

# Tabor Academy

Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex CM7 5XP

## Inspection dates

16–17 November 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Insufficient evidence</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since April 2015. School leaders have taken swift and effective action to establish a culture in which pupils and adults feel valued, have increasingly high aspirations and are motivated to succeed.
- The Loxford Trust provides well-judged support which has significantly improved the quality of leadership and management, as well as teaching, learning and assessment.
- Middle leaders are supported well and empowered to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Almost all of these leaders are making a considerable contribution to the continuous improvement of this school.
- School leaders have made appropriate changes to the school curriculum, which is carefully planned and balanced. As a result of these changes, standards of attainment have risen across many subjects.
- Governors use their substantial experience and knowledge of education to provide good levels of support and challenge to school leaders.
- Since April 2015, pupils' behaviour has improved dramatically and is now good. Pupils are typically polite, courteous and respectful to each other and to the adults around the school.
- Since April 2015, pupils' attendance has improved significantly and is above the most recent national average. This is because very many pupils enjoy learning at Tabor Academy.
- Most teachers plan learning that is well matched to the interests and capabilities of pupils. In a small number of classes, including some in mathematics, where this is not the case, pupils can lose focus and the pace of learning and the progress that pupils make is slower than it should be.
- Due to the legacy of poor and disrupted teaching in key subjects, outcomes in 2016 were lower than national averages. Since April 2015, pupils, including the most able, continue to make improved progress from their individual starting points and are catching up with their peers nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is rapidly improving, including those who are most-able, especially in key stage 3 and Year 10. However, their attainment does not match that of other pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their individual starting points. However, leaders do not analyse the impact of their work to accelerate these pupils' learning precisely enough.
- Tabor Sixth Form opened in September 2016. There are 17 students on roll. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of the 16 to 19 study programme.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes, by:
  - accelerating further the pace at which pupils, including the most able pupils, are catching up with their peers, especially in mathematics
  - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils' achievement, especially of those pupils in Year 11, improves even more rapidly and their attainment matches that of their peers nationally.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - equipping those responsible for the leadership of special educational needs with the strategies to enable them to analyse the impact of their work precisely and so accelerate the progress that these pupils are able to make.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - ensuring that the few teachers who do not yet match learning activities closely to the abilities of the pupils in each class have the strategies so to do.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The widely respected headteacher leads the school very well. Together with the chief executive of the Loxford Trust, she models the expectations of 'being in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing'. These leaders, fully supported by staff, have successfully created an ethos in which pupils develop their academic and social skills well. One pupil commented that he enjoys 'coming to school because it has a good atmosphere now'. This sentiment was echoed by adults and pupils over the course of the inspection.
- Under the guidance of the chief executive of the trust, who is a national leader of education, school leaders are realistic in their evaluation of the quality of education provided by the school. They review each aspect of the school's work frequently and skilfully plot the journey of school improvement. They have not shied away from challenging many aspects of provision where there has been poorer practice in the past. This has led to rapid developments in many areas.
- The Loxford Trust invests significant resources into successfully improving the quality of education at Tabor Academy. The presence of trust staff on the senior team has increased the capacity of leaders to bring about accelerated improvement. Historically, leaders have found it difficult to recruit staff, which has resulted in too many pupils' learning being affected by poor or disrupted teaching. The trust has worked with considerable success to recruit appropriately skilled and qualified teachers. The school is fully staffed, which has been a significant factor in the improved morale of pupils and staff and also the improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Subject leaders fully support senior leaders' vision and are increasingly effective in their work. These reinvigorated leaders work closely to the monitoring programme laid out in the school's strategic operational plan. They know the strengths and weaknesses of their subject areas and use this information well to make appropriate changes to provision. For example, amendments made to the curriculum in science are leading to improved pupil progress across key stage 4.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Despite the difficulties in recruitment, leaders have rightly refused to let poorer practice go unchallenged. They make good use of information gathered from their regular monitoring to provide appropriate support and mentoring. Teachers, including those new to the profession, told inspectors how much they value the training provided, such as the Loxford Lectures. Teachers reflect upon and are committed to improving their own practice.
- Using accurate information about what pupils can and need to do, school leaders swiftly made appropriate changes to the school curriculum. As a result, the curriculum has breadth, provides equality of opportunity, and is well matched to the capabilities of pupils in the school. For example, additional time provided for literacy and reading is helping pupils to make better progress, not only in English, but also in other areas of the curriculum.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Pupils have access to an increasing variety of clubs, visits and activities which broaden their understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils' increasingly thoughtful behaviour demonstrates the impact of opportunities to reflect upon events such as Diwali and Remembrance Day as well as visits to theatres, art galleries and careers fairs.

