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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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12 July 2021

Lindsay Jones  
Principal  
Lowedges Junior Academy  
Lowedges Road  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S8 7JG

Dear Miss Jones

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lowedges Junior Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 15 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff have suitable expertise in the teaching of phonics and early reading.

## **Context**

The Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has affected leaders' work to improve the school. For example, Covid-19 delayed planned improvements in how leaders monitor the quality of teaching.

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new phonics and early reading leader. A senior leader has taken on the role of acting special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and a new SENCo has been appointed to start in September 2021.

## **Main findings**

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the teaching of phonics and early reading. Leaders and teachers prioritise reading. Pupils who need extra practise to catch up get the support they need. The early reading leader is an expert and models effective teaching of phonics to staff. This work is developing greater knowledge and expertise among staff. However, some inconsistency in the teaching of phonics and early reading remains. Some staff do not quickly identify and address pupils' misconceptions in phonics.

Pupils take home books to practise their reading, which are matched to their phonics knowledge. Leaders have based their approach to early reading on the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Letters and Sounds' strategy. Currently, leaders are reviewing their approach to phonics and early reading. This is to ensure that it provides the right teaching and support for pupils, staff and parents and carers.

Leaders have improved the identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, adults identify pupils' needs more quickly. Leaders have effective plans in place to support pupils with SEND. Leaders involve parents and carers in the planning process. Leaders have improved how they communicate information about pupils' needs to staff.

Leaders have taken action to improve the attendance of pupils. They work closely with families. An educational welfare officer from the multi-academy trust (MAT) is now based at the school. The attendance of pupils with SEND has improved. However, this remains a focus of leaders' actions to improve the school.

The quality of curriculum planning has improved, supported by subject experts from across the MAT. Leaders and teachers are ambitious for all pupils. Curriculum plans clearly identify what pupils need to know and be able to do at each stage in their learning. Training from the MAT has also improved the expertise of subject leaders in evaluating the impact of teaching in their subjects. This work was delayed by Covid-19 but has resumed recently and is being quickly embedded.

Governors are knowledgeable about leaders' actions to improve the school. They hold leaders to account. Governors evaluate the impact of leaders' actions in meetings and through focused visits to the school.

### **Additional support**

Support from the MAT has been effective in addressing areas for improvement. Colleagues from across the MAT have worked together to improve the quality of curriculum plans. Training has improved the way subject leaders monitor the quality of education. SEND and inclusion staff have received regular support and training from the MAT. The school has also received external support from a local English hub. This has helped leaders to evaluate the quality of teaching of phonics and early reading.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, representatives of the MAT, including the chief executive officer and those responsible for governance. I also met with pupils and staff, including the SENCo.

I listened to pupils read and visited lessons and intervention sessions. I reviewed documentation and considered the results of staff and parent surveys.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Jenner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**