



# The Thomas Lord Audley School and Language College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115207  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279539  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Ms. Jennifer Brown LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Monkwick Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		CO2 8NJ
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 547911
<b>Number on roll</b>	882	<b>Fax number</b>	01206 760581
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr.Liam Ward
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Steven Davidson

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 279539
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Thomas Lord Audley School is a mixed 11-16 comprehensive school whose roll has declined since the last inspection so it is slightly smaller than average. Some parts of the area the school serves are deprived. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. Over 98% of the pupils come from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is just above the national average although the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is below average. A small unit for pupils with a visual impairment is attached to the school. The school became a specialist language college in September 2001.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 4**

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. The school's improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate. Standards are too low and pupils are not making enough progress. Standards of attainment have fallen steadily for the last four years. The headteacher and senior managers identified many of the weaknesses found by the inspection team but have been slow to implement effective actions to bring about improvement. Until recently the school has had neither adequate systems nor information in place to enable it to accurately assess its performance. Consequently senior managers have an unrealistic view of how well the school is doing and how quickly improvement will occur in the future. Inspectors found that while considerable effort has been put into improving the quality of teaching and learning, too high a proportion remains inadequate. They agree with the school's assessment that teachers are inexperienced in using criteria which determine the levels pupils are working at to inform lesson planning and to predict future pupil performance. In too many lessons there is insufficient challenge and low expectations of achievement. In addition the rate of attendance is too low. Problems of high staff turnover have been addressed but recruitment difficulties have resulted in a high proportion of staff being inexperienced. This has put pressure on managers and has adversely affected the quality of teaching, the pupils' behaviour and their rates of progress. The school's budget is in deficit and falling pupil numbers are putting it under additional pressure. The school's poor standards mean that it provides unsatisfactory value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement and raise standards of attainment through ensuring teachers are able accurately to determine the level pupils are working at and have high expectations of their future performance. - Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by close monitoring which focuses on how much learning is taking place in lessons and whether pupils are making enough progress. - Improve attendance and pupils' attitudes to learning by incorporating tasks into lessons which challenge pupils and match their interests and abilities. - Improve leadership and management by the effective use of reliable data to monitor and secure the achievement of challenging targets which raise standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils enter the school at age 11 with broadly average standards. They make inadequate progress through the school so that standards are low at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Few pupils gain the higher levels in their tests at age 14 and most attain levels

which appear to be no higher than those they reached at age 11. Pupils with learning difficulties generally make broadly satisfactory progress. Examination results have deteriorated over the last four years and in some subjects, including English, they are exceptionally low and among the poorest in the country. The school's examination and test results have fallen far short of its targets in recent years. Far more pupils fail to gain any GCSE passes than in most schools. The school has failed to meet the targets required by its specialist language college status and standards in languages are too low. Standards in some subjects, including history and geography, are closer to the national average and pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in these subjects. However, the school is not equipping pupils with the basic skills in literacy and numeracy that they need for future life and the world of work. Instability of staffing in some subject departments has meant a lack of clear leadership and inadequate support for teachers. This has led to inconsistent teaching so that too few pupils are making adequate progress. Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that many teachers are unfamiliar with the criteria which define the level at which pupils are working and are inexperienced in predicting their future performance. In too many lessons there is insufficient challenge and low expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school has recently put systems in place to predict how well individuals should be doing and to check their progress towards those predicted targets. However, these systems are too new to have had an impact on standards and achievement yet.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy good relationships at the school and feel that they receive a good level of support and guidance from most of their teachers. The school has devoted time and effort to establishing procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance, but in spite of this attendance is unsatisfactory and remains below the national average. Although inspectors judged behaviour around the school to be satisfactory, there are instances of disruption in lessons because some teachers lack skills in classroom control and are failing to capture the interest of pupils. Attitudes to learning vary. Some pupils listen carefully, make considered responses to questions, and work effectively in pairs and small groups, but others lack the motivation required to succeed and do not make sufficient effort. The school has procedures to deal with bullying, but there are some instances which pupils feel are not dealt with effectively. Fixed-term exclusions have been reduced but remain high. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, pupils develop satisfactory self-awareness and social skills. Assemblies promote a sense of community; during the inspection the Churchill Learning Community assembly addressed appropriate safety issues about the use of fireworks. Pupils are keen to show concern for those less fortunate than they are and to play a more active part in the school community, specifically through the school council and the community councils. Physical activities are popular choices in the activities programme. Many pupils say they would like to be offered healthier food options and greater access to drinking water. They criticise the practice of locking lavatories during lesson time and the inadequate provision of soap and toilet paper. Pupils appreciate

