inspector:

Matthew Haynes, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Peter Cox, His Majesty's Inspector

Marian Feeley, His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Grundy, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

493

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

600

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

20.58%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.01%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

3.25%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	43.6%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24	57.3%	45.9%	Above
2022/23	49.6%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	48.3	45.9	Close to average
2023/24	49.2	45.9	Close to average
2022/23	50.6	46.3	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	30.4%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24	25.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23	40.9%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	39.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24	38.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23	39.1	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	30.4%	52.8%	-22.4 pp
2023/24	25.0%	53.1%	-28.1 pp
2022/23	40.9%	52.4%	-11.5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	39.7	50.3	-10.6
2023/24	38.2	50.0	-11.8
2022/23	39.1	50.3	-11.2

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022 leavers	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers	98%	94%	Average
2020 leavers	96%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	26.15	34.38	Below
2022/23	29.24	34.16	Below
2021/22	33.53	37.86	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-0.6	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	7.7%	7.7%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	7.2%	8.9%	Below
2022/23	5.4%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	17.8%	21.1%	Close to average
2023/24	21.4%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23	13.2%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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