

Templars Academy

Crossing Road, Witham, Essex CM8 2NJ

Inspection dates

24 to 25 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The heads of school and staff share high expectations for themselves and their pupils. Since 2016, when the school opened as an academy, the quality of provision has improved markedly.
- Trustees provide effective support and challenge for school leaders. Trustees have been instrumental in ensuring that the provision has become good.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their determination and decisive actions are making long-term, sustainable improvements.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and improving. Leaders and trust representatives provide teachers with effective support, training and challenge.
- Teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' thinking. Consequently, pupils gain a greater understanding of what they are studying.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers' high-quality feedback helps pupils to take responsibility for improvements in their learning.
- The broad curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally and socially. They value diversity and are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy learning and take pride in their achievements. They are well looked after, and their behaviour is good.
- The key subjects of English and mathematics are taught well. As a result, pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- In some subjects, such as geography and history, teachers are not as adept in providing the same high level of challenge they do in English and mathematics. As a result, progress in some of these subjects is varied across the school.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive effective support to overcome whatever barriers they face. These pupils make good progress.
- The alternative provision to help pupils who need help with their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) is effective. Pupils receive high-quality support to overcome their difficulties.
- Leaders' and teachers' support for pupils with special educational needs (SEND) does not meet the needs of all these pupils. Some pupils with SEND are not making the progress they should.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe at school and home.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that support for pupils with SEND helps them overcome their barriers to learning and make good progress.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - equipping teachers with the skills and strategies to plan sequences of learning that provide the same high level of challenge in all subjects of the curriculum
 - equipping teachers to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so that they make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Trust and school leaders have created a school with an ethos of ambition where all members of the community value learning and take pride in their achievements. With a can-do, no excuses culture, leaders have overcome substantial barriers to school improvement. After a period of rapid staff changes, leaders have created an effective team of teachers and support staff who share the same high expectations of themselves and their pupils. Staff morale is high and all staff who took part in Ofsted's staff questionnaire reported that the school continues to improve.
- The trust provides strong support to the school. The executive headteachers train highly skilled leaders who are able to work across the trust and who can quickly identify and address areas of weakness at the school as they arise. Staff appreciate the opportunities to work with staff from other schools in the trust. This work has been an important factor in the improvements made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and to pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and they have produced well-considered and effective improvement plans. Leaders carefully assess the development needs of their staff and create bespoke training plans to help them improve. Using specialist teachers and leaders from across the trust and beyond, leaders ensure that staff receive the highest quality training possible. Where weaknesses in teaching were evident, these have been eliminated so that most pupils make good progress across the school, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Assessment is accurate across the school and this ensures that leaders have a precise understanding of the needs of the pupils. Leaders know the pupils very well and provide support for those who fall behind. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of this support.
- The actions of leaders to promote equality of opportunity has ensured that many pupils with SEND thrive in the school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENco) accurately identifies the needs of these pupils. The support for these pupils, however, is not equally effective. As a result, some of these pupils are not making the progress they should.
- The alternative provision for pupils who have challenges with SEMH is well led and effectively supports these pupils. Leaders identify pupils' needs swiftly and precisely and put into place appropriate support. As a result, these pupils overcome their difficulties and learn effective strategies so that they can return to mainstream education.
- Leaders have designed a broad curriculum that interests pupils and enables them to make good progress. Leaders have connected the learning across the curriculum effectively so that different subjects are well integrated and enhance pupils' learning. For example, inspectors saw pupils learning science and writing at the same time very well. At times, however, teachers do not always provide the same high level of challenge found in English and mathematics in some other subjects, such as geography and history.
- Leaders and staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

They ensure that pupils are prepared for adult life by learning about different cultures and faiths in modern Britain and around the world. Discussions with pupils and work in books demonstrate that pupils value people's differences and are curious about how different people live their lives.