the advice they are given when considering careers options. Although employers speak well of the general qualities pupils demonstrate during their three-week work experience, their low standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and low qualification levels are not adequately preparing them for adult and working life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The school judges the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. Inspectors found, however, that it has deteriorated since the last inspection and is now inadequate. The school continues to face significant problems with the recruitment and retention of teachers. It has reduced the rate at which they leave and has expanded its teacher-training programme. Although overall lesson planning has improved, there continue to be large variations in the quality of teaching. In some lessons, teachers' expectations are high and pupils are highly motivated by interesting work that closely matches their interests and abilities. In the less successful lessons, however, behaviour deteriorates because teachers do not explain the purpose of the activity nor provide clear guidelines regarding the time available for the task. Many pupils do not work hard enough because teachers do not push them to do so. In addition, pupils say they are set tasks that are too easy or repetitive and consequently they become increasingly demotivated and frustrated. Assessment procedures are inadequate and this is reflected in the low standards of work seen. The standard of marking is very variable. Although some teachers give pupils constructive guidance on how to improve, few teachers sufficiently understand the quality of work associated with different curriculum levels and are consequently unable to help pupils to produce higher standards of work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. All requirements of the National Curriculum are met and appropriate amounts of time are allocated to all curriculum areas. The school has successfully addressed points raised in the last report concerning the provision of art in Years 7 to 9 and the absence of any vocational and work-related courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Good links with nearby further education colleges enable pupils to choose from a range of vocational courses and these meet their needs well. Pupils speak highly of the opportunities provided by the three-week work experience placement in Year 10. Individuals can also spend part of the week on an extended work placement, while undertaking a reduced range of accredited courses in school. There are a satisfactory range of clubs and activities. In line with the school's status as a language college, pupils undertake a range of visits abroad.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students arriving in Year 7 are well supported and quickly settle into school routines. Staff are generally observant and satisfactory attention is paid to the safety of pupils. Relationships between most students and staff are good and the school has a friendly atmosphere. Students are well cared for. There is good liaison with external agencies so that students have access to the sources of help that they need. The Learning Academy is a welcoming and well-presented unit. Learning support assistants offer a good level of support to students with particular learning difficulties enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Individual education plans are provided for all students with special educational needs but there is some lack of rigour in setting targets and analysing outcomes. The care offered to visually impaired students is very good. This area of the school is particularly well resourced. Satisfactory academic guidance enables students to make suitable choices about the courses they follow. Students appreciate the support of a learning mentor that is offered when they have difficulties.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The school's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate but it has an over-optimistic view of how well it is doing. Inspectors judge that leadership and management are inadequate because the headteacher and senior managers have not secured significant or rapid improvement in raising standards. Underachievement is unlikely to be addressed rapidly because the quality of teaching is inconsistent, too much is inadequate and the school's systems for checking and evaluating the impact of its work are too new to have become embedded in practice. The headteacher and senior managers have been slow in implementing effective actions to drive up standards. Until recently performance management was weak. The school lacked robust data to enable it to analyse how well it was doing and to track and monitor the achievement of individual pupils. Management information has improved. New accountability systems have been put in place and line management strengthened but managers at all levels are at an early stage of using data to set and monitor the achievement of challenging targets for improving standards. Senior managers have placed a strong emphasis on improving teaching but a significant amount remains inadequate. Following a review by the local authority an extensive programme of lesson observations has recently taken place. However, the process devised by senior managers puts too much emphasis on assessing what teachers are doing rather than how much learning is taking place in lessons and whether pupils are making enough progress. The headteacher and senior managers have achieved success in stabilising staffing at a difficult time. However the high turnover of staff and recruitment difficulties have increased the number of inexperienced staff which places additional pressures on managers and has adversely affected the quality of teaching, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and progress. The quality of middle management is variable. Steps have been taken to address this through recent appointments particularly in core subject areas where standards and

achievement are consistently low. The governing body is well organised and committed, but has not received adequate information to hold the school to account for its underachievement. In addition governors have had relatively limited involvement in the appointment of middle managers. Day to day financial management is good but school's budget has been in deficit for the last two years and a further fall in pupil numbers will place additional pressure on the budget in the next financial year.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of that inspection. Firstly I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for being so helpful and welcoming when we came to inspect your school. Many of you were keen to tell us what you enjoy about the school, but you were also honest and constructive about what you feel needs improving. Results at both GCSE and in the tests at the end of Year 9 have been steadily getting worse. Standards at the school are too low and most of you are not making the progress you should. Too many of you are not achieving the qualifications and developing the skills you will need for the next stage of your education or for employment. This is because some of the teaching is not good enough. Some of you feel the tasks you are set by your teachers are too easy or repetitive and that does not encourage you to learn. But you have your part to play in this as well. Whilst some of you listen well in lessons, think carefully about your answers to questions and work co-operatively with others, many of you do not work hard enough and your behaviour prevents other pupils from learning. We agree with you that the school is a friendly place and could see that most of you have good relationships with the adults at the school. You told us you would like to be offered healthier food at break and lunch times and that you would like there to be more drinking water available around the school. We understand your concerns about access to the toilets during lessons, which has been restricted because a minority of you have misused them. A few pupils and parents reported concerns about bullying which they felt had not been dealt with effectively. We have reported these matters to the school and will check up on them again in the future. The school has faced difficult circumstances in recent years. There has been a high turnover of teachers. However, the headteacher and senior managers have worked hard to improve this situation. They have also introduced new systems so you, your teachers and your parents can be better informed about how well you are doing and whether you are achieving the very best you can. You will know by now that we have said that the school requires special measures. This means inspectors will visit the school regularly until we judge that it is good enough. In particular we need to see improvement in: - the progress that you make and the standards you achieve; - the quality of teaching and your learning. We know much of it is good but some needs to be better; - attitudes and attendance; if your attendance is poor you cannot learn enough. It is also important you try hard in lessons and that your behaviour allows others to learn; - assessment and checking: the school needs to check more carefully what it does and how well you are doing. You also need to be given more advice about how to achieve the highest grades in your work. Everyone at Thomas Lord Audley School has a responsibility for improving the school and making it a place to be proud to attend. Make sure you play your part. We wish you all every success in the future.