- Leaders are now making effective use of the funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Using accurate information about these pupils' barriers to learning, leaders have put in place appropriate support. For example, one-to-one support, reading sessions and additional pastoral staff have helped disadvantaged pupils attend school more often and make faster progress. Similarly, Year 7 catch-up funding has enabled pupils who receive this literacy and numeracy support to make up differences with their peers.
- School leaders have rightly prioritised improving the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils' needs are now more accurately identified and met. However, leaders' evaluation of their work in this area is not precise enough to ensure that pupils' progress is as rapid as it could be.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body shares school leaders' high aspirations for the school. Governors do so by making effective use of their significant experience of education to ask astute questions of senior leaders. Consequently, governors provide a good level of challenge and support to school leaders.
- The governing body does not simply rely upon the information in the detailed reports that senior leaders provide for them. Governors visit the school to speak with pupils, scrutinise safeguarding practices and other documentation, and meet with a variety of school leaders. Governors then summarise their findings for the governing body which accurately identifies areas where they judge practice needs commending, explaining or improving.
- The governors benefit from the expertise of the Loxford Trust, for example in ensuring school policies reflect the most recent statutory guidance. Through the support of the trust, governors ensure that teachers' performance is managed well and in line with the appropriate trust policy.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Governors carry out careful checks to assure themselves that the school carries out its statutory responsibility to keep pupils safe. The school's single central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with young people is well-maintained and compliant.
- Adults receive appropriate training in relevant aspects of child protection, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff are alert to their responsibility to keep pupils safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil.
- Well-maintained records demonstrate that school leaders ensure that, where appropriate, swift and effective action is taken to secure the welfare of pupils when they may be at risk. This includes clear and timely communication with external agencies.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Since April 2015, school leaders have maintained an unrelenting focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Through a programme of high-quality training, robust challenge to weak practice and skilful support they have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment have developed quickly and are good.
- Teachers in almost all subjects make good use of their strong subject knowledge to plan learning that is well matched to the capabilities and interests of very many pupils. For example, due to the teachers' careful planning of learning, key stage 4 pupils in English lessons were able to offer mature analysis of the character of Scrooge.
- In September 2015, leaders rightly identified that pupils' literacy skills needed to improve. Teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to read in lessons and at the end of the school day. Pupils are challenged to read a range of texts and genres. Inspectors heard pupils read confidently, even when grappling with words that were unfamiliar to them. Pupils' confidence and enjoyment when reading is now much more evident at Tabor Academy.
- Teachers in many subjects typically make skilful use of questions to consolidate and accelerate pupils' learning. For example, teachers in history, geography and religious education lessons ask probing questions that enable pupils, including the most able, to deepen their understanding and empathy across a variety of topics. In drama, the teacher's skilful intervention enabled key stage 4 pupils to make improvements to their scripts.
- Learning support assistants make an important contribution to the learning of pupils who need additional support. These adults are well informed about the individual needs of the pupils they support and the topics pupils are learning. They offer skilled support and challenge to pupils. One pupil told inspectors that the presence of the learning support assistant meant 'it was like having two teachers in the room'.
- Teachers provide feedback in line with the trust's expectations. Where this is done well, most pupils know exactly how and why they need to improve their work. Inspectors saw feedback, across a wide range of subjects, which was precise and enabled pupils to make prompt and accurate improvements to their work.
- In a very small number of classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are not high enough. Activities in these lessons are less skilfully matched to pupils' needs and their progress slows as a result. Pupils lose focus and do not demonstrate the positive attitudes seen in many classes across the school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's culture is one of care for each individual pupil. Leaders have worked with considerable success to establish a school in which pupils have the confidence to learn. This is helping pupils to make the accelerated progress that will enable them to catch

up with their peers nationally.

