

The Thomas Lord Audley School

Monkwick Avenue, Monkwick, Colchester, Essex CO2 8NJ

Inspection dates	21–22 April 2016
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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a rapidly improving school.
- Pupils are achieving well in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils are making good progress in key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across both of these key stages.
- Pupils behave well and they develop positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher and her senior team is valued by pupils, staff and parents alike.
- Achievement is improving because school leaders and governors focus effectively on strengthening the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Over time pupils do not experience enough outstanding teaching and as a result outcomes are not high compared to national figures.
- Some teachers do not always plan sufficient challenge in their lessons.
- Numeracy skills are not developed across the curriculum outside of mathematics lessons.
- The progress made by pupils in off-site provision is not monitored carefully enough.
- Persistent absence, although improving, is greater than the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment in the school to outstanding, so that outcomes for pupils are high compared to national averages across the curriculum, by
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently plan sufficient challenge into their lessons
 - developing the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - sharpening the monitoring of the progress made by pupils who are taught through off-site provision.

- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent so it is at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The determined and dedicated leadership of the headteacher and her senior team has ensured that this is a rapidly improving school. The strength of leadership is recognised overwhelmingly by pupils, staff and parents alike. Leaders effectively fulfil the school's stated aspiration to create, 'an environment of mutual respect, care and consideration in which everyone can learn'.
- School leaders establish, communicate and apply clear expectations of the conduct of pupils. This results in the pupils' positive attitudes to their learning and good behaviour. This in turn allows effective teaching and learning to take place.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of where the strongest and weakest teaching is in the school. The quality of teaching is improving rapidly because underperformance has been addressed. The school's professional development programme is tailored to help improve the skills of individual teachers. Performance management systems are used effectively to challenge staff and hold them to account for pupils' progress.
- Teachers in charge of subjects and year groups are supported effectively by senior leaders. This support is enhanced for new middle leaders by targeted training.
- School leaders are using pupil premium funding effectively to reduce the gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. They are also successfully using the funding available to accelerate the progress of pupils who need to catch up with their peers when they first arrive at the school.
- Self-evaluation at the school is perceptive. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be improved further. They have responded decisively to areas of underperformance in the 2015 examinations and the changes they have made as a result have rapidly raised standards.
- The school curriculum is carefully planned, and regularly evaluated, by staff and governors. It provides an appropriately broad and balanced range of pathways for pupils to move onto the next stage of their education or employment. As a result, last year the vast majority of pupils leaving the school secured a place on a course or in employment when they finished Year 11. This transition is well supported by effective impartial advice and guidance. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended and help enhance pupils' positive attitudes.
- Opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and understanding are threaded throughout lessons, assemblies and tutorial periods. Pupils learn to appreciate and respect the diversity of life in modern British society. This is strongly emphasised through the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, citizenship and religious education lessons, charity events and links with external organisations. The school places particular importance on pupils developing a sound understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is expert and experienced. It provides local governance for both secondary academies within the academy trust. This is a strength of governance: governors rapidly gain expertise in comparing practice and outcomes across both academies, and effectively coordinate support between them when it is needed.
 - Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the school. They ensure that the school performance management process rewards good teaching and challenges underperformance. Governors contribute effectively to the school's strategic planning.
 - Governors ask challenging questions of the school's leadership to discover whether targets are being met. They effectively monitor the performance of pupil groups. They know how the pupil premium is spent and they understand the impact it has on the achievement of relevant pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures to identify and respond to any concerns are thorough. Communication with parents and carers is regular and clear, and working relationships with other agencies to keep children safe are effective. The school successfully coordinates the care and welfare of looked-after children who attend the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Effective teaching in key stages 3 and 4 has a positive impact on learning in English, mathematics and across the wider curriculum. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress as a result.

