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30 November 2011

Mr T Farr  
Headteacher  
Lathom High School : A Technology College  
Glenburn Road  
Skelmersdale  
Lancashire  
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Dear Mr Farr

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Lathom High School: A Technology College**

Thank you for the help which you, the Chair of the Governing Body, your staff and the students gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 2011 for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has become a Foundation with Trust school and there have been several changes to senior leadership responsibilities.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 February 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

There has been a rising trend of performance since the previous inspection. However, as this has taken place in the context of a national picture of improvement, attainment remains significantly below the national average for some key indicators. Data provided by the school during the inspection suggest that current performance and progress overall remain below the national average. Nevertheless, in the very large majority of the twelve lessons observed during the visit, progress made by students was better than at the previous inspection, largely as a result of the school's effectiveness in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report.

There has been a sharp focus on the use of assessment to support learning, resulting in a consistent approach across all subjects. Teachers use assessment information effectively in order to plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of students. As a result, most lessons observed during the visit provided an appropriate degree of challenge. Lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and clear sense of purpose. Teachers use questioning well to

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establish whether students have understood the work. Students know their targets and can explain confidently what they need to do in order to achieve them. Time in lessons is spent productively and many opportunities are provided for students to work collaboratively and independently. Students speak highly of the improvements in teaching; as one student commented: 'Lessons have become more interactive... there has been a big increase in talking about targets and success criteria at the start of the lesson, then the teachers go back to them at the end to see how much we've learned'. During the inspection, a selection of students' work across a wide range of subjects was scrutinised. From this it was found that students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly for the most part. Students are given clear advice on how to improve their work.

The school has benefited from the headteacher's passionate commitment and drive to address the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. The senior leadership team has established far more effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning than were previously in place. Detailed records of lesson observations are kept and teachers receive clear guidance as to how to improve provision. Good practice is used and disseminated effectively through an extensive programme of training and coaching. The impact of initiatives to improve teaching is monitored at individual teacher and departmental level. Effective challenge and support has been provided for weaker teachers and whole-school policies for, for example, marking and lesson planning, are driving consistently good practice across the school. The headteacher has effectively established a culture of accountability and underperformance is robustly challenged. However, targets that have been set have not been sufficiently challenging to raise attainment to national averages.

Students' performance in Key Stage 4 is assessed frequently, but this is not the case for students in Key Stage 3. Teachers' assessments of students' performance are now more accurate than at the previous inspection.

The specialism contributes well to the life of the school. For example, all classrooms now have access to information and communication technology, which is used effectively by teachers. Teachers of specialist subjects have been highly instrumental in driving improvements in teaching through the school's Learning Development Group.

The school has received support from the local authority. However, the School Improvement Partner has not been sufficiently critical regarding targets set by the school for improvements in students' performance and progress. This monitoring inspection included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting requirements.

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

Yours sincerely,  
Joan Davis  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

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## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
  - ensuring consistency in terms of a high level of challenge for all students in lessons
  - using the outcomes of assessments of prior learning to inform new learning
  - providing lessons which maximise the time for learning so that the rate and consistency of progress improves
  - ensuring that teachers' marking gives feedback to students about how to improve their work.
- Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning by:
  - fully implementing a rigorous system for observing, monitoring and evaluating lessons
  - utilising the outcomes of monitoring to identify good practice to share widely across the school
  - prioritising improvement to the weaker aspects of teaching and effectively targeting professional development for teachers
  - ensuring greater consistency across subjects, cohorts, key stages and student groups.
- Ensure that the school's assessments of students' work are accurate and robust.