

The Thomas Lord Audley School

Monkwick Avenue, Monkwick, Colchester, CO2 8NJ

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although the quality of teaching has improved, it is not yet consistently good. Teachers do not make full use of the good information they have about students' prior attainment to set challenging work so they reach their full potential.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to practise writing at length in a range of subjects to develop accuracy, confidence and styles of writing, to speed up their progress.
- Marking is not consistently good across departments. Teachers do not always show students how they can improve their work, or make sure students act on teachers' comments and advice.
- Teachers do not consistently set high expectations for the presentation and quality of students' work.
- While behaviour has improved, attitudes to learning do not always support good progress. Learning slows when students are withdrawn from classes because of low-level disruption.
- Attendance is below average, both in school and at the alternative provision.
- Teachers do not guide and support students to choose and read challenging texts to improve their vocabulary and develop the skill to make deduction and inference.
- Although the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have introduced a range of initiatives to improve teaching and achievement, they have not yet had a full impact.

The school has the following strengths

- A good range of sporting clubs, educational visits and residential trips, including overseas, promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Students are kept safe at school.
- The headteacher and staff are committed to school improvement and make good use of partnerships with other schools to improve leadership and the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons. Eight of these observations were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed students at breaks and lunchtimes and attended tutorial periods.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, governors, the headteacher, the executive headteacher and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of 42 responses to staff questionnaires and correspondence from parents.
- A wide range of documents was examined including samples of students' work, information about students' progress, the school's development plan and self-evaluation, records of any poor behaviour, and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to students read, and observed reading-support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
Tomris Ibrahim	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Thomas Lord Audley School converted to become an academy school in August 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The school is smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportions of minority ethnic students and of students who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is member of the North East Essex Partnership and the North East Essex Teaching School Alliance. It purchases part time alternative provision from several providers, including the Colchester Institute. This currently caters for 22 students in Key Stage 4. The school also purchases full time alternative provision from the North East Essex Alternative Provision School for 6 students in Key Stage 3.
- The school is a member of The Stanway Federation Academy Trust and receives support to improve teaching and learning, and raise achievement, from The Stanway School, which is also a member of The Stanway Federation Trust. The Trust's executive headteacher is also the headteacher of The Stanway School.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching good and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use information about students' prior attainment to provide students with challenging tasks
 - providing more opportunities for students to write at length in order to develop their accuracy, confidence and skill in using a range of writing styles
 - sharing the best practice in marking so that students know how to improve their work, and checking that they act on marking comments
 - guiding and supporting students to choose challenging texts to help increase their vocabulary and develop skills in deduction and inference.
- Improve attitudes to learning by:
 - raising attendance, including that of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those attending alternative provision
 - making sure that pupils take pride in their work and the quality of presentation
 - reducing the number of students removed from classes due to disruption.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that the regular reviews of students' progress are conducted with greater rigour and encourage high aspirations.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students join the school with below-average attainment and, in 2013 they left with below-average attainment. While there has been some improvement to the quality of teaching, it is not yet consistently good enough to speed up students' progress. Furthermore, students' attitudes to learning are not consistently good and this too slows their progress.
- In 2013, an average proportion of students made nationally expected progress in English. Fewer students made expected progress in mathematics, and the proportion that exceeded expected progress in English and mathematics was below average. The school's tracking information shows that current students are on track to have made better progress by the end of this year, although attainment may be lower because the 2014 year group had lower starting points than the 2013 group. In 2013, students achieved below-average standards in a broad range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium funding has not been as good as that of other students. In 2013, the eligible Year 11 students were, on average, more than a GCSE grade behind other students in English and mathematics. Well-planned support is beginning to take effect. School information currently shows that the progress of eligible students has improved considerably this year and is now close to that of their classmates.
- In 2013, some of the most-able students did not make expected progress. The school recognises that this group of students did not reach their full potential. Tighter checking of their progress and improved support are now enabling a higher proportion to make at least expected progress. However, too many still do not exceed expected progress.
- Some of the disabled students and those who have special educational needs did not make enough progress in 2013. Progress is improving this year, particularly for those who have a statement of special educational needs. This is because the support and quality of teaching for these students have improved.
- Year 7 'catch-up' funding for students who join the school with below-average attainment in English and mathematics is used to address gaps in students' learning with the aim of helping them to develop literacy and mathematical skills that are appropriate to their age. The impact of this support is not yet evident in accelerated progress for these students.
- The progress of minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is at least as good as that of other students in the school. These students are eager to get involved in the life of the school, have positive attitudes to learning and benefit from good support with reading and writing.
- In 2013, some students were entered early for GCSE English and mathematics to give them the opportunity to improve their grades. The policy was successful for most of the students entered and resulted in them achieving better results. However, others, and students as a whole, did not do well enough in these subjects.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good and not enough is outstanding. Consequently, it does not support students to progress well. While many teachers have a good level of subject knowledge,

they do not always use this to ensure that students learn effectively. Teachers do not consistently plan learning which reflects what their assessments tell them students already know and understand, or make good use of information about students' achievement to set them challenging work so that they achieve in line with their abilities.