- Pupils told inspectors they feel safe. Leaders have provided opportunities for pupils to develop strategies to keep themselves safe in a variety of settings. For example, through presentations on road and fire safety. Pupils demonstrate an appropriate awareness of the risks associated with the use of the internet and can explain the precautions they would take to keep themselves safe when online.
- Pupils know what bullying is and the various forms that it can take. They explained confidently that bullying is not a common occurrence in their school. Pupils were equally confident in telling inspectors that were bullying to take place, it would be swiftly and effectively dealt with by school leaders.
- Vulnerable pupils are very well cared for. They were full of praise for the work of the school as they explained that there is always someone to speak with if they become anxious or concerned. As a result, these pupils are developing an increased sense of confidence, academically and socially.
- The school's personal, health, social and careers education curriculum (PHSCE) equips pupils with important knowledge and skills which help them to make more informed choices about their lifestyle. For example, through subjects such as, PHSCE, physical education and technology, pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit. Many key stage 3 and 4 pupils, having attended careers fairs, are more aware of the options available to them in later life. In 2016, almost all pupils went on to sixth forms, colleges or training providers.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders, including those in the school's Year Care Team, have successfully transformed the attitudes and behaviour of the very large majority of pupils. Consequently, pupils are proud of their school and increasingly confident in their learning. This is demonstrated not only in their behaviour, but also in how most pupils present their work in their books.
- Pupils and staff told inspectors that pupils' behaviour has significantly improved and that their school is a welcoming and pleasant place to learn. The large majority of parents who expressed an opinion on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school ensures that pupils behave well. Inspection evidence supports these views.
- Pupils behave well in almost all lessons. In very many classes, relationships are positive, pupils are supportive of each other and learning takes place uninterrupted by the poor behaviours evident in the past. On several occasions pupils told inspectors that this harmonious atmosphere contributed to the better learning that is now evident in many classes.
- Pupils move around the site calmly, with good humour and arrive at lessons on time and ready to learn. In corridors, where congestion can occur, pupils maturely wait their turn and then move swiftly to their lessons.
- School leaders have successfully improved pupils' attendance. For example, where a pupil's attendance begins to slip, leaders make phone calls home or carry out home visits. As a consequence, overall, pupils' attendance has risen dramatically and is good. Leaders track with similar care the attendance of the small number of pupils who are

educated off-site.

- In a small number of classes, where the learning is not well suited to the abilities of pupils, a small minority of pupils lose focus and engage in off-task chatter. This is a cause of frustration to their peers, almost all of whom want to learn and achieve well. Teachers are more confident and effective at refocusing pupils on their learning, so minimising disruption to lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Many pupils enter Tabor Academy with starting points that are significantly below those of their peers nationally. Prior to April 2015, in the key subjects of science, mathematics and English, too many classes were affected by poor or disrupted teaching as well as some unacceptable behaviour. This meant that pupils were unable to catch up with their peers nationally. Despite pupils making accelerated progress since April 2015, outcomes in 2015 and 2016 remained below national averages.
- Inspection evidence, which includes observations of learning, scrutiny of pupils' work, and analysis of school assessment information, indicates that pupils are making improved progress across many subjects, including English and mathematics, and in each year group. This progress is more rapid and secure than previously at the school. Despite this improved progress, a small proportion of pupils in older year groups are still some way behind their peers nationally, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils in key stage 3, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress across the curriculum. The consistently good quality of teaching enables pupils to acquire knowledge and skills quickly. Evidence in books indicates that pupils are increasingly confident in their analysis of topics such as the 19th century slave trade and expressionism.
- School assessment information, supported by evidence seen in lessons and a large number of books scrutinised by inspectors, indicates that key stage 4 pupils, including the most able, are now typically making more rapid progress. This progress is particularly strong in subjects such as history, English, art and science. A small number of pupils make slower progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages as they seek to fill gaps in their learning. Subject and senior leaders have credible plans in place to rectify this.
- The most able pupils have, in the past, not achieved the standards of which they are capable. They are now making improved progress across many subjects. This is due to the better quality of teaching, learning and assessment as well the additional support, such as sharply focused after-school classes, which these pupils now have access to.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improved, but variable, progress from their individual starting points. Where the work is well matched to their individual needs, and learning support assistants are present to offer support, these pupils achieve well. However, not all teachers are skilled at providing learning activities that enable these pupils to make consistently good or better progress.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, have not made the progress of which they are capable at this school. Inspection evidence demonstrates that these pupils are now making accelerated progress across a wide

range of subjects. This is due to the well-focused support that these pupils now receive. However, given their often low starting points, there is some way to go to ensure that they attain as well as other pupils nationally.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Insufficient evidence

- The Tabor Sixth Form opened in September 2016. Currently 17 students are enrolled on study programmes that include A Level courses in subjects such as chemistry, English literature, history, mathematics, physical education and sociology. Inspectors observed learning in lessons, scrutinised students' work, held discussions with school leaders and with a group of 15 sixth form students. However, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the overall quality of 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Leaders have carefully planned study programmes to match students' capabilities and ambitions. As a result, at this early stage, retention rates are high. School assessment information indicates that students who did not achieve a GCSE C grade in English and/or mathematics are making progress towards achieving a pass grade.
- Students have quickly developed very positive attitudes to their learning and behave exceptionally well. Leaders have, in a very short space of time, established a palpable sense of togetherness and community among students and staff in the sixth form.
- Students make an important contribution to the school community and respond very well to the expectation that they be role models to the rest of the school. Students speak proudly of their work with younger pupils in subjects such as science and English. Students also are developing their decision-making skills through sports leadership programmes.
- Teachers make effective use of their strong subject knowledge to plan learning that enables students of all abilities to develop a solid understanding of the facts and concepts in each subject. For example, students in an A level history class confidently used their subject knowledge to discuss international relations in the 1950s.
- Leaders have planned a detailed programme of careers, information, advice and guidance. Students have already undergone a careers interview and speak confidently about their ambitions for their future. Each student has the opportunity to take part in work-related learning that is aligned to their study programme. For example, students experience workplace learning in settings such as schools or zoos.
- Through a range of assemblies and other activities, students are provided with opportunities to further develop their awareness of life in modern Britain. For example, students have visited Parliament and taken part in whole-school events such as Remembrance Day commemorations.
- There is insufficient evidence to comment upon how well students progress into higher education, or successfully achieve in relation to their starting points.



## School details

Unique reference number	139179
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10020376

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	823
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	17
Appropriate authority	Academy Trust
Chair	Peter Ballard
Headteacher	Elizabeth Robinson
Telephone number	01376 323701
Website	<a href="http://www.taboracademy.co.uk">www.taboracademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:mail@taboracademy.co.uk">mail@taboracademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	25–26 November 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with the Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Tabor Academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school. It joined the Loxford Trust in April 2015.
- Most of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the

national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is below the national average.
- A below-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend the school.
- The school makes use of the Heybridge Alternative Provision School to provide education for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 33 lessons, sometimes accompanied by senior or middle leaders. Inspectors also visited three tutor periods.
- The inspection team looked at work in pupils' books and folders across a wide range of subject and year groups.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject and care team leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, the chief executive officer of the Loxford Trust, the chair of the Loxford Trust, several trust officers and two governors. The lead inspector also conducted a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team scrutinised school improvement documents; information about pupils' attendance and achievement; safeguarding records; policies; records of pupils' behaviour, minutes of governor meetings; details of training; and records of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors considered 60 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cathy Tooze

Ofsted Inspector

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