

Inspection of The Taunton Academy

Cheddon Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7QP

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The Taunton Academy is a welcoming school. As pupils arrive, teachers greet them to help them start the day well. The relationship between staff and pupils is positive. There is a high presence of pastoral staff around the school. Pupils are well supported.

Leaders are developing an ambitious curriculum. Yet, they have some way to go to establish this. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should because they do not have the knowledge they need for the next step in their learning.

Some pupils say that when they report bullying it is not dealt with effectively. Leaders are aware of this and have put systems in place, such as training pupils to be peer listeners.

Staff, pupils and parents recognise the improvements in the school. Leaders have raised the expectations of behaviour. They are working with pupils to help them understand these expectations. However, pupils move around the school noisily and sometimes without care for others.

Pupils attend a range of extra-curricular clubs, which include sports, arts and drama. For example, all Year 7 pupils experience the forest school. The school library is well attended. Pupils play chess, read or use computers. Pupils have the opportunity for leadership roles, such as becoming well-being ambassadors.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created a well-sequenced curriculum in some subjects, such as English and mathematics. However, in other subjects, there is a lack of depth in planning. Teachers do not set out what pupils must learn and how this will build over time. As a result, pupils do not understand their work as well as they should. The curriculum is not ambitious enough for all pupils. For example, some pupils miss out on modern foreign languages in key stage 3.

Teachers regularly assess and review pupils' learning. Pupils say they find this helpful. Therefore, in most subjects, teachers know what pupils have learned and what they need to revisit to improve their understanding. However, where assessment is less effective, leaders do not use the information to review and make improvements to the curriculum.

There are literacy classes to support pupils. However, these do not help pupils who are in the earliest stages of learning to read. This means that some pupils are not able to understand their work as well as they could. Leaders have not established a culture of reading across the school. While some pupils regularly read a range of books, many others do not read widely enough.

Leaders know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure pupils' support plans provide guidance for teachers. However, the information is not always used well to plan learning. This means that some pupils do not get the right support at the right time.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Typically, lessons are calm and orderly. However, pupils are not as well behaved outside of lessons. When they are moving around the school, pupils are not as considerate to each other as they should be. A minority of pupils either do not go to their lessons or leave early. This contributes to the problem.

Spirituality is central to the school's values. Visiting pastors support pupils and there are opportunities for reflection. The careers programme spans over five years. Pupils take part in work experience and learn about college courses and apprenticeships. Pupils feel that they are prepared well for making choices when they leave school. The personal, social and health education curriculum teaches pupils about relationships effectively. Even so, some pupils say that parts of the curriculum are not taught early enough.

Teachers say that professional development is well planned. They receive the development they need. Teachers who are at the start of their careers receive appropriate training and support. Leaders and governors are mindful of staff's workload. There have been recent changes in school leadership. Leaders are ambitious to raise standards and expectations, but their plans are in their infancy. The newly appointed acting headteacher is passionate about improving the experience for every pupil. She is well supported by the trust and the governing body.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training and are aware of how to keep pupils safe. Systems for reporting concerns are well established. Leaders work well with the trust and external agencies to support pupils.

Pupils say they know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Leaders have made pupil well-being a priority. There are key workers who support vulnerable pupils.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders ensure pupils learn how to identify the risks they may experience.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not considered the content and sequencing of the curriculum deeply enough. Teachers are not clear about what knowledge pupils need to take the next step in learning. This means that pupils' learning is hindered. Leaders should support teachers and subject leaders to have a secure understanding of the key concepts and knowledge they want pupils to learn.
- Some pupils do not have the opportunity to study a full and broad curriculum. Consequently, they may miss out on learning in particular areas, such as modern foreign languages. Leaders need to ensure that there is an ambitious and high-quality curriculum for all pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information contained in the plans for pupils with SEND to provide appropriate levels of support. This hampers their learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use the information they receive to plan and deliver an effective curriculum for pupils with SEND in all subjects.
- There is a range of literacy intervention programmes to support pupils. However, pupils who are in the early stages of reading do not secure their knowledge of phonics. As a result, these pupils do not have the reading knowledge to access the curriculum. Leaders need to make sure there is a comprehensive programme to support pupils who are in the early stages of reading.
- Too many pupils are absent during lesson time. As a result, these pupils are not learning the full intended curriculum effectively. Leaders need to ensure that the rate of pupils' attendance at lessons increases.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136193
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10227494
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	881
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Ormrod
Headteacher	Lisa Webber
Website	www.thetauntonacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher has been in post since 1 September 2022.
- The school is part of the Richard Huish Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, trustees and other school leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the view of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.
- An inspector spoke to alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

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Tracey Reynolds	His Majesty's Inspector

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