

Inspection of Tabor Academy

Panfield Lane, Braintree, Essex CM7 5XP

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Requires improvement

The acting co-headteachers of this school are Kellyann Brown and Gregory Forster. This school is part of the Loxford Schools Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Anita Johnson OBE, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Low.

What is it like to attend this school?

Tabor Academy is a warm and welcoming school that pupils are happy to attend. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout. Pupils know that they are expected to 'be at the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing'. They strive to meet these expectations. This is evident in the way that pupils behave, the smartness of their uniforms and how they speak to visitors and staff.

Pupils have a good understanding of individual differences and are respectful of each other. They are confident that they have someone to talk to if they need support. Anti-bullying ambassadors, easy to spot with their red ties, play a valuable part in making sure that pupils feel safe. If bullying happens, leaders deal with it well and promptly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all aspects of school life.

In lessons, pupils work hard and want to succeed. The school is making some changes to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, can achieve well in all their subjects.

The new headteachers have already made their mark on the school. Many parents think communication with them has improved. Staff feel well supported to do a good job.

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

The new headteachers' ambition and drive to make the school the best it can be shines through. Staff are energised by their enthusiasm and vision.

The school is ambitious for all its pupils. Leaders want pupils to succeed academically alongside gaining the skills they need for life. In some subjects, this vision is translated well into practice and pupils develop knowledge securely over time. However, in others, there are weaknesses in the extent to which knowledge is clearly and logically sequenced and in the delivery of the curriculum through lessons. Sometimes, what pupils are expected to achieve is limited by the tasks they are given to do. Moreover, there are some factors that limit the impact of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Pupils' needs are identified. However, work with teachers to help them to understand the most effective strategies to use to support pupils with SEND is in the early stages and is not yet well understood. The school's ambition is not, therefore, realised consistently across the curriculum.

The delivery of the sixth-form curriculum is more consistent. Staff use their expertise well to enable students to succeed. The majority of students go to university and others take up suitable apprenticeships. Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the life of the school. They are advocates for Tabor and are keen to help ensure that others, including parents and the community, share their views.

Reading is given a high profile. The school assesses pupils' reading knowledge with precision. There is an effective programme of support that helps pupils who need it to catch up quickly with their peers. This includes a phonics programme. Staff lead by example. For instance, they display the books they are reading on classroom doors and create engaging competitions and events. All pupils join the 'Tabor Express' which develops their knowledge and their understanding of different genres and authors. Pupils are also taught how to use a public library and are enrolled into local libraries. Class readers and a very engaging library also successfully foster pupils' wider reading knowledge.

Pupils learn about a series of important topics related to their personal development. These topics are revisited as pupils get older. The Tabor 'pledges' set out a range of opportunities for pupils, such as seeing live performances, supporting charities and meeting different professionals. Pupils' participation in these opportunities is carefully logged to ensure that most pupils take part. The school gives pupils appropriate careers advice, including through a 'career of the week', which is highlighted and discussed.

The school is working hard to establish good relationships with all parents. Newsletters, coffee mornings and increased opportunities to speak directly to leaders are all having an impact. Some parents remain unhappy with aspects of the school and express concerns about communication and provision for pupils with SEND. Others, however, are very content with how the school provides for their children.

Many staff and leaders are new in post. The two new headteachers are working hard to support all of these colleagues as well as carrying out the new aspects of their roles. Trust leaders are very aware of the need to ensure that the headteachers' roles and responsibilities are clear. Trust leaders also understand that the headteachers need time and support to enable them to be strategic, in order to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the knowledge that pupils need to gain and the order that they should learn it in have not been clearly defined. Where this is the case, pupils are not enabled to build their learning in a logical order over time, so do not make the connections they need between and across topics and from one year group to the next. Leaders should evaluate the curriculum sequencing across all subjects, then build on the best practice that exists in the school and beyond, to ensure

that in each subject the curriculum is designed to build pupils' knowledge sequentially and effectively over time.

- On some occasions, pupils, including those with SEND, are given work that does not enable them to learn the most important knowledge in that subject. This makes it harder for them to achieve consistently well. The school should ensure that all staff in all subjects understand and implement adaptive teaching strategies effectively, in order to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, learn the most important knowledge in each subject in order to make strong progress across the curriculum over time.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139179
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10309838
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	963
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	75
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Low
CEO of the trust	Anita Johnson OBE
Acting headteachers	Kellyann Brown and Gregory Forster
Website	http://www.taboracademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 March 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Tabor Academy is part of the Loxford Schools Trust.
- The previous headteacher left the school during the summer term 2023. At the time of the inspection, the acting co-headteachers had been in place for three weeks.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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.

Inspections are a point in time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the trust, the acting co-headteachers, other senior and middle leaders and trust leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, music, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at some curriculum planning from other subjects and discussed the curriculum and assessment with a headteacher and trust leader.
- In addition to the evidence about provision for pupils with SEND gathered through the deep dives, the lead inspector held discussions with school and trust leaders about SEND, scrutinised documentation, visited lessons and spoke to pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff surveys and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with pupils to find out about their views and evaluate their experiences of school. They observed break and lunchtimes and looked at documentary evidence in order to evaluate pupils' behaviour and the support for pupils.

Inspection team

Susan Morris-King, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Clarkson	His Majesty's Inspector
Rob Hackfath	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Stevens	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Smart	His Majesty's Inspector

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