

Summary of Consultation responses

UTC Warrington undertook a six-week period of consultation of key stakeholders including LA, schools, local community and employers. The consultation was held from 24th November 2023 to 5th January 2024.

As part of this consultation period, UTC Warrington invited stakeholders via the website, social media, email and student/parent announcements to share their views on the proposed changes.

UTC Warrington would like to address the concerns raised in this document.

UTC Warrington response to comments received.

‘Recruiting children before they have completed KS3 does seem premature and has the potential to destabilise school population numbers. Leaving at the end of Year 9 to start at KS4 seems like obvious milestone for students to depart.’

UTC’s by design have an atypical entry point. Whilst UTC Warrington (UTCW) has an established point of entry in Year 10, the rationale for moving to a Year 9 entry point is based on evidence nationally where UTC’s with a Year 9 entry point have been able to demonstrate stronger outcomes at the end of Year 11. Students joining the UTC will complete their Key Stage 3 in line with expectations for the National Curriculum in Year 9 whilst also having the opportunity to learn the technical skills that are not available in traditional high school.

‘Some year nines are still in that very uninterested phase of learning where they’re not particularly bothered and have no real focus...Would you be able to mould the more disruptive children so early on?’

Students joining in Year 9 is very much about them having access to the right careers advice and guidance as part of their normal careers education and understanding fully what their choices are. The UTC has a very specific technical curriculum which is designed in partnership with employer partners. The curriculum is not specifically aimed at managing disruptive children, disruptive behaviour would be managed in the same way it would be in any other high school environment following the college’s behaviour curriculum. Having students for additional year would enable an accelerated assimilation to the UTC’s professional behaviours and standards.

UTC Warrington’s Behaviour Curriculum can be found here: <https://utcw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/UTCW019-Behaviour-Curriculum.pdf>

‘Your planned admission arrangements was not part of the Warrington strategy to provide additional school places’

The UTC is not part of the Warrington strategy to provide additional school places. UTCW has atypical entry point that does not align with typical admissions arrangements for Year 7, therefore it sits outside the Warrington strategy to provide additional school places. Adding Year 9 in 2025 would increase capacity in the Local Authority in that year. Since its inception, the aims of the UTC have always been to address the skills shortage in its specialist areas, those skills shortages have increased locally, regionally and nationally. Despite UTCW being one of 44 UTC’s nationally there are still significant challenges for companies that operate in UTC specialisms to recruit suitably qualified individuals to recruit suitably qualified individuals.

‘Students would be entering into a very specialist narrowed curriculum at a very young age. Are students aged 13 ready to make that decision/change?’

Students joining in Year 9 would still complete Key Stage 3 in line with the expectations for the National Curriculum so will still access a broad and balanced curriculum. There does need to be high quality information advice and guidance made available to students and parents to ensure that any students considering UTC and the technical curriculum do so for the right reasons. Evidence from UTC’s nationally with a Year 9 entry point suggests that students who do make that decision go on to be very secure and successful with it. This is demonstrated in the stronger outcomes of those UTC’s. Students joining in Year 9 should be considering the UTC as a five year pathway that takes them from entry at Year 9 through to the completion of a T Level in one of the UTC’s specialisms.

‘What happens if it’s not right and they return to a different non-specialist school?’

This risk is apparent for any students considering an institution that has an atypical entry point. UTCW has history of a very high retention rate and we would be keen to maintain this with the introduction of Year 9, again ensuring that students and their parents who are considering this choice do so for the right reasons.

‘You explain that you would ‘aim’ to reduce Y10 & Y11 numbers following your first intake of Y9 students...Is there a strategic plan to do this and this will be written in to your new admission arrangements?’

New admissions arrangements would be to admit 90 students in Year 9, with the reduction of the PAN in Year 10 and Year 11 happening over time and forming part of the UTC’s longer term strategy to allow it to respond to changing demographics and maintain its long term viability. The altered PAN for year 10 and Year 11 upon the introduction of Year 9 is written into the proposed admissions arrangements for that year.

