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Mrs Helen Phillips  
Executive Principal  
Lansdowne: A de Ferrers Trust Academy  
Goodman Street  
Burton-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
DE14 2RE

Dear Mrs Phillips

### **Short inspection of Lansdowne: A de Ferrers Trust Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 3 April 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the inspection of the predecessor school. You are committed to providing children with a good start to their education. Together with the vice principal, you work tirelessly to model the expectations you desire to see across the school. Your strong, determined leadership has halted the decline in the school and rapidly improved the quality of education, ensuring better outcomes for all pupils. You have raised expectations and, through the shared vision, ensure that all staff are aspirational for the school community. Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong moral purpose and a commitment to improving the life chances of the pupils they teach.

This was the first visit since the school converted to become an academy in May 2016. Following a period of co-headship, in September 2017 you became the executive principal, working across the infant school and the junior school to which the pupils transfer. A vice principal was appointed at the same time. Leaders have successfully managed several other staffing changes due to periods of maternity leave or resignations from staff. A joint local academy governing board, shared with the junior school, has been established.

You have established strong systems and effective procedures, including those for managing teachers' performance. You challenge underperformance as well as offering highly effective coaching support to enable staff to develop their skills further. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and honest, identifying the priorities for development. Comprehensive action plans support the drive for

improvement. Actions are carefully monitored at regular intervals and the impact evaluated before any additional action is taken. Leaders ensure the sustainability of the improvements made, rather than looking for a 'quick fix'. The cycle of school improvement is becoming deeply embedded and understood by all.

A key aim of the trust is to identify and develop future leaders. Senior leaders do this well. You empower others and support them in developing high-quality leadership skills. Working alongside new leaders, you ensure that they have the same high expectations and know how to support and challenge effectively. Together, you are creating a strong culture of achievement.

Pupils are welcoming, polite and eager to share their learning. They get on well together, and behaviour observed throughout the school during the inspection was positive. Pupils say that they are happy in school and have lots of friends. They feel safe and know that adults in school are there to help them. Pupils are motivated by the topics they study and proudly show the stickers they get as rewards. Parents and carers are positive about the school, stating that their children are safe and make good progress, especially with their reading. There is evidence of a strong, harmonious school community both in work and at play.

Governance is effective. The comprehensive scheme of delegation ensures that all involved in governance understand the part they play in checking the quality of education in the school. There is a transparency between the trust board, the chief executive officer and the local academy governing board. Through regular meetings and visits to the school, governors seek assurances on behalf of the trustees. The board is led by a knowledgeable chair, who directs other governors effectively. Governors know the school well and are ambitious for its continued development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Designated safeguarding leaders have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the latest government guidance and know how to implement this to ensure that pupils are safe. They work successfully with a range of professionals and external agencies to give vulnerable children and their families the help and support they need. Leaders are tenacious in following up any concern about a child.

All staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe. They are vigilant and work closely with designated safeguarding leaders when reporting concerns. Highly effective recording systems with a detailed chronology ensure that a comprehensive picture is built up over time. Children causing concern are monitored closely and action taken swiftly where appropriate.

Highly effective support from staff ensures that all pupils are nurtured. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and which medicines and drugs are good for you. The use of the NSPCC resource 'PANTS' helps pupils to understand and know how to keep their body safe.

