

Inspection of a good school: Lydiard Park Academy

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

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 December 2023

Outcome

Lydiard Park Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Gary Pearson. The school is part of The Parks Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Benedick Ashmore-Short, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Matthew Dixon.

What is it like to attend this school?

Lydiard Park Academy teaches pupils to 'think of the other person' in all that they do. Pupils show pride in their work and are keen to learn. The school knows students in the sixth form as individuals and supports them to achieve well in their chosen qualifications.

Pupils have positive, trusting relationships with adults. They feel able to raise concerns, knowing that they will be listened to and helped. The school teaches pupils to value others and bullying is not tolerated. The school has set out the clear consequences pupils would receive for disruptive or discriminatory behaviour. Pupils appreciate this clarity and the fairness of the behaviour system. Pupils behave well, which means that learning can take place without disruption.

The school promotes leadership opportunities for pupils and students in the sixth form. They take on roles such as house representatives or community ambassadors. Pupils understand the importance of contributing to the life of the school. They join action groups such as 'ethnic voices' and fundraise for the school's nominated charities. Students in the sixth form act as role models for younger students. For example, they lead the school council and take part in school productions. Pupils enjoy extra-curricular clubs, trips and visits. These enrich pupils' learning and provide cultural experiences.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has planned a broad and ambitious curriculum. Subjects are carefully sequenced to support pupils to learn the curriculum effectively from Year 7 through to Year 13. As a result, pupils' knowledge builds securely over time. Pupils learn what is distinctive about subjects. For example, how historians use sources to interpret the past,

or how authors use literary techniques. This prepares pupils well for the demands of sixth form and higher education.

The school uses assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is then adapted to address these gaps and make sure that pupils are ready to learn more. Pupils value the 'make a change' activities as a chance to make improvements to their work. However, some pupils lack the confidence to debate and discuss their learning with their peers. This limits their ability to reapply their learning and deepen their understanding.

The school accurately identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults know the needs of these pupils well. They make the adaptations needed to enable pupils to learn the curriculum. The resource base for pupils with autism provides additional support for pupils to learn alongside their peers. The school recognises that low attendance or repeated poor behaviour hinders a few pupils' ability to learn. The 'school of solutions' provides bespoke intervention to re-engage these pupils into school life.

Leaders prioritise supporting pupils to be fluent and confident readers. The weakest readers receive effective support to ensure that they catch up and keep up with their peers. Pupils in key stage 3 read a wide range of texts. Each book has been carefully chosen to interest pupils and develop their cultural understanding.

The school's personal development curriculum prepares pupils, and the students in the sixth form, well for adult life. Pupils learn age-appropriate sex and relationships information. Pupils explore moral dilemmas and consider their own views on a range of world issues. This encourages pupils to become active, informed citizens. The school teaches pupils to be proactive in maintaining their own mental health. Pupils are alert to situations when their friends need help and support, adding to the sense of community within the school.

Pupils engage with local employers to understand the world of work. The school provides impartial careers advice, including information about higher education and apprenticeships. Pupils develop a record of their experiences and skills that will help them in future job applications. The extensive individual guidance received by students in the sixth form means that they are aspirational about their ambitions when they leave the school.

The school and trust understand that supporting staff workload and well-being in turn helps them to support pupils. Staff can access a wide range of professional development opportunities, including extensive leadership training. Consequently, staff are well equipped to fulfil their roles. The school warmly welcomes teachers early in their career into the profession. Staff talk with passion about how the contributions they make to the running of the school are making a difference for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum pupils and students are not given the opportunity to discuss their learning with others. This hinders their ability to debate and to deepen their thinking about complex issues and concepts. The trust should help pupils and students develop their oracy skills and provide them with opportunities for discussion and debate.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137264
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10297991
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,275
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Matthew Dixon
CEO of the Trust	Benedick Ashmore-Short
Principal	Gary Pearson
Website	www.lydiardparkacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- This school is part of The Parks Academies Trust.
- The school has a specialist resource base for pupils with autism. Currently there are 15 places within this provision.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff, trust executive leaders, the chair of the local advisory board and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, computing and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND. They visited the specialist resource base.
- Inspectors spoke to students within the sixth form and visited sixth-form lessons as part of the deep dives.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the local advisory board and trustee meetings and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Hill

Ofsted Inspector

Tim Redding

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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