‘What does this consultation mean for KS5 places at UTC?’

There are no changes to Key Stage 5 places at the UTC. The ambition is very much that more students will progress into the high status post-16 qualifications on offer.

‘Students from any school in Warrington who leave at the end of Year 8 will not have completed the National Curriculum. They will be interrupting a well-designed, interleaved approach to that required programme of study to join a new one.’

When students join UTCW in Year 9 they will be completing the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The broad and balanced curriculum will also provide an opportunity for any gaps in knowledge or understanding that are identified at the point of entry to be remedied ahead of Year 10 and Year 11 studies. This model is the same as that has been successfully evidenced by other UTC’s nationally that have Year 9 entry point.

‘Students should not be using Key Stage 3 to ‘prepare for the challenge of GCSE.’ This implies a rationale for the Year 9 curriculum which is qualification and outcome driven, and of concern from an educational perspective.’

Students will use their time in Year 9 at the UTC to complete their Key Stage 3 National Curriculum studies whilst also having the opportunity to access specialist equipment and develop technical skills. As with any other high school, students may choose to study subjects that they transfer over to be GCSE subjects, however

the time they spend on these subjects during Year 9 will be within the Key Stage 3 areas of study and broaden their curriculum experience.

‘It is educationally inappropriate for Warrington to plan for a proportion of their students to not complete a coherent Key Stage 3 study of the National Curriculum as required by the DfE, leaving gaps in their knowledge and experience.’

There is no intention for any students joining the UTC at Year 9 to not complete the National Curriculum as required by the DfE. They will study a broad and balanced curriculum which fulfils any statutory obligations. Any gaps in knowledge will be closed in the Year 9 curriculum offered by the UTC, as is common practice in other UTC’s nationally.

‘As all other schools run a three-year Key Stage 3, they would commit to staffing and groupings for the numbers of students they have in Year 7 - 9, only for some of these students then to leave in Year 9 to go to UTC...For a significant number of students to leave part way through a planned key stage could be potentially damaging for other Warrington schools to manage.’

It is acknowledged that there can be some disruption to schools when students choose to leave their existing high school to move to a UTC or another atypical school. Students leaving their high school to join UTC for Year 9 will be the same as students currently leaving to join for Year 10. Whilst it’s recognised that this is difficult to predict, as the UTC is now going into its 7th year of operation schools affected have experience of managing this challenge. The expectation is that if all schools follow statutory careers guidance and all students therefore have access to independent information and guidance, no one school should be adversely affected.

‘We also do not believe that offering to take students for one year of a three-year programme will significantly improve the shortfall of places and, in fact, may leave other schools struggling to manage funding and staffing decisions.’

Introducing Year 9 will increase capacity in the Local Authority in that year. Students leaving one school to attend another could present some financial challenges, however the UTC regularly attracts students from 30+ different schools so we very much hope that any disruption is minimised. If careers legislation is correctly applied we would not expect a disproportionate amount of students to join from any one individual school. UTCW is here to address the skills gap not shortfall of places within the Local Authority however it will still increase capacity for Year 9 places in that year.

Examples of positive comments in support of the Consultation:

‘I think it is the best thing to do for the UTC and the young people of Warrington.’

‘I have total trust and confidence in everything that UTC do and offer...given the need for places in Warrington, and the fact that you always makes decision on sound educational grounds’

‘For some children it could be the perfect solution and getting them early on maybe better.’

‘Taking year 9’s you would have the opportunity to show them more of the practical elements to learning which I think is a massive positive.’

‘The year 9’s...are now doing 18 separate subjects this year; which I feel is totally ridiculous. In my mind they can’t do anything to a high standard. Just a lot of little things badly.’

‘My son...would have loved to have started at UTC this year. He is currently in year 9 and can’t wait to start with you!’