

Lydiard Park Academy

Grange Park Way, Grange Park, Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 6HN

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress as a consequence of good teaching. The results they achieve at the end of key stage 4 are consistently at or above the national average.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages. In languages, progress has been in the top 20% of schools nationally for the last two years.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving, although it is not yet at the level of other pupils with similar starting points. In particular, some disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment still have significant gaps in their basic literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they use it well as the basis of effective lesson planning. They assess pupils' progress well, for example, by the use of effective questioning that probes and develops pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The leadership of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Senior leaders set very clear expectations about the high-quality teaching they expect pupils to receive. The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of recent initiatives, however, need refinement.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Pupils who attend the Autism Spectrum Centre (ASC) receive very effective support to enable them to attend mainstream classes.
- The leadership of the school, including governance, is good. Leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges they face as the school moves towards forming a multi-academy trust with another school in Swindon. They are managing this transition well.
- Leaders' evaluation of the standard of education that the school provides, however, is overgenerous. Their analysis of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form is more accurate.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is highly effective.
- The school's new sixth form has improved since it opened in 2014. Students follow courses which meet their needs and aspirations, although the opportunities to do work experience need further development.
- The sixth form prepares students well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Many go on to higher education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the accuracy of leaders' evaluation of the standard of education provided by the school so that development planning is securely based
 - ensuring that the analysis of the use of the pupil premium measures impact by comparing the progress of disadvantaged pupils against that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally
 - making sure that the monitoring and evaluation of recent initiatives to develop teaching, track more closely their impact at middle-leadership level and in the classroom
 - ensuring that the different strands of the school's work to improve pupils' literacy are more clearly coordinated.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so that disadvantaged pupils make better progress by ensuring:
 - that the characteristics of successful teaching of disadvantaged pupils seen in places in the school become more typical of teaching as a whole
 - that the gaps in basic literacy and numeracy skills of low prior-attaining disadvantaged pupils are effectively tackled, enabling them to make better progress across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes followed by students in the sixth form by enhancing their opportunities to engage in meaningful work experience and other work-related learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership and management of the school, including governors, provide very clear and purposeful direction to the school's work. Leaders have a very clear vision of the school as an inclusive learning community for the children of West Swindon. They translate this vision effectively into reality.
- Leaders are managing a period of transition in the school's life well. Lydiard Park Academy is the founding school in a new multi-academy trust and will soon be joined by a neighbouring secondary school. The principal of Lydiard Park has become the executive principal across the trust, with day-to-day running of the school now in the hands of an operational principal. They share a clear understanding of their roles and of how the new leadership structures will work. As a result, the transition to these new arrangements has been smooth. In addition, the senior leadership team, including those recently appointed to new roles as a result of the recent changes, displays clear capacity.
- Nonetheless, leaders are overgenerous in their assessment of the quality of the education provided by the school. As a result, their laudable ambition to provide outstanding education for pupils is not based on a clear enough understanding of the areas the school needs to work on.
- The leadership of teaching has developed well since the previous inspection. Leaders set very clear expectations for teachers, aiming to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching across the school. Teacher training and development are part of a coherent programme driven from the top by senior leaders. The impact of this was clearly evident in some areas of the curriculum, such as humanities. It is not yet consistently seen in all areas, however, and the impact of recent initiatives on the practice of middle leaders and classroom teachers is not monitored and evaluated as effectively as it might be.
- Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are well supported as they set out on their new careers. They are very complimentary about the support they receive from their subject mentors and senior leaders. They state that the school's programme of development for NQTs is very helpful in developing their teaching skills.
- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. The recent appointment of a strategic special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) across the trust has added considerable capacity to the school's work in this area. This is ensuring that additional funding for SEN is used increasingly effectively to support pupils who need additional help to realise their potential.
- Pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision, the ASC, receive particularly good support. The centre is funded by the local authority and caters for a small number of pupils from across Swindon. The support they receive helps them to make better progress in their studies and to access mainstream classes in a range of subjects. In addition, the centre provides highly effective emotional and pastoral support. It makes an important contribution to these pupils' overall personal development.

