

Tabor Academy

Panfield Lane, Braintree, CM7 5XP

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Too many students fail to make expected or better progress and so do not attain the standards they are capable of.
- Students' progress and attainment in mathematics has declined. Standards are below the national average.
- Too much teaching is ineffective, resulting in students' underachievement in key subjects.
- The Trust, governors, and senior leaders have not improved teaching enough to raise standards for all students.
- The attainment of disadvantaged students has declined and is now lower than their peers nationally. The gap between their progress and that of other students at the academy is widening.
- Senior leaders and governors have not monitored the spending of pupil premium funds closely enough, or evaluated its impact.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress.
- Students have experienced too many changes of teacher which has slowed their learning. This is of concern to both the students and their parents.
- Some students do not always behave well in lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal has a clear understanding of the issues facing the academy and has set out a new vision for its future. He has the full support of the governing body and the majority of staff.
- Students feel safe in the academy and safeguarding procedures are sound.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of students’ learning in 37 lessons, some of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- A range of documents was scrutinised by inspectors, including those relating to safeguarding, student progress, attendance, the academy’s self-evaluation and development plan and its policies for managing teachers’ performance and improving teaching and learning.
- Inspectors undertook a close and careful scrutiny of students’ written work across all year groups in key subjects.
- Inspectors took account of 150 responses to the online Parent View survey including 10 written comments, 68 responses to the staff survey, an email from a parent and a letter from two students.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, other senior and subject leaders, several groups of students, a representative from the local authority, the Chair and one member of the governing body and the Chief Executive of Lilac Sky Multi Academies Trust.

Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Amanda Carter-Fraser

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Elizabeth Macfarlane

Additional Inspector

Terence Cook

Additional Inspector

Lesley Daniel is appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Tabor Academy is an average-sized secondary academy. It gained academy status in January 2013 when the Lilac Sky Multi Academies Trust sponsored it.
- The governing body is made up of Trust members, school leaders and parent governors.
- A new Principal started at the academy in September 2014.
- The majority of students come from white British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- Just under a quarter of students are eligible for the pupil premium which is just below the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for some groups of students including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- About a fifth of students are disabled or have special educational needs. This is just above national average.
- A small number of students attend work-related courses at Chelmsford College, Braintree College and Circles Farm.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and raise standards across the academy by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of all groups of students, and that these expectations are translated into effective classroom practice
 - planned teaching activities lead to rapid progress
 - advice to students on how to improve their work is clear and they are given the opportunity to act on it
 - all teachers provide for the needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs
 - teachers are aware of the needs of disadvantaged students in their classes and of the extra resources that are available to support them.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - reducing the excessive changes of teacher that lead to poor experiences for students
 - ensuring that the assessment of students' progress is accurate and is used effectively to aid teaching
 - making sure that policies on marking, literacy, numeracy and behaviour management are clear to all staff and that they are applied consistently across the academy
 - improving communication with parents so that they have confidence in the leadership of the academy

