

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



16 March 2010

Mr J Tippett  
Executive Headteacher  
The Thomas Lord Audley School  
Monkwick Avenue  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO2 8NJ

Dear Mr Tippett

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 3 and 4 March 2010 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit included some discussion on our current survey theme of provision for gifted and talented students in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- The attainment of Year 11 students has improved markedly in each of the last three years, although in 2009 it remained well below average. However, the current Year 11, of whom around half already have a GCSE grade in English, are on track to improve these results again and their attainment is likely to be closer to the national average.
- Students' progress has also improved markedly in each of the last three years. In 2009 it was below average. The school's assessment data for the

current Year 11 indicate that the majority are on track to achieve their targets and make satisfactory or better progress.

- Analysis of previous examination papers identified that students' performance in reading tasks was weaker than in writing. Effective action to remedy this has led to improved results in November GCSE entries.
- The small number of students who speak English as an additional language or who have statements of special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress. The progress made by other students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that of all students and is the focus of individual tuition and additional support.
- In the lessons observed, students made satisfactory and sometimes good progress. They mostly settled to work promptly and collaborated well. They entered into discussion enthusiastically and enjoyed assessing each other's work. Overall, their behaviour and attitudes to work were good.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan lessons in detail with relevant objectives. They use a sound range of activities to engage students' interest; the most effective involved opportunities for group work, discussion and drama.
- Teachers' questions encourage students to respond in detail but, too often, they are not given sufficient time to think or to discuss their ideas with others before answering.
- Although teachers' planning includes learning objectives targeted at a range of levels, the questions, tasks and resources used do not always set different challenges for students of varying attainment.
- There are clear systems for setting overall targets, recording assessments and monitoring students' progress.
- Teachers use level or grade criteria regularly in lessons to help students understand what they have to achieve.
- Teachers' marking varies in quality, with too much that does not use targets clearly enough to give guidance to students on what to improve.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- There is suitably broad coverage of National Curriculum requirements with a good balance between reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Schemes of work are currently under review, in conjunction with the other schools in the federation. The current units cover established topics but there is too little emphasis on the use and implications of modern media and communications.

- The early entry of some students for GCSE in November of Year 11 has been effective in raising attainment by ensuring that more students gain a grade in English. This is supported by an effective range of additional support, including targeted booster and revision sessions for Year 11.
- There is a sound range of enrichment activities such as competitions and theatre trips.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject leader sets a clear vision, strongly focused on improving achievement. The reorganised leadership roles in the subject provide good opportunities for staff to take responsibility and share good practice.
- Approaches to planning and teaching are increasingly consistent.
- The subject leader has a clear understanding of areas for improvement. Priorities are identified in a well-focused action plan which is regularly reviewed, based on a cycle of monitoring, including detailed monitoring of students' progress.
- Determined leadership and the implementation of effective strategies have led to consistent improvement in achievement.

### Provision for gifted and talented students in English

- The school identifies gifted and talented students on entry from primary school. There is a wide range of projects and opportunities to broaden students' experience and raise their aspirations.
- Students develop communication and personal skills through participation in the public speaking and mock trial competitions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving students' attainment and progress by ensuring that teachers:
  - provide questions, tasks and resources which challenge students at different levels according to their attainment and capability
  - extend students' thinking and ideas through structured opportunities for reflection and discussion
- further improving teachers' use of assessment by:
  - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of marking and comment on students' work
  - using short-term targets to make it clear what students should do to improve their work
- ensuring that the curriculum reflects modern media and communications.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector