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Jill Hislop
Executive Principal
Long Field Academy
Ambleside Way
Melton Mowbray
LE13 0BN

Dear Ms Hislop

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Long Field Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 30 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Executive Principal, Assistant Principal, subject leaders, and three members of the governing body, including the Chair. The academy's improvement plan and statement of action, and a range of other documentation, was evaluated. Accompanied by the Assistant Principal, I made brief visits to lessons to look at the quality of students' learning.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, a number of staff have left the academy, and new teachers have been appointed. An interim Principal, appointed in January 2015, added capacity to leadership, particularly of the mathematics department. He has now left the academy. The curriculum directors for the English and social sciences departments left at the end of the autumn term, and the academy has made internal appointments to cover their leadership roles on an interim basis. Three staff have

gone on maternity leave, with their work covered by existing teachers, one supply teacher, and two new teachers in mathematics and physical education.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Actions taken since the last inspection:

The Executive Principal, supported by senior leaders and governors, has acted with urgency and determination to make improvements to the academy. Since her appointment in May, an impressive range of actions had already been taken to address the areas of weakness recognised by academy leaders. Following the Section 5 inspection, leaders revised the academy's improvement plan, and developed additional action plans for key academy priorities. These include plans for raising the achievement of disadvantaged students, and the progress of disabled students, and those with special educational needs.

Leaders acted swiftly to address the areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors. For example, they now analyse students' progress more regularly, and in greater depth, to identify and address underachievement more quickly. Leaders at all levels have a better understanding of their role in raising achievement, because information is shared more regularly between senior leaders, subject leaders and heads of house. There are better systems to collect and analyse data, and as a result, leaders have a much clearer overview of those students who are performing well, as well as those who need additional support. A rigorous process of monitoring and evaluation ensures that all subject leaders are now more accountable for driving improvements in their areas, and that teachers are held to account for the progress of students they teach. Subject leaders have developed their own detailed action plans, linked to academy priorities, and have set themselves ambitious but realistic targets to improve achievement in their departments. Targets set for students, particularly the more able, are challenging, and leaders carefully monitor the proportion that are making expected, and more than expected, progress. Subject leaders have worked with each other to ensure that they have been more consistent in how they set and mark students' assessments, and have liaised with their partners in local primary schools to ensure that teachers of English and mathematics have a consistent approach to assessing students' work.

Leaders have revised performance management arrangements, so that targets set for teachers take greater account of the progress students make, and are aligned to the academy's priorities for improvement. Leaders' observations of teaching now focus much more closely on the progress made by different groups of students within the lesson. The 'teach to the top' initiative encourages teachers to challenge all students, but especially those who are more able, and this is helping to create a culture of high expectations for all. Leaders are providing effective support to teachers to develop their practice, for example through the tailored coaching programme, and through increased opportunities to learn from the best practice in

the academy. During this inspection, it was apparent that teachers have responded positively to these changes.

Governors have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring the academy's progress. They have a good knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, and have sensibly recruited new governors to take on responsibility for those areas that needed additional scrutiny and monitoring; for example, the progress of disadvantaged students. They recognise that, in the past, they were hindered in their ability to evaluate the academy's performance accurately, because leaders did not provide them with reliable data on students' performance. Governors now look at a wider range of information to assess how well students are doing. They regularly visit the academy to gather first-hand information about the quality of learning and progress in different subjects. They ask leaders for information on how teachers assess students, and how they ensure that assessment is accurate; they look at the work in students' books to verify what leaders tell them. They have undergone training to ensure they have a better understanding of how students' achievement in the academy compares to others' nationally. Governors monitor the academy's progress against the action plan through their committee structure. In some cases, it needs to be clearer how specific action points will be monitored, and how the success criteria will be evaluated.

Students have responded well to the new behaviour policy, and to the higher expectations that teachers have of them. The academy values of 'reflection, responsibility, resilience, respect and readiness to learn' lend clarity and coherence to its vision to 'inspire young people to achieve the best they can'. Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding is developed through the assembly programme, through extra-curricular activities, and through the regular opportunities to reflect on their learning. At the time of the inspection, they had created a thought-provoking display to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgement was made:

The academy's improvement plan and statement of action plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector