

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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23 June 2017

Mrs Alison Hayes  
Principal  
Lodge Park Academy  
Shetland Way  
Corby  
Northamptonshire  
NN17 2JH

Dear Mrs Hayes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lodge Park Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the school's sponsor, the David Ross Education Trust (DRET), are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the most recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders and a representative of the trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited a number of lessons in key stages 3 and 4, accompanied by you and the senior leader in charge of teaching and learning. During these visits to lessons, I examined pupils' books and spoke with them to evaluate the quality of their learning. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated documentation about pupils' attainment and progress, and reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work and its improvement plans.

## **Context**

Immediately following the previous inspection, DRET appointed, from within the trust, a temporary executive principal to support you with leadership. The local governing body is in the process of being dissolved and an academy improvement board is due to take over. In January 2017, trustees appointed someone from another trust school to provide you with further support and in due course join the forthcoming improvement board. They also commissioned an external consultant to work with middle leaders. Since the last inspection, five teachers have left the school, including the previous head of history. Two science teachers have been appointed and there is now a new head of history.

## **Main findings**

You, other senior leaders and the trust have taken appropriate steps to act on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You have ensured that the school's improvement plan is clear, measurable and focuses on actions designed to improve outcomes for pupils. You have successfully shared this plan with senior leaders to ensure that they fully understand their role in bringing about the necessary improvements.

Middle leaders now support senior leaders in driving forward whole-school improvements. They share senior leaders' high expectations of pupils and feel empowered to lead improvements within their subjects. Middle leaders value the opportunities which you have provided for them to work more closely together to share knowledge, discuss good practice and support each other in developing their leadership skills. They feel well supported by senior leaders. They have found the support from the trust particularly beneficial in helping them to understand the requirements of the new examinations in key stage 4 and in ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate. Middle leaders have also benefited from working with external consultants to gain a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning within their departments. This work means that they have been able to offer improved support and guidance to teachers when it is needed, and tackle any underperformance more rapidly and effectively.

Leaders have refined the school's assessment system to monitor pupils' attainment and progress effectively, and have ensured that staff are trained in its use. All staff and pupils who spoke to the inspector said they understood the system. Previously, middle leaders had to collate attainment information on pupils in their subject areas for themselves. Senior leaders now provide middle leaders with detailed information on pupils' progress. This includes a breakdown of the performance of key groups of pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils. This means that middle leaders can now put in place more timely support to prevent pupils underachieving. The school's information indicates that disadvantaged pupils are currently making faster progress and their attainment is improving as a result.

Teachers are now planning additional tasks for the most able pupils. Not all teachers, however, are providing the most able pupils with sufficient challenge or giving them regular opportunities to apply higher-order thinking skills. The most able pupils are therefore not achieving the high standards that they should.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work well together in lessons. Leaders have introduced a whole-school approach to helping pupils become more resilient in their learning. We saw this being used effectively throughout the school. Consequently, pupils are now more confident at tackling tasks by themselves.

Since the last inspection, leaders have revised the school's behaviour policy and involved staff and pupils in this process. Staff and pupils are clear about leaders' higher expectations, and sanctions are applied consistently. The number of fixed-term exclusions, however, remains too high, although it has reduced significantly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has taken on a number of pupils with behaviour problems at various points during the academic year. Leaders work well with external agencies to provide additional support to pupils who need additional help to improve their behaviour and remove any barriers to their learning. You are committed to providing an inclusive curriculum for all pupils.

Leaders have ensured that the number and range of work-related opportunities for sixth-form students have increased. Students in Year 12 on vocational courses now go on relevant work placements. Leaders organise events for all students in Year 12, involving specialists from different industries so that students can learn about a range of employment opportunities.

Your single central record of recruitment checks meets statutory requirements.

### **External support**

The school has received effective support from its sponsors, DRET, to strengthen leadership capacity at the school and help leaders at all levels to make effective judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**