- Leaders have used the physical education (PE) and sport premium effectively in order to enrich the provision of sporting opportunities. As a result of the increased opportunities, more pupils take part in clubs and competitions. The positive values learned during sports clubs have also contributed to the positive ethos on the playground during playtime.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- The body responsible for school governance is the board of trustees. Members of this board provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. By comparing the school's performance with other schools in the trust, they challenge leaders at Templars Academy to meet trustees' aim of ensuring that all schools in the trust provide outstanding education.
- In addition to the challenge presented by the trustees, the chief executive officer and the chief learning officer regularly scrutinise the work of the school and meet with the heads of school. This combination of support and challenge is helping the school's leaders bring about the necessary improvement.
- Trustees make sure that leaders spend additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively and set high expectations for all pupils across the school. Trustees also make sure that leaders use the PE and sport premium to improve these aspects of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All adults place safeguarding as their highest priority. They look for signs of harm and take swift and appropriate action when they have concerns. Leaders ensure that all adults undertake regular training and use this training to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies and keep careful records so that agreed actions are implemented effectively to support the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe at school and home. Pupils articulately explained the strategies they use to keep themselves safe in a range of settings, including when online.
- Leaders ensure that all required checks are carried out to be certain that all adults working with pupils are suitable. The record of these checks is meticulously maintained. Trustees check these records carefully to confirm that leaders and staff carry out their duties effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' actions have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment markedly. In line with the well-established ethos set by leaders, teachers have high expectations and pupils work hard to meet these. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's parent questionnaire agreed that their children are taught well at the school.
- Teachers and pupils share strong relationships. Pupils described to inspectors how they trust their teachers to help them achieve well in school. Teachers encourage pupils to take risks and pupils are not afraid to do so and show resilience when things go wrong.
- Teachers provide clear feedback that informs pupils how to improve their learning. Pupils discuss their learning with maturity and act on their teacher's feedback. In books, for example, pupils' writing consistently shows what pupils and teachers call 'upskilling', that is, pupils making their writing more sophisticated in response to teachers' feedback.
- In many classes, teachers' questioning deepens pupils' thinking and understanding. For example, in key stage 1 classes teachers' questions helped pupils gain a greater understanding of the scientific concepts they were studying.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Teachers use the new approach introduced by leaders effectively across the school. As a result, pupils confidently reason and solve complex mathematical problems.
- Teachers develop pupils' reading skills very well. The youngest pupils quickly learn how to use phonics to develop their reading. They develop a love of reading that continues throughout their time at school. Older pupils show a mature understanding of what they read and read a wide range of texts with well-developed comprehension skills.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and contribute positively towards pupils' learning. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and have a shared understanding of pupils' goals. Pupils benefit from the small group and one-to-one support teaching assistants provide.
- Teachers use regular assessments to ensure that they know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use this information to plan learning that is usually well matched to pupils' needs and interests. For some pupils with SEND teachers have not been completely successful in providing learning opportunities appropriate to their needs. As a result, these pupils have not always made the progress they should.
- Pupils enjoy and benefit from learning about a range of topics across the curriculum. They are keen to learn new subjects and can discuss confidently the links between subjects. Teachers are improving their skills at providing appropriately challenging learning opportunities in subjects other than mathematics and English. In some subjects, such as geography and history, however, some teachers provide learning opportunities that are too easy and limit the progress of some pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and take pride in their achievements. Because teachers help pupils develop self-awareness and determination, they accurately identify and effectively act on what they need to do to improve their learning.
- The well-taught and broad curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils value each other's differences and listen to others exceptionally well. During 'Let's Talk' assemblies, pupils of different ages share and challenge each other's ideas sensitively. One pupil reflected the views of others by telling an inspector that, 'Pupils like listening to each other.'
- Leaders' strong promotion of physical, social and emotional well-being ensures that pupils are taught how to stay healthy effectively. Adults provide effective support and coaching when pupils experience challenges so that they can find solutions. Leaders' creation of an alternative provision, in partnership with the local authority, has been very successful in helping pupils overcome challenges with SEMH.
- Pupils feel safe socially, emotionally and physically at school. They told inspectors that bullying is rare and resolved well when it does occur. Pupils also said that they have several adults they trust at school if they become worried about the actions of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have high expectations about behaviour and have created a clear system to ensure pupils behave well. Pupils understand the behaviour system and enjoy the recognition and rewards they receive for demonstrating the school's values. The number of incidents of negative behaviours has gone down markedly since 2018, as has the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- Pupils are polite and care for each other in lessons, and while moving around the school and on the playground. Incidents of disruptive behaviour are rare because pupils value their own learning and respect the learning of others.
- Adults have created an enriching playtime environment where pupils enjoy playing together. The use of the PE and sport premium has improved the activities available at playtime. Many pupils benefit from these opportunities socially, while also developing their PE skills.
- Leaders have been increasingly successful in making clear that coming to school is important. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who were absent was above the national average. The proportion of those persistently absent was also above the national average. Current absence figures show the situation to be improving for absence and persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- By the end of key stage 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018, Year 6 pupils made progress in line with the national average in reading and mathematics. In the key subject of writing, however, Year 6 pupils made progress above the national average. Work in books confirms pupils' good progress in key stage 2.
- In key stage 1, pupils' attainment in mathematics in 2018 was above the national average by the end of Year 2. In reading and writing, however, attainment was below the national average in 2018. Leaders' decisive actions have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1, and this has led to improved outcomes. Work in books shows substantial improvement in key stage 1, with pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils read confidently and enjoy the frequent opportunities to do so across the curriculum. While the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics in 2018 was below the national average, inspection evidence shows that pupils are now making good progress in phonics. Work in books shows that, as pupils gain confidence in reading, they use their knowledge of phonics effectively to read and spell tricky words correctly.
- In 2018, by the end of key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils made progress that compared favourably to that of other pupils nationally in reading, mathematics and, especially, in writing. Leaders and teachers identify their needs accurately and provide a wide range of effective support. Work in books and the school's assessment information show that disadvantaged pupils are making even better progress in 2019 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In common with other pupils in school, most-able pupils' progress was stronger by the end of key stage 2 than in key stage 1. Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 have enabled them to make much better progress this academic year.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils with SEND the support they need to make the progress they should. As a result, some of these pupils have not been able to overcome their challenges in learning to reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers do not always plan sufficiently challenging learning opportunities. As a result, some pupils do not always make the progress they should, such as in geography and history.

