

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 July 2025

Clair Gooding
Headteacher
Skerne Park Academy
Coleridge Gardens
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 5AJ

Dear Ms Gooding

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Skerne Park Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 12 June 2025, 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 took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and the school's middle leaders, a number of members of school staff, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the leader of education, the trust improvement partners, primary improvement partners, strategic partners and the chair of the academy council 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, spoke with a group of pupils, looked at examples of pupils' work and considered curriculum information with subject leaders. I have considered all of this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

At the time of the last inspection, you were relatively new to the school. Since that inspection, steps have been taken to address the main areas for improvement. Three teachers with phase-specific responsibility have been appointed. The curriculum has been redesigned, and changes have been made to subject leadership.

Leaders, in close collaboration with the trust, have developed a curriculum rooted in the key skills, concepts and knowledge that the school wants pupils to learn from the early years to Year 6. This work has resulted in a carefully structured curriculum which maps out the knowledge and skills that pupils need to build over time. Teachers are benefiting from increased guidance and support in delivering the school's curriculum. There is evidence that teachers are beginning to check how well pupils are understanding important knowledge across a wider range of subjects better. More care is being taken to ensure that the activities pupils are set enable them to fulfil the aims of the curriculum. However, there remains much work to do for these improvements to be fully embedded.

You and your team have put increased support in place for pupils. There are signs that pupils are now learning and remembering more of the school's curriculum. Nevertheless, there remains more work to be done, and gaps in knowledge remain. In 2024, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 was significantly below that seen nationally. The legacy of COVID-19 is still evident, particularly in the gaps in some pupils' early language and social skills, which persist for some of the school's oldest pupils.

You and your team have taken action to enhance aspects of pupils' personal development. There is now a greater focus on fundamental British values in the taught curriculum and in wider aspects of school life. You are continuing to refine and embed these aspects of provision.

The school is checking how well the revised curriculum is being implemented. However, some of this work is not consistently well focused. This means that leaders are not as aware of the impact of improvement actions as they could be.

The school has developed extra capacity to drive further improvement. The appointment of staff responsible for phase-specific improvements and subjects has brought further energy and focus to the school's work. Support from the trust has provided strategic guidance, professional development and external quality assurance. This work has supported recent improvement. Trustees and governors are providing improved challenge and support. However, some aspects of quality assurance could be stronger.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Advance Learning Partnership Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Darlington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Marcus Newby
His Majesty's Inspector