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15 July 2011

Dr Chris Gerry Executive Principal  
Mr Hewett Headteacher  
New Line Learning Academy  
Boughton Lane  
Maidstone  
ME15 9QL

Dear Dr Gerry and Mr Hewett

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of New Line Learning Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy with my colleague Josephine Lewis on 14 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students and staff who were so welcoming.

In the past year the academy, run by the Future Schools Trust, has been supported by some high profile visits. The new academy buildings were largely ready for occupation in September 2010 so the students and staff were all able to move in at this time from the nearby old school. However the external site remains under development and this has caused access and safety problems as students and cars have had to use the same entrance and road all year. Staff work hard to make sure that the road is as safe as possible for the students when they enter and leave the academy.

Some sixth form classes take place on this site although the students are based officially at the sister academy. These classes include vocational courses such as child care, performing arts and sport as well as more academic subject based courses. The ability range of students on entry to the academy remains well below average with many students coming from socioeconomic backgrounds where they experience significant difficulties. This includes several students who are directed to the academy as they have had problems in other schools.

As a result of the inspection on 03 March 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

September 2010



Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made good progress in making improvements and in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Our visits to a sample of lessons, together with an analysis of the information provided by the academy on students' attainment and progress, indicate that achievement is improving. This is confirmed by the 2010 examination results where the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* - C GCSE grades rose to be in line with the national average and almost twice as many students gained five or more A\* - C including English and mathematics than in previous years. This upward trend is expected to continue in 2011 and is well supported by the focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in different subject areas.

Most students are making faster progress as a result of improved teaching and better behaviour management. The number of students excluded from the academy has reduced significantly. Teachers place a clearer emphasis on actively involving students in their learning and behaviour improves where tasks are interesting and lively and teachers have firm expectations of students' behaviour. Teachers in all lessons share with students what they are expected to study although the extent to which this is used rigorously to drive the learning is variable. Assessment and tracking of students' performance has improved and the outcomes are used effectively to maintain an overview of individual performance, identify underachievement and set targets. Strategies are in place to ensure students know the level they are working at and how to improve but these are not applied consistently across different subjects.

Students' social skills are improving and most have good relationships with each other. Attendance has improved significantly and is much closer now to that found in other schools. The number of students who are persistently absent has reduced through intense support. A range of different agencies are involved in weekly meetings to monitor attendance as well as putting in place strategies to support individuals and their families. The staff place a high priority on caring for students and ensuring they are safe as well as helping them to deal with their problems both in and out of the academy. Students as well as staff are given training in child protection issues and procedures. As a result, students are adamant that bullying is rare and, where it does occur, is dealt with promptly by staff. Students appreciate the new facilities and opportunities that the academy offers. For example academy links with China have resulted in students learning Mandarin and some developing their numeracy skills using an abacus.

The senior leadership team make good use of the academy's business and enterprise specialism to enhance the curriculum and the management of the academy. The use of business techniques in management has strengthened the strategic direction of the academy. This is much clearer and well focused on ensuring all students achieve the best they can and make good use of their time in the academy.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

**The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010**

- Strive to ensure that all teaching is at least good in order to accelerate progress still further by:
  - making the most of every opportunity to promote students' skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics in all subjects
  - ensuring that teachers make absolutely clear to students what they are to learn in lessons, and check rigorously that they are on track throughout the lesson
  - providing more opportunities for students to engage in active, participative learning.
- Ensure that the staff's enthusiasm and drive is harnessed and focused on key areas that will make a difference by amending plans for improvement so that they set out the academy's strategic direction, are sharply targeted and contain clear criteria for measuring success.
- Persevere with strategies to raise attendance so that it rises to 92% by December 2010.