- Teachers ensure that their classrooms are constructive learning environments. Positive relationships have been developed throughout the school, and as a result there is a purposeful and productive atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations and are confident to ask questions whenever they need clarification.
- Pupils experience highly effective teaching in a range of subjects. Teaching in English is increasingly strong, and the progress pupils make is accelerating as a result. In modern foreign languages and humanities teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve within lessons and this promotes rapid learning.
- The school's drive to improve pupils' literacy has been particularly effective. Initiatives for improving pupils' reading skills are successfully helping to develop a culture of reading in the school. Writing at length across subjects is also now developing well, and pupils regularly practise and produce a wide range of written styles in subjects other than English.
- Teaching in mathematics is also improving. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons which build coherently on pupils' existing mathematical skills. However, pupils' numeracy skills are not sufficiently developed in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils consistently present their work carefully and thoughtfully. As a result, they maintain effective written records of their learning which help them revise.
- Teaching assistants work well to support the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. The work teachers plan for these pupils is carefully tailored to their individual needs and they are making good progress as a result.
- Teachers are exceptionally thorough in checking that all pupils have mastered previous learning; however, some teachers do not always move onto new learning as quickly as they should. As a result, some pupils do not experience the level of challenge they require from the outset of the lesson to ensure that they always make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- School leaders have adopted a range of successful strategies to encourage positive pupil attitudes. They have created a number of responsible pupil leadership roles, including through the prefect system and the school council.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are becoming increasingly constructive, and they are developing a mature understanding of how they can take responsibility for their own learning. On occasion, these attitudes are not sustained as consistently when pupils are taught by staff who are not their regular teachers.
- Pupils feel safe and are well looked after in the school. They are appropriately supervised at break and lunchtimes and they are confident that staff will help and support them should they experience any problems, for example if bullying were to occur.
- The school develops the physical and emotional well-being of pupils through a range of subjects including physical education, drama, PSHE and citizenship. A large number of pupils benefit from the range of extra-curricular activities available, including sport, music and the arts.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There has been a significant improvement in behaviour since the last inspection. Teachers use the school's behaviour policy effectively. As a result, very little behaviour in lessons impedes learning.
- Pupils look after the school site well and are almost always polite and courteous to adults and each other. Pupils move around the school in a consistently calm and orderly fashion.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions at the school has declined and is currently below the national average.
- The school has worked effectively to improve attendance. Absence has declined over the last three years, and this year is in line with the national average. While persistent absence has also declined, it remains above the national average.

- Detailed records show that the number of behaviour-related sanctions have reduced significantly. The number of bullying incidents, including bullying of a prejudice-based nature, have also fallen. The school has dealt effectively with the bullying incidents that have occurred and pupils say they have confidence in the systems that have been established.
- The school effectively monitors the behaviour and attendance of pupils who are taught off-site. Records show that the impact of educating some pupils in this way is generally positive in terms of improving their attitudes, punctuality and attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Achievement at the school is improving rapidly. Pupils are making good progress throughout the school in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects.
- In 2015, pupils made progress in line with the national average at GCSE level in the key subjects such as English, mathematics, science and humanities. School leaders have acted effectively to address areas of underperformance in the 2015 results and to raise outcomes for the current Year 11.
- Achievement in modern foreign languages is particularly strong at the school. In each of the past three years, pupils have made significantly faster progress at GCSE level, on average, than pupils nationally.
- Pupils currently in key stage 3 are making more rapid progress than pupils in key stage 4. This is because the school's new lower school curriculum embodies very high expectations of what pupils can achieve across all their subjects.
- Leaders have taken good advantage of the greater demands of the new key stage 3 curriculum to provide opportunities for the most-able pupils in the school to make accelerated progress. While the most able make progress in line with their peers in key stage 4, they are making relatively greater progress than other ability groups in key stage 3.
- Gaps in the progress being made by different groups of pupils are narrowing. Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally have narrowed markedly since the last inspection. In 2015, girls did not achieve as well as boys in their GCSEs. The school has successfully worked to close this gap this year.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is accelerating because teachers are carefully planning how to meet their needs more effectively, including through the effective use of teaching assistants.
- The school's focus on literacy across the curriculum is having a positive impact on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The skills pupils develop equip them effectively for the next stage of their education or employment.
- Leaders have introduced a range of measures to enhance the accuracy of assessment in key stage 3 and key stage 4. These include more regular testing and internal and external moderation of work. As a result, they are able to monitor effectively how much progress pupils are making, and provide support if they fall behind.
- School leaders do not routinely monitor the progress of those pupils in key stage 4 who receive some of their education off-site as a distinct group; as a result they do not have a sufficiently clear picture of the impact of these programmes.
- Not all subject departments achieve as well as the most effective. The progress made by pupils in art and information and communications technology, for example, is not as consistently strong as that made by pupils in other areas of the curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	137937
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10011801

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	751
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Palmer
Headteacher	Helena Boast
Telephone number	01206 547911
Website	www.tla.essex.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@tla.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 April 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is above average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at Key Stage 4.
- A proportion of Year 11 pupils take part-time vocational courses at the Colchester Institute.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils undertake full-time off-site provision at the North East Essex Additional Provision School, Essex Youth Service and the New Approach Programme, which are all based in Colchester.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 41 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also observed small-group sessions, tutorial periods and assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, school leaders, teachers, a representative of the local authority, members of the governing body, the chief executive of the trust and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including policies, the minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 89 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 19 questionnaires returned by school staff and eight questionnaires returned by school pupils.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from alternative providers used by the school to educate some of its pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
John Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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