

# Inspection of Tabor Academy

Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex CM7 5XP

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at Tabor Academy and are proud of their school. They have positive relationships with staff. Pupils can voice their views. For example, they asked for a one-way system in corridors, and leaders put one in. Pupils are well supported with their mental health and well-being. This helps build their confidence and encourages their calm attitudes.

Behaviour is purposeful. Pupils are polite and friendly. They move around the school in an orderly way. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Any disruption in lessons gets sorted quickly. There is very little bullying. Pupils feel safe and trust leaders to resolve issues.

Pupils are given effective support with their personal development. Their wider experiences build well on what they learn in class. The 'Pledge' system, which guarantees the range of opportunities pupils receive, prepares them well for life beyond school. In all year groups, guidance is given to help them make informed choices about their next steps.

Pupils do not benefit from clear or coherent enough expectations of what they can learn. As a result, they do not do as well as they should. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

In some aspects, the curriculum is ambitious. For example, a high proportion of pupils take the English Baccalaureate. Leaders understand the need to build pupils' knowledge over time. Many pupils develop what they know, particularly in the sixth form. However, not all subject leaders have identified closely enough the knowledge they want pupils to learn. This means that when pupils are taught new content, they sometimes lack the prior knowledge they need to be able to understand the new concepts. As a result, they do not develop the detailed knowledge they need to be successful.

The delivery of the curriculum is inconsistent. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. If they are new to the profession or non-specialists, they get the training and help they need. The weakest readers get effective help to access the curriculum. Teachers manage behaviour well, which supports learning. In general, they use appropriate activities to put in place leaders' aims for the curriculum. However, there is variability in this, for example regarding the support for pupils with SEND. Leaders plan the best ways to support these pupils. But leaders do not ensure teachers apply them. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not always get the help they should.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. Staff and pupils understand these. Leaders deal with the underlying causes of misbehaviour. When pupils receive

sanctions, leaders help them learn from it. As a result, pupils conduct themselves well.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well designed. Leaders plan carefully how to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and the local area. Leaders adapt this well when they need to. For instance, they address issues that arise on social media through the PSHE curriculum. Leaders check that pupils understand what they learn. As a result, pupils develop mature and well-considered views.

The sixth-form curriculum is more coherent than the rest of the school. Leaders plan closely what students will learn, including when they are not in the classroom. Students achieve well. They engage well with the life of the school, such as reading with younger pupils.

Many parents, including those of pupils with SEND, have less than positive views of the school's provision. Leaders do not communicate as well as they could in some cases, such as when parents have concerns.

Typically, staff recognise how leaders support them with their workload. This includes ensuring staff have the time they need to complete their work during the school day. Having the support of leaders and fellow staff means most staff enjoy working at the school.

The trust and governors support and challenge the work of leaders. This is more effective in areas such as pupils' well-being than it is with the curriculum. Trustees are currently training governors so they know how to ask questions about the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant in keeping pupils safe. They train staff effectively to spot and log concerns. Leaders respond to issues promptly and liaise with the appropriate agencies.

Pupils learn to stay safe through the curriculum, such as when they are online. The strong and knowledgeable pastoral support pupils receive contributes to their feeling safe.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not identified closely enough the key knowledge they want pupils to learn in all curriculum areas. As a result, in these aspects, pupils do not develop

the detailed knowledge they need to be successful. Leaders should make sure that in all subjects they identify in detail the important learning they want pupils to learn.

- Leaders have not put in place well-considered processes to ensure that teachers support pupils with SEND effectively. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not receive the consistency and quality of support they should. Leaders must ensure that teachers use the strategies they recommend so that pupils with SEND are supported more effectively in their learning.
- Leaders do not communicate as well as they could with parents. A large number of parents have concerns about leaders' communication, including parents of pupils with SEND. Leaders need to communicate and engage better with the parental community so that more parents are able to understand and support leaders' work.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139179
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10226957
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	963
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	79
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Low
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Speller
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.taboracademy.co.uk">www.taboracademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	16 and 17 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Tabor Academy is part of the Loxford School Trust.
- The chair of governors was appointed in June 2021.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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 held meetings with various leaders during inspection: the chief executive officer of the trust and the headteacher; the chair of the trust, the chair of the local governing body and other governors; and, other senior or middle leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, art, religious education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of the evaluation of the safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record of recruitment vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures and spoke to leaders, staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 233 responses that were submitted from this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 169 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 41 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. To mitigate this, inspectors made sure they met with a large number and wide range of pupils to gather their views.

## **Inspection team**

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Piercy	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Robins	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Dallas	Ofsted Inspector

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