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The Trust, governors and senior leaders have failed to halt the underachievement of students at the academy. Although some of the issues affecting achievement were identified, subsequent actions did not improve outcomes for students in 2014. A significant group of parents do not have confidence in the leadership of the academy.
- Senior leaders do not effectively monitor the progress of disadvantaged students or tackle teacher attitudes that lead to teaching being ineffective for disadvantaged students. Senior leaders have not regularly assessed the impact of pupil premium spending. Consequently, these funds have been wasted because actions have been ineffective in raising standards for students eligible for support through this funding.
- Leadership of the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is inadequate. The attendance and progress of these students is not monitored effectively. Inspectors observed one to one support resulting in short term progress for some students but there is no analysis of the impact this has on their progress across all subjects over time.
- Historically, students sat examinations in two of their GCSE options at the end of Year 10. Although the Trust recognised that this system led to underachievement for many students, it was too late to stop this having an impact on results in 2014 and will also affect students taking their GCSEs in 2015. Current Year 10 students will sit all of their examinations at the end of Year 11. The academy offers a suitable range of vocational and academic subjects for students at Key Stage 4.
- Recent changes to the curriculum have reduced the time given to the study of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and personal and health matters. A programme of study includes topics such as anti-bullying, money management, drugs' education and basic first aid. However, lessons designed to develop tolerance and understanding of other cultures and ways of living, do not feature prominently enough.
- The academy has a high turnover of teachers. Two joined the academy in the week of the inspection. Senior leaders have struggled to recruit permanent, fully qualified teachers. This has led to very different learning experiences for students across subjects, especially in mathematics, and across year groups. Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Until recently, data produced by the academy on the progress of students was inaccurate. Because of this, senior and subject leaders did not have a clear picture of how much progress students were making. This led to some wildly inaccurate predictions of how well Year 11 students would do in their GCSEs last year. Underachievement was not picked up and so support was not put into place. At the beginning of this term, all students were tested to give an accurate picture of current attainment. These levels were recorded and will be used to track progress more accurately in the future.
- Under the leadership of the new Principal, senior leaders now have a clearer vision for the future development of the academy and are working hard to implement this and to raise the aspirations of staff and students. The academy evaluates itself too generously, for example, regarding the quality of teaching which is judged more on classroom practice than on the impact of teaching over time on the progress and achievement of students.
- Leaders have failed to address effectively weak teaching over time and so achievement has declined. The quality of teaching is now closely monitored and teachers who need to improve are offered support and training. This has yet to have an impact on improving progress across all year groups and subjects.
- Subject leaders are beginning to take more responsibility for the quality of teaching in their departments and for the progress and attainment of students.
- Senior leaders have had a positive impact on students' behaviour. Parents, teachers and students agree

that behaviour has improved both around the academy and in most lessons. There are clear structures in place to monitor attendance and this is followed up effectively. The attendance of some groups of disabled students and those with special educational needs and of some disadvantaged students is still too low.

- The attendance, behaviour and progress of students who attend courses at other providers are well monitored by senior leaders.
- The quality of guidance available to students as they make decisions about the next stages in their education is adequate. It ranges from group interviews with tutors to Year 11 students being taken to a local careers event. The academy now runs a three year Key Stage 4, and Year 8 students are given appropriate information as they choose their GCSE options.
- The academy is currently involved in a joint project with the local authority and four other secondary schools focused on improving transition between primary and secondary education.
- The academy's arrangements for keeping students safe in the academy are robust and meet all statutory requirements.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors have not acted quickly enough to improve outcomes for students.
 - Although they have tried measures such as recruiting teaching staff from overseas, governors have failed to ensure continuity of staffing. They have ensured that the academy's future is more secure through a re-structuring of staffing which is still on-going.
 - Governors have not effectively monitored progress towards the academy's targets or challenged underperformance in public examinations.
 - Governors can account for how the pupil premium money is spent but do not have procedures in place to tell them what impact it is having.
 - Governors now have a more realistic view of what the academy needs to do to improve and a clearer development plan is in place. They are better informed about how senior leaders are tackling the underperformance of teachers and also about how effective teachers are being rewarded.
 - Governors have fulfilled their duties to ensure that the academy meets requirements for safeguarding students and have been proactive in putting robust measures into place to secure the safety of students on a site that is open to the public.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Attitudes to learning are steadily improving but inspectors saw too much low level disruption in lessons which had a negative impact on the progress of some students. Students confirmed that their learning is interrupted at times by other students, but that this is decreasing.
- Older students told inspectors that behaviour has improved since they started at the academy. They like their new uniform and say that teachers now have higher expectations of them generally. They say staff do not yet use rewards and sanctions consistently to manage behaviour.
- Most students behave with respect towards each other and towards adults. They move around the building between lessons and at break times calmly and keep the academy environment tidy.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools. Recently, the academy has tackled the issue of punctuality and this has led to an improvement in the number of students arriving on time in the mornings. Students on work-related courses out of the academy attend and behave well.
- The academy does not use external exclusion to manage the behaviour of challenging students. It keeps