Leaders have improved the safety around the school site by raising the height of fences and gates. Visitors to the school are checked thoroughly before being allowed entry. New staff and volunteers working at the school are rigorously vetted. Governors regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures, and an annual safeguarding audit is undertaken by the trust.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders are committed to ensuring that children get the best start to their education in the early years. They ensure that the curriculum interests the children but also develops their knowledge and skills and prepares them for Year 1. The learning environment encourages children to be independent from the start. A love of literature is encouraged, and the breadth of language developed is clear to see in the environment and in the interactions between adults and children. Children's writing books show that they are making strong progress in writing. Changes across the early years are beginning to improve outcomes for the children.
- Leaders work to ensure that no child is left behind with their learning. They check the progress of all children carefully from the start. As soon as children are identified as experiencing some difficulty, appropriate support is provided. Small-group work is used effectively to develop speech and language skills. Children gain confidence to retell simple stories. Adults ensure that additional opportunities for children to practise the skills they struggle with are threaded through the continuous provision. Sensitive support helps children to flourish and make progress from their low baseline.
- Actions taken by leaders have been effective in developing early reading skills and improving outcomes in phonics. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 had fallen over time until last year, when leaders and teachers reversed the decline. High-quality training for staff and regular checking by leaders have resulted in consistent provision across Year 1. Phonics sessions are highly engaging and introduce pupils to a range of ambitious vocabulary. Regular assessments ensure that pupils are supported and challenged at the right level. They make strong progress and quickly develop the skills to read unknown words independently.
- Reading is further developed through improved and increased opportunities for guided reading. Using a high-quality text, teachers ensure that specific reading skills such as inference, deduction and explaining are taught. Books such as 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' and 'Flood' are chosen to engage pupils' interest, especially boys. Pupils who do not read regularly at home are invited to join the before- and after-school reading club. This provides further opportunities for pupils to practise their reading. Visits to the refurbished school library help develop a love of reading. Pupils who read to me talked enthusiastically about their books and confidently used a range of strategies to read. Pupils are making strong progress in their reading.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is interesting and enables pupils to develop their knowledge across a range of subjects. Key texts are integral to the themes

being studied and used to inspire a range of writing such as instructions, descriptions, letters and poetry. For example, while studying 'The Secret Garden', pupils wrote invitations to a secret garden party. The texts expose pupils to a broader vocabulary and different sentence structures. Attainment and progress in writing continue to improve. The gaps in attainment between different groups, including those who are disadvantaged, are beginning to close.

- Key writing skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught regularly and over time. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work and supported to write in a legible, joined style. They are eager to ensure that their writing is neat so that they can get a 'licence' to write in pen. Leaders ensure a high focus on vocabulary development across the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils use technical vocabulary when recording an experiment. As a result, pupils' writing is richer and of a higher quality. Workbooks show that by the end of Year 2, pupils develop the stamina to write at length, using appropriate vocabulary.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) appears to have increased. However, this is due to a cultural change in the school regarding how needs are identified and pupils with SEND are supported. A comprehensive process ensures the early identification of any pupil with SEND. Training for staff enables them to understand pupils' individual needs. Teachers have confidence to make reasonable adjustments in order to support pupils more effectively in the classroom. Teachers work to ensure that they meet the needs of the widest group of pupils possible.
- Specific, additional support is provided, such as phonics catch-up, speech and language support and self-esteem groups. Interventions are focused and run for a set period of time. Leaders check pupils' progress and measure the success of the support provided, including that for social and emotional needs. Specialist external support is sought, where appropriate, and leaders work hard to make the best use of the time available. As a result of highly effective coaching and mentoring by the executive principal, the special educational needs coordinator has developed confidence in her role. Leadership of SEND is much stronger and purposeful. Consequently, pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points, particularly in reading and writing.
- Although improving, attendance is below the national average. Many pupils take extended leave from school, and parents underestimate the impact that time away from school has on their child's attainment and progress. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly so that they can learn more. They get cross when pupils in their class are absent for long periods of time as it prevents the class from winning the 'attendance owl' reward. Leaders do not authorise holidays in term time. Absence from school is tracked carefully and appropriately challenged. Leaders use all available means to tackle poor attendance. They meet with parents, carry out home visits and issue fixed-penalty notices. Despite the green shoots of better attendance which are now clearly evident, leaders fully understand the need to further improve attendance across the school.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the provision in the early years further develops to strengthen the progress children make so that more children reach a good level of development
- the high expectations, systems and processes introduced to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning are further embedded so that pupils' attainment and progress continue to improve
- they continue to work with families to raise attendance further
- the leadership skills of new leaders continue to develop so that they have a sustained impact on school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders. I held a discussion with the chief executive officer for the trust and spoke to the chair of the board of trustees on the telephone. I met with the chair of the local governing board. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I checked documents relating to safeguarding and looked at published information on the school's website.

Accompanied by you and other leaders, I made short visits to classrooms and spoke to pupils informally. I met a group of pupils to hear them read and talk about the school more formally. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, during the lunch break and around the school. I scrutinised their workbooks. I spoke to parents at the end of the school day. I considered the five responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.