

Lydiard Park Academy

Grange Park Way, Swindon, SN5 6HN

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2	2
Leadership and management	Good	2	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because

- Students achieve well, including those who have special educational needs or are disabled. They make good progress in both their academic and personal development.
- Lessons generally provide good opportunities for students to build their knowledge and understanding through interesting and challenging activities. Some teaching is inspiring; teachers use their expertise to enthuse students and drive rapid progress.
- Students behave well, both in lessons and with one another. They enjoy school and understand that it is helping them take clear strides towards their future lives.
- Leaders and managers ensure the school is a safe, harmonious place where ambition and drive are valued and rewarded.
- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school and members use their considerable expertise and energy to help and challenge staff and leaders as they build success in this academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in English has not always been as strong for all groups as it has in mathematics. Writing has not consistently been a sufficient focus across subjects.
- The checks made by leaders on teaching are sometimes not rigorous enough.
- Teachers' marking is not consistently clear, or followed up, across subjects so students do not always have the chance to fully understand how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 33 teachers in 35 lessons, seven of which were seen jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They held meetings with staff, leaders, members of the governing body and students.
- The lead inspector held a telephone meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s policies and documents and records of student achievement. They took account of the online responses to both the school’s own questionnaires and the 62 that were recorded on Parent View in carrying out this inspection.

Inspection team

Carolyn Carnaghan, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Kaye Palmer-Greene	Additional inspector
Patrick Hazlewood	Additional inspector
Colin Money	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This academy formally opened as Lydiard Park on 1 September 2012.
- Lydiard Park Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, Greendown Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- Lydiard Park Academy is average in size when compared to other secondary schools.
- The majority of students are from a White British heritage.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium (additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals or from service families) is below average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is below average but above for those supported by school action plus and with statements of special educational needs.
- There are six students currently receiving training away from the school at the Oakfield Project.
- There are a small number of students supported by Year 7 catch-up funding (additional monies specifically provided to support students whose attainment in English and mathematics falls short of national averages).
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A new sixth form is opening in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the rising achievement by:
 - improving the accuracy of the checks made on teaching so that progress always matches that seen in the best lessons
 - ensuring teaching, in English and across other subjects, delivers sufficient opportunity and challenge, particularly through writing.
- Ensure teachers' feedback to students helps support progress by:
 - providing detailed written comments that enables students to understand the quality of their work
 - consistently indicating how students can improve their work
 - making sure students have the time and opportunity in lessons or through homework to follow up on teachers' feedback and so develop their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students arrive at Lydiard Park, their attainment is below average. Progress across the school is good so that achievement, by the end of Year 11, is also good. The proportions of students making or exceeding expected progress in both English and mathematics now compares favourably with that seen nationally.
- Students who receive the extra pupil premium funding make good progress, although their attainment is a little behind that of their peers. In English, these students were two terms behind, and in mathematics, a term and a half at the end of Key Stage 4. This gap in attainment is closing fast because the extra funding is used to provide one-to-one support, academic mentoring, help in building the basic skills needed for learning, and support for personal development.
- The most able students are effectively challenged, particularly through the extensive programme of special activities provided by the school, such as the extra mathematics clubs. This ensures that gifted and talented students and others of above-average ability are kept at full stretch throughout their studies so that their achievement is good and similar to that of their peers.
- Students in Year 7 who receive catch-up funding have also been a focus for extra support. This has helped them to develop skills in English and mathematics so they are able to make strides in their progress similar to others.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, those supported by a statement, and those at school action and school action plus make good progress. The school ensures the needs of students are carefully diagnosed, support put in place and their progress carefully monitored so that these young people have all the chances enjoyed by their peers. This applies across the whole curriculum, both in lessons and after school in enrichment activities. The school prides itself on this inclusive approach that is securing equal opportunities for all to achieve, enjoy school life and not be subject to any form of discrimination.
- Reading has been an area of focus in lessons and this has helped students raise their achievement. The library has also grown, with subject areas such as humanities developing their specific resources. Students are not afraid to tackle difficult texts. For example, in an English lesson, students explored how ways of communicating meaning through film visually and in sound could help them develop their own skills in writing.
- Writing has historically not been as strong as reading. The school is now working more consistently across all subjects to promote all styles and forms of writing.
- The progress and achievement of the small number of students attending training away from school at the Oakfield Project are slightly lower than for others, largely because their attendance is lower.
- Students are not currently entered early for GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually well planned to deliver good opportunities for students to work hard and make good progress. However, a small number of lessons are not sufficiently well organised because teachers do not plan enough for students to do, or provide for the acquisition of new knowledge or to practise their developing skills. In these circumstances students do not develop their understanding sufficiently.
- Generally students respond with enthusiasm to teachers' good subject knowledge, the range of stimulating activities and chances to flex their academic muscles in class. For example, in ceramics and textiles lessons, where much of the work was outstanding, the teachers' obvious mastery of their subject was inspiring and encouraged students towards greater creativity and effort. Here, students spoke enthusiastically about their own work, showing due pride and

enjoyment. They were also generous in their praise for others' work.

