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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Lawrence Chapman
Headteacher
Stone Lodge Academy
Stone Lodge Lane West
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP2 9HW

Dear Mr Chapman

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Stone Lodge Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 21 October 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in January 2025.

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 other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the chair of trustees, trustees and governors, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's post-inspection action plan. I also visited lessons, met with staff, spoke with pupils and observed their behaviour at lunch time. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership. Following the departure of the previous headteacher, the school is now overseen by a leader with extensive experience in special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional leaders, including safeguarding staff, have joined the school. These changes have strengthened leadership capacity and brought about sharper oversight. Leaders have acted quickly and decisively to tackle the school's most serious weaknesses. Supported by the trust, school leaders have prioritised pupils' welfare, safety and educational experiences. A clearer sense of direction, shared ownership and accountability are now evident across the school.

The safeguarding culture has undergone root-and-branch transformation. Leaders immediately began their work with a thorough review of systems, policies, training and capacity. The school has ensured that each safeguarding element has improved at pace, for example bringing in a specialist expert to review practice in how to address any pupils with harmful sexual behaviours. Patterns and incidents are now analysed closely. There is swift intervention and appropriate follow-up. The school's personal, social and health curriculum has been adapted to better match pupils' needs. Lessons are increasingly effective and more frequent. This helps pupils to build their knowledge over time. Consequently, pupils now better understand respectful relationships and boundaries.

Staff recognise the improvements to the safeguarding culture. They say that training has developed their confidence to identify and report concerns. As a result, staff are more vigilant and respond more swiftly to safeguarding issues. School leaders responsible for safeguarding recognise and value the trust's support and expertise. Regular meetings and closer working relationships with external agencies have strengthened knowledge sharing and resources. Pupils feel safe and are now safer at school, knowing that they can go to a 'trusted adult' when they are worried. Leaders constantly monitor the safeguarding culture to ensure that staff confidence continues to grow.

Leaders have also taken firm action to improve oversight of pupils' attendance. The school now analyses attendance data in more detail, using clearer thresholds to trigger intervention and follow up absence more rigorously. Regular communication with families is helping to improve engagement. The number of pupils on part-time timetables or attending alternative provision has reduced. These arrangements are time limited and reviewed systematically. Leaders are aware that, despite some improvements to attendance, persistent absence for some pupils is still too high. Leaders are continuing to embed their systems, work closely with families and external agencies to tackle the root causes and improve the attendance of all pupils.

The school has begun to improve the quality of education across the school. This has included reviewing the content and sequencing of the curriculum. Rightly, leaders have prioritised reading, recognising that this skill enables pupils to access wider learning opportunities. Lessons now support pupils to read more regularly and with greater

purpose. Pupils who need to catch up with reading now receive more frequent, targeted and bespoke support. Leaders' analysis and pupils' views indicate that the school's more systematic approach to reading is having a positive impact. However, the school is at the early stages of making the comprehensive changes needed to improve pupils' education. Leaders know there is more to do and have a clear plan to enact the changes needed.

Governance has been strengthened. Trustees and governors have received specific training that enables greater insight into the school's actions and pupils' experiences. This means trust leaders ask more searching questions about the school's work and its impact on pupils' experiences. This includes more detailed conversations around safeguarding and attendance.

The trust is ambitious about the school's improvement journey. Trust leaders have been clear in their expectations for rapid improvement and have provided the school with targeted expertise to achieve it, for example specialist input to strengthen key areas such as safeguarding. The trust has also brought in outside expertise. For example, through engaging the services of the local authority's education welfare officer to support the school's work on attendance. This gives the trust additional assurance that the right actions are being taken and that leaders' evaluation of progress is rooted in external validation and best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Hannah Stoten
His Majesty's Inspector