- School leaders are using the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium effectively to support those pupils who did not meet the required standard at the end of their primary education. Leaders have employed a teacher with primary experience to work with these pupils to help them catch up. This is having a positive impact on pupils in Year 7, who are developing greater security in basic literacy and numeracy.
- The school's curriculum is well designed to cater for a wide range of abilities, interests and aspirations. In key stage 3, pupils study a wide range of subjects, although the school has reduced the number of GCSEs that pupils in key stage 4 take by one. This was a response to the higher demands of the new, reformed examinations. Pupils can still opt for all three sciences or a language if they wish. On the other hand, it is not possible to do both history and geography, or to take two languages in key stage 4.
- The curriculum is well supported by a range of extra-curricular activities. Many of these take place in what is known as 'Period 6' on three days a week, after the end of formal schooling. Pupils can take part in sporting, cultural or other activities during this period. For those who travel to the school by bus, the travel arrangements are adjusted to enable them to take part as much as those who live close to the school.
- The school's work to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed. In the formal curriculum, lessons in personal, social and health education contribute well to this. The extra-curricular programme augments this work. The promotion of fundamental British values is woven through the school's life and, as a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the barriers to progress faced by disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Additional funding is allocated appropriately to address these. For example, the work of leaders and the pastoral support team is helping to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils who had previously high rates of absence. The analysis of the impact of the pupil premium on pupils' academic progress, however, does not place sufficient emphasis on comparing this progress to that made by other pupils nationally, rather than to disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The school has a number of initiatives to promote literacy across all year groups, but they are not as coordinated or coherently evaluated as they might be. As a result, their overall impact is less clear than that of the use of the Year 7 catch-up funding.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is good. Ultimate accountability lies with the board of trustees, but many aspects of governance are delegated to the school's local advisory board (LAB). This division of responsibility is a result of the fact that the school is currently establishing a multi-academy trust that will include another local secondary school. Governors are creating clear structures for the future and demonstrate good capacity to take the school forward as the trust develops.
- Trustees and members of the LAB have a good understanding of their respective roles, and the two bodies work effectively together to exercise critical oversight of the school. Monitoring procedures are well established, and records of meetings of both the trust and the LAB indicate a developing ability to challenge school leaders in a supportive way. Nonetheless, governors share school leaders' overgenerous assessment of the

standard of education currently provided by the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of vigilance based on a good understanding of the fundamental principles of child protection and safeguarding. The operational principal is continuing in the role of designated safeguarding lead that he held when he was vice-principal. He brings a wealth of experience to the role and has ensured that the school's processes and procedures are well designed to keep children safe. Leaders have a good awareness of current issues in safeguarding, such as child sexual exploitation or the dangers posed by political extremism and radicalisation. The designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and uses this to make staff aware of its key features through training.
- Records of the school's work with external agencies are well kept, including efficient chronologies of contacts made by the school with these agencies. The single central record of pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff indicates that the school is consistently following the principles of safer recruitment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good-quality teaching, learning and assessment in the school mean that pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. This effective teaching is built on positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- When teaching is at its most effective, including in the sixth form, it is characterised by a number of features. Teachers' secure subject knowledge means that they plan effectively to promote pupils' progress. This planning is based on a good understanding of pupils' aptitudes and prior attainment. As a result, pupils largely do appropriately challenging work that helps them develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects.
- Mathematics teaching, for example, helps pupils develop their fluency and security in performing more complex calculations. Teachers of English regularly check on pupils' progress, both formally and informally, which means they can quickly offer support or address any misconceptions. Art teaching provides good support for pupils' literacy when pupils write about and reflect on the work they produce. Economics teaching in the sixth form develops good levels of technical understanding among students.
- The high-quality work done by the team that supports pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities means that teachers have useful information on how to help these pupils in lessons. The quality of this information provided to teachers is improving as a result of the new leadership of this area.
- Teachers use questioning well to assess, probe and develop pupils' understanding. A notable feature of this is teachers' willingness to persist with lines of questioning that make pupils think, rather than simply giving them the answer if pupils do not enable pupils to understand things immediately.
- Teachers largely set consistent expectations of conduct and the quality of work

expected, to which pupils rise. Where they do not do this, or do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently, pupils' engagement in lessons suffers as a result, and learning slows.

- The teaching for disadvantaged pupils across the school is addressing some of the barriers they face. There is clearly strong practice in places in the school, but it is not consistently seen both within and across all subjects. In addition, a considerable number of lower-achieving disadvantaged pupils in Years 8 to 11 have gaps in their basic literacy and numeracy that teaching has yet to successfully plug. By contrast, teaching for the most able disadvantaged pupils is good and they make good progress as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils engage well with their work and most are developing the habits of successful learners. This is particularly the case in upper sets, where self-motivation is strong. In lower sets, engagement can be less strong, especially where pupils have not developed good levels of self-confidence and resilience.
- The school's well-developed programme of personal, social and health education is making a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, effective sessions on the topic of bullying develop pupils' understanding of what bullying is and the impact it can have. Nonetheless, some pupils raised concerns in the pupil survey about how bullying was dealt with by staff, although virtually all said they feel safe at school.
- Careers guidance and work-related learning are stronger in key stage 4 and the sixth form than in key stage 3. A substantial minority of responders to the pupil survey said they would like more information on the options available to them.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. This provision helps their personal development by addressing the specific concerns that led school leaders to decide that this was the best option for them. Leaders monitor the quality of this provision well and keep a good track of pupils' attendance, progress and safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous to adults, including visitors.
- The school's behaviour policy, when applied effectively, is helping to improve behaviour. The recorded number of incidents of poor behaviour is reducing over time, as is the need to use fixed-term exclusions. Where teachers' behaviour management is less strong, however, or the behaviour policy is inconsistently applied, pupils' behaviour can become less positive, including, for example, talking over the teacher or not

following instructions. This is relatively rare, however.