- Some teachers plan learning activities that are stimulating and hold students' interests. Where this happens, students work with clarity, enjoyment and purpose, and they make good progress. Where teachers set high expectations, students take great pride in their presentation and produce high-quality work. This is not always the case for the most-able pupils because the work set is often not demanding enough to ensure that they consistently reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Some teachers check students' understanding carefully through effective questioning. Students respond to teachers, demonstrating that they are keen to answer. Sometimes students show good recall and evidence of prior learning. Answers show good reasoning and thought, but the range of vocabulary used is too limited because students do not read a wide range of texts.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are not taught consistently well. While a range of support is provided to improve progress in reading, writing, communication and mathematics, the effectiveness of the different approaches has not been evaluated to determine which are of the most value.
- The school uses a range of additional support activities, including educational visits, targeted one-to-one and small-group sessions, revision classes and booster classes. The whole-school literacy and numeracy initiatives are in their early stages but they are providing opportunities for students to apply literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- The school's reading programme is helping students who find reading challenging. However, progress is slow. Students are not guided and supported sufficiently to read challenging texts that stretch their vocabulary and develop their skills to make deduction and inference.
- Some teachers mark students' classwork and homework regularly and accurately, providing helpful comments to students. However, marking is not consistently effective across all departments. Teachers do not all provide high-quality feedback to show students how to improve, or ensure that students act on the comments and advice that they are given.
- Where teachers and teaching assistants work closely to plan small-group and in-class support for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs, teaching assistants are used effectively and students make better progress as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although students report there has been a notable improvement in behaviour, it is not yet consistently good because a significant minority of students are disruptive and often they are not managed well.
- While some staff are skilled classroom managers and establish good levels of rapport with students, this is not always the case. The school appropriately records and reports unacceptable behaviour. There has been a reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- The school supports disabled students and those who have special educational needs, or challenging behaviour, to improve their behaviour. The pupil premium has been used to

establish good links with parents and carers. Close work with parents and carers, external agencies, and the full involvement of students in decisions about the support they receive, result in clear individual support plans and more consistent approaches to behaviour management. However, this is not sufficiently widespread among students who need this kind of support. Case studies show that some students respond well to this help and develop good self-management techniques.

- Students are developing positive attitudes to learning and the vast majority are polite and friendly. They listen quite well to teachers and to each other.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- Students feel safe. They understand right from wrong and can explain different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic name-calling. They recognise the harm that this causes and explained that it does occur from time to time but they are confident that it is dealt with effectively by staff. Internet safety is taught well.
- Attendance is below average, particularly for students eligible for the pupil premium and those attending alternative provision. Attendance has improved during the past year but the attendance of those attending alternative provision remains too low for them to achieve well. The school continues to explore how it can further improve attendance. The vast majority of students attend school punctually and move between classes quickly so that lessons start on time. The pupil premium funding is used to improve the attendance of eligible students but is having limited impact.
- Many students respond maturely and benefit from the range of opportunities available to them to serve the school as prefects, house captains, members of the school council, and as organisers for charity fundraising. They enjoy these opportunities and gain a great deal of leadership experience from them. The house system and assemblies promote a good sense of community throughout the school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher is supported well by staff, governors and parents. However, the initiatives to improve achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour, and leadership and management are at a relatively early stage and have not yet had enough impact.
- The school reviews the targets set for students each half term. However, these reviews are not sufficiently robust and targets do not contain enough challenge. Students identified as working at or above their target level are not set new, challenging targets to move them on in their learning and development, and maintain high aspirations.
- The senior leadership team is supported well by subject leaders in checking the progress of students on a regular basis. Students identified as not making sufficient progress are discussed during regular progress meetings. Support is identified to address specific areas and help students to improve their work. The support provided for students is most successful where parents are closely involved in this process.
- The school has benefited from being a member of The Stanway Federation. During challenging times for staff recruitment, the school has been able to share teachers and senior leaders with other schools in the federation. In this way, it has overcome some of its staffing difficulties.

- Leaders use good systems to manage the performance of staff. The headteacher has not been afraid to tackle underperformance.
- Leaders and managers have worked with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.
- The school is developing its range of subjects to reflect both academic and work-related interests, and increase access to learning for students of all abilities.
- The curriculum promotes students' skills well and covers artistic, technical, cultural, mathematical and linguistic development. Classroom learning is enhanced by assemblies, visitors to the school and through the variety of after-school clubs and sporting competitions with local schools. Residential trips to Mersea Island and Germany also support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is not fully effective. Although students are generally free from discrimination and harassment, they do not make good progress during their time at school. Consequently, their career options are limited. The pupil premium is used to provide additional activities and a range of academic support for eligible students.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the school but some expressed concerns about homework, bullying and communication about their children's progress. The school is looking at how it can address these concerns effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors possess a range of professional skills. They are dedicated and ambitious for students to do well. Governors monitor the school's tracking of students' behaviour and academic progress against set targets. They understand and interpret students' progress and performance information because they are well trained in this and other areas of governance.
 - Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They monitor progress in implementing the initiatives in the school development plan, including those aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, through reports from the headteacher at governing body meetings.
 - Governors understand the value of good teaching in securing high standards, and that this is an integral part of staff performance management. They manage the headteacher's performance closely. The headteacher's own targets are used to determine the targets of other staff and to drive school improvement.
 - The school's finances are managed prudently. The governing body ensures that pay rises for teachers are tied to their students' progress. It has not checked sufficiently on the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of eligible students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137937
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425337

This inspection of the school 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	754
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Palmer
Headteacher	Helena Boast
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Fax number	01206 760581
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