

Inspection of a good school: The Thomas Lord Audley School

Monkwick Avenue, Monkwick, Colchester, Essex CO2 8NJ

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

The Thomas Lord Audley School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils largely enjoy school. They have positive relationships with teachers. They respect teachers and value the support they receive. Pupils benefit from leaders' and teachers' high expectations. Their time is used well in focused and meaningful activities, which help pupils to learn.

Bullying does not happen often. Most pupils are confident that, if it does happen, staff will deal with it effectively. Around school, pupils behave well. The atmosphere is generally calm and positive. Pupils spend their free time socialising sensibly. There is little poor behaviour and, if there is any, staff deal with it appropriately. Most pupils also behave well in lessons.

This is a supportive school and parents and carers value the work of the school. They speak positively about leaders and of teachers who 'go the extra mile'.

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

Leaders have constructed their curriculum plans with care. They know well what pupils need to learn and when, and when they are ready to progress. Learning is sequenced logically, and sufficient time is given for pupils to understand what they are being taught.

Teachers regularly check what pupils have learned. Systems for doing this are securely established across the school. Teachers use the information they get from assessments to give guidance to pupils and to inform their own future planning. Pupils develop their understanding of different subjects securely as they move through the school.

Leaders recognise the subjects where pupils achieve well, and which need to develop further. They take a long-term view with the aim of securing sustainable improvements. Leaders work well with the trust to support and develop subjects that need bolstering. Standards have improved.

Supporting curriculum development is an ambitious and extensive programme promoting literacy and an understanding of the wider world. From Years 7 to 11, pupils learn about diverse themes such as sport, justice, culture, history, art and current affairs. Important words are interwoven across subjects, and pupils learn a broad and rich vocabulary about diverse contexts.

Pupils achieve well in science, humanities and modern foreign languages because of the strengths of the curriculum in the school. However, the proportion of pupils who successfully complete the range of subjects required to achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is low. While humanities and science are popular choices at key stage 4, modern foreign languages are not and take-up is low. Leaders are in the early stages of trying to inspire more pupils to study a modern foreign language by giving them a greater appreciation of foreign cultures.

In lessons, most pupils behave well. They listen and work well, making the most of their time in class. Pupils are particularly focused when the subject matter inspires them. Pupils really enjoy history, for example, and are diligent in improving their work. In some classes, the behaviour of most is let down by some pupils who do not pay enough attention and disrupt learning. While teachers often deal with this well, they sometimes do not.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Leaders gather detailed information about the pupils' needs and provide teachers with training and strategies to support pupils. This means that pupils' needs are met in lessons.

Leaders are mindful of the well-being of staff. They consider and adapt what they expect staff to do to keep staff's home and work lives in balance. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's survey of their views said they feel well supported, treated fairly and treated with respect. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have an accurate register of recruitment checks on adults who work in the school. They ensure that staff have up-to-date training and they teach pupils to keep safe.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the risks pupils might face in the local area. They ensure that staff understand the signs that might indicate pupils at risk. Leaders' clear systems for reporting concerns mean that staff pass these concerns on. Leaders use the information they receive to look for patterns that might indicate pupils at risk. They follow up concerns in a timely fashion, including with external agencies where appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The proportion of pupils who study a modern foreign language at key stage 4 is low. This means that fewer pupils than are capable of doing so achieve the EBacc. Leaders should increase participation in key stage 4 modern foreign languages so that more pupils benefit from the strong language curriculum in place at the school.
- A few pupils misbehave in some lessons. This means that lessons are sometimes interrupted. Leaders should ensure that behaviour is managed consistently well at all times so that low-level disruption is eradicated.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137937
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10121466
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	817
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nick Pavitt
Headteacher	Helena Boast
Website	www.tla.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 April 2016

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has joined Sigma Trust, a multi-academy trust operating in the East of England.
- The trust sets the vision for the school, and implements and monitors this through a local governing committee, the members of which are appointed by the trust.
- The school makes use of three alternative education providers: Rallysport Engineering, Wellies-On, and North East Essex Co-operative Academy.

Information about this inspection

- We did deep dives in the following subjects: English, history and media studies. We met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, as well as speaking with teachers and pupils.
- We spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and members of the local governing committee. We met with the chair and chief executive officer of the trust.
- We looked at records showing movement on and off the school roll. We reviewed safeguarding records and considered the views of staff, parents and carers, and pupils

about safeguarding arrangements. We held a meeting to discuss the leadership of safeguarding.

- We considered the 144 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, the 47 responses to the free-text option, the 74 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and the 210 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Georgina Atkinson

Ofsted Inspector

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