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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Paul Todd
Headteacher
Lansdown Park Academy
Stockwood Lane
Stockwood
Bristol
BS14 8SJ

Dear Mr Todd

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lansdown Park Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 13 December 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in February 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the academy council and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, looked at pupils' books, met with external professionals who have been supporting the school, reviewed curriculum documentation and spoke with staff. I checked the procedures for keeping pupils safe and scrutinised documents, including the school's plans for improvement, external visit reports and minutes of meetings. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Lansdown Park Academy remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to staffing. There is now a substantive leadership team in place who demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders work effectively to build consistency across both school sites. Nearly half of the staff are new in post since the previous inspection. There have been significant refurbishment and building improvements to the Stockwood site and ongoing work at Rush Hill. During this monitoring visit, I was based at the Stockwood site. This was due to the previous inspection reporting the significant weaknesses and challenges based on this site. However, the focus of the monitoring visit covered evidence relating to both school sites.

As headteacher, you have focused the newly established leadership team to rapidly tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have acted swiftly to ensure that there are clear plans in place to improve the curriculum for all pupils. Leaders have designed a curriculum which is now aligned with the length of placement for the majority of pupils on roll. Your work with the local authorities, to provide clarity around length of placements, has been important in this. Leaders' work to establish the different curriculum pathways now underpins what and how pupils learn. There is a core offer in place which includes English, mathematics, science, art and design and design technology across primary and secondary. This is enhanced by an additional focus on pupils' wider development. This aims to address other areas of the curriculum in addition to preparing them for what comes next. It is still too early to establish the impact the curriculum developments have had on pupils. Leaders are also aware of the need to find the right balance between addressing gaps in learning and ensuring that new learning is secured in pupils' long-term memory during their time at the school.

Leaders are fully aware of the importance of reading for pupils. Staff take into account the negative views and experiences many pupils have of reading prior to starting at Lansdown Park. They know it is crucial to overcome this barrier before pupils will be able to develop their reading skills with any success. There are clear expectations for pupils to read daily. Leaders know there is still some work to do to find the right balance for pupils in developing their reading skills and increasing their enjoyment of reading. The books that pupils now have access to have been well chosen to support them to have a more positive attitude towards reading. Leaders expect reading to be part of every subject to increase its profile.

Leaders have established an assessment system to check how well pupils learn. Staff are clear on the expectations of when and how pupils are assessed. There is a well-defined process in place for collecting and evaluating this information. Intentions for refining this further with new pupils when they start are clear. Leaders know the importance of having precise support in place for pupils to work towards appropriate targets. However, much of this is in its infancy or is not yet in place. Therefore, its impact has not yet been evaluated to determine how effective it is.

The school's monitoring calendar provides information about when leaders have built-in opportunities to check the impact of their actions and decisions. Leaders have carried out these checks alongside colleagues and external advisers. There is currently a great deal for leaders to check on during their monitoring, as a result of the necessary changes that have been implemented. This means there are a range of different expectations within each subject area as heads of departments have worked to improve their area of responsibility. Some of these expectations are consistent across different areas. However, leaders know that there is still further work required to achieve the most effective approach for checking the impact of improvements.

The academy council and the trust have taken the recommendations from an external review of their effectiveness and put systems of communication and accountability in place. These improvements now mean that those responsible for governance have a more accurate view of the school. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas they are still looking to improve. The trust has supported curriculum development by using subject specialists, for example in science, from other trust schools.

Staff feel well supported by leaders despite the rapid journey of improvement. They are appreciative of how leaders and the trust have invested in their professional development so they can improve their own practice. They value the daily communication between staff and leaders in the briefings at the start and end of the day. They see this as critical to their role of providing the best for the pupils in their learning and also in their well-being and welfare. The small number of parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school has had on their child and them as a family.

Leaders benefit from the trust's use of external support to strengthen aspects of the school's action plan where relevant. This includes a focus on the development of the curriculum in both primary and secondary. This support is now shifting towards more specific developments rather than the initial, more generalised, whole-school support.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Learn@MAT, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Bristol City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Leanne Thirlby
His Majesty's Inspector