- Where progress is most rapid, students are encouraged to think for themselves, deepen their understanding through well-designed tasks and to respond to careful questioning that teases out what is needed. Students are often encouraged to assess their own work and that of their classmates. For example, in a modern foreign languages lesson the teacher used praise very effectively to build confidence and encourage the class to tackle more difficult exercises.
- Teachers' marking of work in books is inconsistent. Where comments about student output are incisive they help students understand what is of high quality and what needs more work. As a result, students are supported towards higher attainment. Teachers in humanities and modern foreign languages, for example, use assessment and marking very carefully as tools to drive progress. Where teachers do not ensure students fully appreciate how well they are doing and what they could do to improve their work, progress is less rapid.
- Teaching assistants are often very well deployed in classrooms. Those that support individual students, sometimes who are disabled or with special educational needs, ably help them to make strides in their work and achievements. Occasionally teaching assistants are not made full use of by teachers because their work is not carefully planned into the whole lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students clearly understand how to stay safe in their everyday activities, on the internet, and in and out of lessons. Support for the development of safe ways of living and tackling different situations is provided through dedicated lessons on topics such as, making relationships or having a go at something tricky in sport. The variety of approaches by the school ensures students develop a healthy attitude to life and its inherent risks.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Day-to-day manners and conduct around school and in lessons are good. Students are very proud of their school uniform, having made the overwhelming choice to wear blazers and ties. Students are smart: they feel smart and they like their school to be that way too. The school is a clean, warm and friendly place to be, largely because of the positive attitudes shared by students and staff.
- The behaviour of students is good and this helps progress and learning. Students work harmoniously together, often in groups and teams, and this helps them build good social skills. Students are aware of the different forms of bullying that could happen, though report they rarely do, such as on the internet or at break times.
- Students enjoy the responsibility of mentoring others and appreciate the rewards that come from hard work and support for their school community. They help their outside community, often encouraged by the governing body.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View say they are happy with the education and behaviour of their children and express their appreciation for the school. They support the ways the school encourages the good development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers at all levels, including middle leaders, share their high aspirations and ambition with everyone involved in the academy. The rise in achievement and attendance since its opening is celebrated but the team is fully aware that it has much to do to achieve the success that it plans for. The school has the capacity for continuing improvement.
- The checks made on teaching are thorough, though sometimes a little too generous. The school understands that this aspect must be sharpened up if all teaching is to be as stimulating as it is

in the best lessons. Senior leaders have supported those who head departments in taking up the challenges of helping to run the school. They help monitor teaching, enable staff to take up professional training and this, alongside the more formal system of setting targets for teachers, helps ensure staff are paid according to their responsibility and their successes.

- The areas studied by students are broad and academically biased. Some students take vocational studies but most pursue a route towards GCSE. New GCSE subjects have been included in Key Stage 4 because students have an interest in taking them; such as law, and these are proving very popular. Some students who are disabled or have special educational needs, including those with autism, are supported through individual provision that helps them overcome their difficulties. Students benefit from following courses in modern foreign languages, unless their particular need is for extra help in English or mathematics. The local authority has provided appropriate support for this academy during its transition from Greendown Community School. It is also providing support as the development of the new sixth form gathers pace.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body have built a very clear understanding of the academy. Their rigorous approach to finding out how well students, as individuals, are progressing and how this is linked to the performance of individual teachers is admirable. Governors have a keen grasp of how well students are achieving compared with national patterns and this helps them contribute closely in making plans for the academy. They use their considerable expertise and professionalism to support the academies' leadership in making difficult and necessary decisions. They are very closely involved in how the sixth form is shaping up but, equally, they take a real interest in how lessons are taught and where the successes of students come from. They are unafraid to challenge leaders if needed. Members of the governing body keep a watchful eye on how government funds are spent, including on those eligible for the pupil premium. They are keenly aware of how effective this spending is, on an individual student basis. Governors support the good development of students' values; spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, and they ensure the school meets its statutory safeguarding duties.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137264
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	440363

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	940
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Davison
Headteacher	Clive Zimmerman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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