

Inspection of a good school: Tilbury Pioneer Academy

Dickens Avenue, Tilbury, Essex RM18 8HJ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Outcome

Tilbury Pioneer Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Tilbury Pioneer Academy are kind and supportive of each other. This makes school a place where they feel happy and safe.

Pupils know and understand leaders' five core values. In line with the value 'aspirations', pupils proudly 'rise and shine' in lessons where they stand and share an answer or an idea. Such respectful routines mean many pupils listen and learn from their teacher and peers. Pupils clearly link current learning to previous learning. This helps them to remember more over time.

Pupils follow the school's anti-bullying 'pioneer pledge' because staff regularly reiterate its importance. Pupils know what to do if they or others experience bullying. As a result, bullying happens rarely. It is resolved quickly when it occurs.

Pupils access a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Many pupils benefit from the caring approach at breakfast club and holiday school. School trips broaden pupils' horizons. Examples include watching a Shakespeare play at a local theatre and taking part in an inter-school poetry competition. Another core value is 'responsibility', and pupils showcase this in their leadership roles. The digital leaders, mental health champions and head pupils all work hard to make the school even better.

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

Leaders maintain high ambitions for pupils' learning. They realise these through a clearly sequenced curriculum. This includes detailed plans for teachers to follow. Teachers use these plans to arrange engaging activities. They make adaptations, where needed, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In lessons, pupils are attentive and ambitious. This helps many to complete activities to a good standard. When pupils make mistakes, teachers mostly spot these quickly. Teachers then respond to support the pupils, for example by being flexible in how they group pupils in lessons. Teachers correct pupils' misunderstandings to move on their learning.

Reading has a high priority at the school. Leaders identified that some pupils' limited vocabulary was holding them back in reading. Leaders ensured that teachers received the training and books to address this. Now, in lessons across the curriculum, pupils learn the meaning of many words. This helps them to comprehend a wider range of texts. There is also targeted support to strengthen weaker readers' phonics and comprehension knowledge, for example by learning how to identify key words in a question before scanning the text to find the answer. Parents receive regular updates about their child's reading. They find out what sounds their child has learned to help them support their children to practise these at home. All this helps pupils to read confidently.

Leaders' ambition shows itself in their ongoing evaluation of the curriculum. They have worked hard to secure improvements in the teaching of mathematics, which is now a strength. Leaders also rightly recognise that some pupils' writing is not as strong as it could be. Staff have made some changes to the curriculum. For example, they help children in the early years to develop their big- and small-muscle movements. This helps them prepare for writing. However, pupils do not have sufficient practise to write longer, creative pieces of writing. Also, how teachers assess writing is not as strong as how they assess elsewhere in the curriculum. Therefore, some pupils' mistakes occur repeatedly.

Provision for pupils with SEND works well. In addition to adaptations teachers make for pupils, there is bespoke support. Leaders ensure that skilled staff help certain pupils to make progress with their learning and their behaviour. Staff arrange this flexibly. Therefore, pupils access some learning with their classmates. Leaders and staff involve pupils and their parents well in this decision-making.

Leaders are proud of their provision for pupils' wider development. To complement religious education, staff invite faith leaders into school. These individuals teach pupils about different celebrations. Pupils have ample opportunity to develop their creativity, such as learning to play different instruments, including brass and drums. Taking part in national awareness days helps pupils to be community minded. They respect differences among people, learning that everyone deserves kindness.

Leaders from the multi-academy trust provide suitable support to local governors, school leaders and their staff. For example, they arrange for teachers to observe best practice across their schools. Teachers value these opportunities to learn. As a result, staff are enthusiastic and skilled to raise pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, despite leaders' and staff's best efforts, there are some pupils who do not attend school regularly. Because of this, these pupils have gaps in their knowledge of the school's curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders oversee appropriate checks on staff working in the school. Through the curriculum and focused staff training, leaders embed a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff know about potential risks to their pupils. They readily report concerns. Records

show that leaders respond quickly to these concerns. They work with local authority agencies to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online and offline. They also learn about healthy relationships. Having this knowledge means pupils can use their 'network hand' to talk to a trusted adult when they have a worry.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils find it difficult to apply the ambitious vocabulary and discrete knowledge they learn about spelling, punctuation and grammar to their writing. As a result, pupils' achievement in writing is not as strong as their achievement in reading, mathematics and the wider curriculum. Leaders should guide teachers to ensure all pupils have frequent and appropriate opportunities to write, including sharp use of assessment to inform teaching and address any shortcomings in pupils' writing.
- Leaders recognise that some pupils are often absent from school. Being absent means that pupils have gaps in their knowledge, despite teachers' best efforts to mitigate this through additional support. Though attendance is improving, leaders should continue to evaluate their systems, ensuring there are swift, demonstrable improvements to pupils' attendance.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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	140832
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10241644
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	472
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hilary Hodgson
Headteacher	Clare Hall
Website	www.theglc-pioneer.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Tilbury Pioneer Academy is part of the Gateway Learning Community, a multi-academy trust.
- School leaders do not currently use any alternative provision for any pupil.
- There is a breakfast club run by school staff and managed by school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the trust's chief executive officer, and two members of the local governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also reviewed other school documentation, including the school development plan, the school’s self-evaluation form, and minutes from local governing and trust board meetings.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to review records and procedures, including scrutinising the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also held discussions with pupils, staff and those responsible for governance.
- To gather the views of pupils, the inspector spent time observing and speaking to them. The inspector also considered the 196 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- To gather the views of parents, the inspector reviewed the 55 responses and 10 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector spoke to staff to gather their views, as well as taking account of the 34 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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