students on site, but separate from other students, so that their education can continue. This has resulted in fewer lessons being disrupted. Students in internal exclusion are well supervised and continue to learn.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel safe at the academy and that they are well supervised at breaks and lunchtimes. Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, also indicated that they think the academy is doing well at keeping their children safe.
- Students are aware of the risks they can face from different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying and psychological bullying. Assemblies cover topics such as road safety and fire hazards. Students are confident that they know how to manage these risks and how to protect themselves when out of the academy. They say that there is a small amount of bullying in the academy, but that staff deal with it quickly.
- The academy's recruitment procedures are robust. They ensure that new staff immediately receive safeguarding training. All staff are kept up to date with regular training sessions.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because, over time, it leads to inadequate progress and outcomes for students. It is particularly weak in mathematics because frequent changes of teacher have resulted in inconsistent approaches to learning. Students have gaps in their knowledge that are not being picked up and addressed by teachers.
- Changes of teacher have also led to variable experiences for students across other subjects. This confuses and frustrates students and slows their progress. This was communicated to inspectors by students and by parents who responded to the online questionnaire.
- Not enough lessons inspire students with a desire to learn. When the work does not interest them or provide enough challenge, students become bored and this leads to a loss of concentration.
- In some lessons there is too much emphasis on offering students lots of different activities instead of consolidating subject specific skills and building on past learning. As a result, students' progress is erratic.
- Students are not encouraged enough to read outside English lessons or to practice mathematical skills across subjects. Inspectors saw some use of mathematical skills in a Year 8 geography lesson where students were working with charts and graphs on population. But too often, teachers fail to provide opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematical skills.
- Teachers do not adapt work to meet the individual needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Learning support assistants are not always directed effectively by teachers, or do not have the skills or training to know how to give support without doing the work for the students. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress in small group literacy, numeracy and self-esteem lessons. However, this progress is not maintained when they are in lessons with other students.
- Teachers usually mark students' books regularly. However, the quality of marking and feedback varies. When it is used well, teachers give students useful advice on how to improve; too often, comments are vague and unhelpful. Even when advice is good, most students pay no attention to it and often move onto a new piece of work without correcting mistakes or consolidating previous learning.
- The promotion of literacy across the academy is inconsistent. In some lessons, teachers promote the use of subject specific words and insist they are used and spelled correctly. Too often, teachers, including in some English books, do not pick up mistakes in punctuation and spelling and so students continue to make the same mistakes.

- Where teaching engages the interest of students, they show real enthusiasm for learning and so make accelerated progress. For example, in a Year 9 drama lesson, students clearly enjoyed directing each other's performances and made good progress because of this.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The achievement of students is inadequate because over time too many students have not made the progress they should have across a wide range of subjects.
- Standards are too low, particularly in English and mathematics. The percentages of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics has been below national average since the academy started. There was a slight increase in the proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in English but in mathematics this fell by nearly 10%.
- The proportion of students making expected progress or exceeding expected progress in mathematics in 2014 continued to fall and is well below the national average. In English the proportion making expected progress rose slightly from 2013 but is still below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who made expected progress in mathematics halved in 2014 and the gap in attainment between them and other students in the academy increased so that there is now a full grade at GCSE between them. In 2013, disadvantaged students attained just under half a grade lower than other students nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students making expected progress in English has been consistent but remains below that of other students in the academy. The gap in the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students at the academy in English closed to half a GCSE grade from one full grade in 2013. In 2013, disadvantaged students attained just over half a grade lower than other students nationally.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is wholly inadequate. From their various starting points, only a small proportion of these students make the progress expected of them.
- Students who have sat examinations at the end of Year 10 perform significantly worse than those who sit the subject at the end of Year 11 and achieve fewer A* to C grades than other students nationally.
- The most-able students do not achieve as well as they could. The vast majority of higher ability students at the academy achieve five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. However, the proportion of those achieving A* and A grades is below the national average.
- School data shows that current progress for Year 11 in English and mathematics is improving. The academy has increased resources in these two areas to tackle underachievement. There is some evidence in students' books and from observations of lessons that this is beginning to have a positive impact.
- In some subjects, especially science, standards are beginning to rise. In 2014, there was some improvement in the percentages of students gaining A* to C grades at the end of year 11 in photography, dance, drama, physical education and history.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139179
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	447992

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	993
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Fielding
Principal	Matthew Slater
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