- In 2017, rates of absence and persistence absence rose. The school has worked effectively to address this situation, and attendance so far this year is better. It is now in line with the latest national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, however, is still too low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in the school, in all key stages, are making good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, as a result of the effective teaching that they receive. They thus demonstrate the good progress that has characterised previous groups of pupils in the school's recent past, especially at key stage 4.
- In the 2017 GCSE examinations, pupils made strong progress in modern foreign languages, achieving over a half a grade better than other pupils nationally. For the second year running, this put the school's results in languages in the top 20% of schools nationally. In mathematics, pupils' progress showed a marked improvement and was significantly above the national average. In all other subject areas, progress was securely in line with the national average. There was no difference between the progress made by lower, middle or higher prior-attaining pupils.
- Although progress in English improved in 2017 and was in line with the national figure, it remained the lowest element in the Progress 8 calculation. Nonetheless, the English work of pupils currently in the school shows a pattern of continued improvement in what pupils know, understand and can do, such as analysing complex texts. Current pupils, therefore, are making good progress in English.
- In 2017, the progress of disadvantaged pupils was significantly below the national average for other pupils, although there were particular features of that year's cohort that had an adverse impact on this. Even taking this into account, however, there has been a recent decline in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4. School leaders are well aware of this and are focused on improving these outcomes. The work of disadvantaged pupils currently in key stages 3 and 4 shows that they are making better progress than recent results would suggest. However, some lower-attaining disadvantaged pupils still have gaps in their basic literacy and numeracy.
- Leaders' use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is having a positive impact on those pupils who did not meet the expected standards in Year 6. For example, these pupils' reading is improving and their developing skills in areas such as word recognition and reading speed are well tracked. The pupils that inspectors heard read in Years 7 to 11 did so with age-appropriate fluency and comprehension.
- The academic and vocational outcomes pupil achieve, including in the sixth form, prepare them well for the next stage, whether that be continuing in education, taking up an apprenticeship or entering employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The provision for students in the sixth form is good; it has improved year on year since it opened in 2014. Students follow appropriate programmes of study, which meet requirements and are well tailored to students' abilities and aspirations.
- Leaders have high aspirations for students in the sixth form and for the quality of education it provides. They are specifically seeking to improve the low numbers of students who go on to higher education from the local authority. The destinations of pupils who complete their studies in the sixth form indicate that a substantial majority do go on to university, at approximately twice the rate for Swindon as a whole.
- On vocational courses, taken by the minority of students in the sixth form, progress is securely good. In the 2017 results for vocational subjects, including Tech levels, students made better progress than other students nationally with the same starting points.
- The majority of pupils, however, take A-level courses. While average progress improved in 2017, it remained below the national average. The progress made by current students, however, is stronger. This is shown by the quality of the work they are producing and the school's internal tracking of their attainment.
- In addition, the most able students who enter the sixth form, including those with an average GCSE grade of A or above, are making better progress in A levels than in the past. They are producing high-quality work in a range of subjects such as psychology, economics, science and mathematics.
- The small numbers of students who enter the sixth form without good passes in English and/or mathematics at GCSE are supported well to improve these grades as part of their study programmes. Most go on to improve their grades.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving, as teachers develop their knowledge and understanding of what constitutes successful post-16 teaching. Teachers' good subject knowledge provides a firm basis for this improvement.
- Students in the sixth form follow a programme of personal, social and health education that contributes well to their personal development. The small number of students who have SEN and/or disabilities benefit from the same strong support that is seen in the rest of the school. This contributes significantly to their continuing personal development.
- One area of the 16 to 19 study programmes remains underdeveloped. While students undertake meaningful non-qualification activity in line with requirements, many would benefit from enhanced opportunities to undertake work experience and other work-related learning. Nonetheless, effective careers advice and guidance in the sixth form mean that students are well supported in moving on to the next stage of education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	137264
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10037064

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1109
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	111
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Davison
Principal	Clive Zimmermann (Executive Principal) Gary Pearson (Operational Principal)
Telephone number	01793 874224
Website	www.lydiardparkacademy.org.uk
Email address	principal@lydiardparkacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- Lydiard Park Academy converted to academy status in 2011. It is currently the only school in the Park Academies Trust but will soon be joined by another school in Swindon as part of a multi-academy trust. Both schools currently have the same executive headteacher, an arrangement that will continue after the other school joins the trust.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a sixth form, which is in its fourth year of operation, having first taken students in September 2014. Year groups in the sixth form are smaller than they are in Years 7 to 11.

- The school has specially resourced provision, the ASC, which caters for up to 15 pupils in Years 7 to 11 from across the local authority. As a consequence, the school has a higher proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans than the national average.
- The school has average proportions of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and who have SEN.
- The school uses two alternative providers: the Oakfield Project and Riverside.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in lessons across all year groups, including in the sixth form. Most of these visits to lessons were undertaken in the company of senior leaders, especially on the first day. During these observations, inspectors spoke to pupils about their studies and examined the work in their books and folders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the operational principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers and other staff. The lead inspector met with the chairs of the board of trustees and the local advisory board. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5 and in the specially resourced provision.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was examined, including records of pupils' progress, key policies, reports from the school's improvement partner, governors' minutes, safeguarding records and the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 86 responses to Parent View, including 85 free-text comments, and 52 responses to the staff survey and 146 responses to the pupil survey. The lead inspector spoke to one parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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