

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9165
Direct email: victoria.mortimore2@serco.com

19 July 2013

Toby Mullins
Lodge Park Academy
Shetland Way
Corby
NN17 2JH

Dear Mr Mullins

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Lodge Park Academy

Following my visit with Peter Humphries, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 17–18 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsors, the David Ross Education Trust. Several observations were carried out jointly with staff with leadership responsibilities.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

Context

With 1092 students on roll, 155 of these being in the sixth form, the academy is larger than most secondary schools. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has risen since the academy opened and is now just below the national average. The proportion for whom English is an additional language remains below average. A smaller-than-average proportion are included in the academy's register of special educational needs, as are the proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs. An average number of students are known to

be eligible for free school meals and therefore receive pupil premium funding. This is additional funding from the government. An average proportion of students join the academy at times other than at the start of Year 7.

The school converted to become an academy on 1 January 2013. When Ofsted last inspected its predecessor school, Lodge Park Technology College, it was judged to require special measures. The Associate Principal of the academy was the acting headteacher of the predecessor school. Over three quarters of the teaching staff are from the predecessor school. An Executive Principal has been appointed, who is leading the work in two academies within the trust, Lodge Park Academy and Malcolm Arnold Academy, Northampton.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Attainment in the predecessor school was improving and the rate of improvement has accelerated in the academy. Convincing data provided by the academy, that include qualifications already gained by the students currently in Year 11, suggest a sharp increase for 2013 in the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grade C or above including mathematics and English.

Students are making better progress because the academy has improved students' attitudes to learning. In all lessons seen where teaching was effective, students showed an interest in learning and often responded enthusiastically. Students are making better progress in mathematics and English because of better teaching, especially in mathematics. The proportion making the progress expected of them in these subjects is set to be in line with the national average this year, from below in the predecessor school. Students still do not make enough progress in science. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than they did in 2012, when the gap between their achievement and that of others was too wide. A new coordinator for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has developed approaches to providing support that are more closely matched to individual needs. Learning support assistants are working more effectively in lessons. Improved provision and more detailed tracking of each student's progress allow leaders to intervene as soon as a student is falling behind his or her increasingly challenging target. Students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress and the gap in attainment with other groups is closing.

The accelerated rate of improvement is due to increased challenge from senior leaders. This takes place in regular reviews at the increased number of assessment points in the year. Challenging discussions then take place between senior leaders and subject leaders to investigate and rectify any underperformance.

Some of the weaker aspects of achievement in the sixth form are being successfully addressed in the academy. The proportion of students gaining an A*, A or B grade in A level examinations is set to be the highest in recent years, and above the target.

The progress students make is rising steadily. Some students are admitted to the sixth form having passed either mathematics or English, but not both. Courses are provided to allow them to address this gap in their qualifications, and those who opt to take the courses are very successful. The academy accepts that these courses should be compulsory and students currently in Year 12 agree. The number of students leaving before the end of Year 13 is lower than average.

Across all year groups, teachers are supporting students' writing and reading skills well. Effective work with students whose reading age is too low ensures many catch up. Students' communication skills are an aspect of literacy that is less well developed. Many students are not confident speakers and, although teachers provide opportunities for speaking and group work in lessons, they do not provide the structured support which many students need to benefit fully from the activities.

The quality of teaching

Since the academy opened, inadequate teaching has been eliminated. A greater proportion of teaching is good or better, and students are making better progress in lessons. Acting on the development points given to the predecessor school, teachers are planning well-structured lessons and checking regularly that all students are working hard and learning effectively.

Teaching has improved because senior leaders undertake a wider range of monitoring activities and provide more personalised support for teachers who need to improve their practice.

Some excellent teaching was observed in English, where, on a hot afternoon, Year 10 students made outstanding progress and were utterly absorbed studying a harrowing poem by Robert Frost. Outstanding teaching was also observed in art and geography.

Teachers use a range of techniques to check that students are making enough progress in their lessons. Students know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve their work and progress further. The majority are receiving helpful feedback from their teachers when they mark their work. In the best examples, the feedback gives detailed guidance on what is needed and a dialogue develops with the students.

Lessons have a clear structure and a good balance of activities between those led by the teachers and those where students can work independently. The way the aims of the lesson are worded sometimes reduces the quality of the activities provided, because they describe what students will do, not what they are expected to learn. As a result, teachers do not adapt the work sufficiently for different levels of ability.

Students who need additional support are able to work with increasingly skilful additional adults. Some variability still exists in the extent to which teachers use

information from assessment to ensure the level of challenge is right for all students, whatever their ability.

Teachers provide a good range of resources and choose topics and texts carefully to support interest and develop students' cultural understanding and their curiosity. A sixth form drama lesson allowed students to explore sensitive issues concerning vulnerable children, and the quality of their work showed a high degree of empathy.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has improved because the academy takes prompt and firm action when poor behaviour occurs. This initially led to a rise in exclusions, but incidents of poor behaviour have now fallen again. Effective support for students to help them manage their behaviour has resulted in reoffending being almost eliminated.

The majority of students are very polite and welcoming. They feel safe. They recognise that behaviour has improved in the last year. Bullying is rare and it is dealt with effectively if it occurs. Students have a good understanding of the various forms it can take.

Students are starting to make a greater contribution to the further improvement of the academy through the student council. Sixth form students would welcome additional opportunities to contribute more to development work.

By sharing the good practice that exists and taking decisive action when teaching is not good enough, leaders have ensured that students enjoy their lessons more. Attendance has risen. However, the academy recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that all groups of students attend regularly. The attendance of students known to be eligible for free school meals is still lower than for other groups.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The leadership structure in the academy has been revised and simplified. Communication and decision-making have improved as a result. Leaders use data on students' progress, attendance and behaviour to ensure that any problems are identified and addressed swiftly. The targets given to students and to teachers are more challenging and, as a result, expectations are rising.

Governors understand well the effectiveness of the education provided by the academy. They gather information regularly through visits and in reports. They have a range of skills and experience that equips them well to undertake their work. They challenge and support well because they have a secure understanding of data on students' performance. The academy's finances are carefully managed and an environmental grant acquired when the school converted to academy status has been used well to provide better social and eating areas.

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and check that procedures are followed. For example, regular book checks have improved the quality and consistency of teachers' marking. Lesson observations are frequent and have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Leaders identify and share good practice well. The quality of self-evaluation by subject leaders is variable.

Changes to the curriculum have improved provision through clearer identification of pathways for different levels of ability. Teachers use classroom displays well to support literacy and numeracy and to bring subjects to life. For example, in a mathematics classroom, posters of special offers in supermarkets reinforced the value of the subject in ensuring shoppers obtain best value for money.

External support

The local authority provided helpful support with issues relating to human resources before and during the conversion process. Through the Executive Principal, the academy has productive links with another school in order to share best practice. The trust has provided very effective specialist advice and support for mathematics and general improvement work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further increase attendance and reduce exclusions.
- Improve students' oral communication by ensuring that teachers provide them with the support they need to participate fully in group discussions.
- Accelerate the progress students make in lessons by ensuring that teachers set clear aims for the lesson that describe what students of different levels of ability are expected to learn rather than what they want them to do.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector