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6 March 2025

Catherine Cusick  
Principal  
Longsands Academy  
Longsands Road  
St Neots  
Cambridgeshire  
PE19 1LQ

Dear Dr Cusick

### **Urgent inspection of Longsands Academy**

Following my visit with Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector, to the school on 5 February 2025, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss the school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school, and the behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

### **Evidence**

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you and other senior staff, including the special educational needs coordinator. We also spoke to leaders from the Astrea Academy Trust and to teaching and support staff from Longsands Academy. In addition, we had discussions with groups of pupils from all key stages to gather their views on their experience at school. We observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and at social

times. We scrutinised behaviour and attendance records, governors' minutes, and pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.**

**Main findings**

You have established clear, robust systems to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff receive appropriate, and regularly updated, training so that they know how to identify, help and manage the safeguarding needs of pupils. Safeguarding records are detailed. They show that vulnerable pupils receive timely and effective support when they need it. Robust checks take place on adults who wish to work with pupils. Staff are vigilant and committed to keeping pupils safe.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that there are staff they can turn to for support. Pupils look out for each other. They know how to keep themselves safe online and offline, the importance of consent and how to manage healthy relationships. Pupils understand the meaning of sexual harassment and why it is important to report it. Pupils learn, through personal development lessons and assemblies, how to look after their mental health and care for their well-being. Where necessary, you use an appropriate range of internal and externally provided services, including counselling and specialist alternative provision, to effectively support pupils' mental health.

Your work to establish very high expectations of behaviour in school is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils are explicitly taught how to conduct themselves as scholars and young adults. This is despite issues caused by staff turnover, which has led to some disruption to pupils' relationships with staff in school. If pupils find it hard to meet expectations, staff work with them to improve. Most pupils respond to this guidance and improve their conduct. The number of suspensions has markedly decreased this year. In lessons, behaviour is usually calm, positive and focused. This helps pupils to learn well.

In a few instances where staff do not apply the behaviour policy as you intend, pupils sometimes disrupt the learning of others. However, these interruptions to learning are becoming less commonplace. Out of lessons, pupils interact positively with each other. Bullying, and the use of discriminatory or sexist language, is increasingly rare. Pupils are consistently polite and well-mannered.

You are aware that more work is needed to ensure that pupils enjoy school fully and attend as well as they can. You have reviewed the pastoral support that the school provides. This is becoming more 'joined up'. Staff increasingly work effectively together to ensure that those pupils who find it hard to attend regularly or to behave positively get the precise support they need. Attendance, for most groups of pupils, is improving, although some pupils do not attend well enough. Although the school now runs annual

rewards trips, and offers a range of prizes, pupils do not always feel that they are appreciated or rewarded consistently for good conduct or effort. Pupils would like a more extensive range of clubs, trips and events to enhance their enjoyment of school and to broaden their range of interests.

Your staff are, like you, determined that pupils gain the 'powerful knowledge' that they need to progress across the curriculum. Consequently, most pupils achieve well. Trustees and governors carefully check the work of the school to ensure that this is true for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You understand where your provision is effective and where, and how, it needs to improve. You have started to improve communication and to re-build positive relationships with the parental community, such as by getting parents and carers more involved in the life of the school. However, you are aware that this ongoing work needs more time to become fully embedded. Staff feel well-supported with their well-being and workload.

### **Additional support**

The trust has provided significant support to help you develop the provision for pupils. In particular, trustees have ensured that additional leadership capacity and resources help you improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes. The trust provides robust challenge to ensure that your strategies are sustainable and effective, because they are based on accurate evaluation of the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- The offer of clubs, trips, competitions and events is currently too limited. As a result, pupils do not have enough opportunities to explore and broaden their range of talents and interests. The school should review its extra-curricular offer and put in place a wider range of enrichment opportunities for pupils to enhance their enjoyment of school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Astrea Academies trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Woodley  
**His Majesty's Inspector**