Early years provision

Good

- The new early years leader has a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. With enthusiasm and a strong understanding of the needs of the children, the early years leader has set high expectations across the early years. As a result, children are well prepared for the challenges they will face in Year 1.
- Children make good progress in the early years. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in 2018 was just above the national average. The

school's assessment information shows that pupils currently have higher attainment than last year.

- The ethos of the early years provision ensures that children value learning and achievement. Children learn independently and in groups without distraction. They enjoy the many opportunities teachers provide for them to explore what they are learning and take pleasure in learning something new.
- Teachers and teaching assistants observe the progress of the children and question them about their learning very well. Along with extending children's vocabulary, adults' questioning deepens children's understanding about what they are learning. Starting with questions such as 'What if...?', adults frequently encourage children to investigate further and take next steps in their learning.
- Children are making great progress in reading and writing. Starting in the nursery, early readers quickly gain a strong understanding of phonics. As they make the transition to Reception, the children apply what they know about phonics to their writing of complex sentences.
- Teachers work closely with parents to ensure that children get the best possible start to their education. Teachers communicate well with parents to ensure a common understanding of how well the children are learning at home and school. Teachers celebrate and build on home learning, with carefully considered provision at school. In partnership with parents, teachers create effective transitions into nursery through reception and into Year 1. Many parents praised teachers for how well their children settled into the early years provision.
- The early years provision is safe, and adults are well trained to care for and protect the children. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

School details

Unique reference number	142813
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088631

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Rowland Costin
Joint Heads of School	Miss C Newley Mrs E Johnstone
Telephone number	01376 513 477
Website	www.templarsacademy.com
Email address	admintem@connectedlearningmat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Connected Learning Multi-Academy Trust in June 2016.
- Currently, the multi-academy trust is governed by the board of trustees. The board of trustees has nine members, including the chief executive officer and the chief learning officer, who oversee the quality of education across the trust.
- The school hosts an alternative provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Currently, pupils from Templars Academy and one other school access the provision.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND are in line with national averages.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer, the chief learning officer, heads of school, SENCo, members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders. They also held meetings with members of the board of trustees and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed lessons and scrutinised pupils' books across the school and in the alternative provision.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and analysed 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers, support staff and pupils throughout the course of the inspection. They analysed 34 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's website, development plan, assessment information about pupils' learning and leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding, as well as minutes of the board of trustees.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kay Tims	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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