

# Longfield Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135630
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	364406
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Russell HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	887
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robert Findlay
<b>Headteacher</b>	Neil Willis, Anne Davis and Simon Beamish
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Main Road Longfield DA3 7PH
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<b>Fax number</b>	01474 708309
<b>Email address</b>	info@longfieldacademy.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Forty one lessons were observed, taught by 40 teachers; there were also a number of briefer visits to lessons. Meetings were held with students, staff and representatives of the governing body, and telephone discussions were held with the Chief Executive Officer of the Leigh Academies Trust. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, 59 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is students' academic progress now securely good?
- Is teaching now good and have the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection been remedied?
- How well do leaders monitor and evaluate the academy's effectiveness?
- What is the impact of the academy's specialisms?

## Information about the school

Longfield Academy opened in September 2008 in the same accommodation as its predecessor school. The academy is due to move into new buildings in September 2011. Longfield is in a hard federation with The Leigh Technology Academy and Willmington Academy and is sponsored by The Leigh Academies Trust, Kent County Council and the University of Kent. The academy is non-selective, but operates in an area with grammar schools. The academy has three 'colleges', each led by its own principal.

Although currently of below-average size, the academy's popularity has risen and it is now full in the lower year groups. Sixth form education is provided in collaboration with a number of other schools and colleges. The academy has specialist status for science and the arts. The academy holds a number of other awards including National Healthy Schools Status, Green Flag Eco-Schools Award and Investors in Careers.

The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A relatively large number of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Spectrum Centre is managed by the school and provides specially resourced provision for 35 students who have statements for autistic spectrum disorders. Many of these students travel long distances to attend. While some support is provided in the centre, students spend most of their time in lessons.

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out a monitoring visit a year ago. At this time, the academy was judged to be making good progress.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Things have changed dramatically in the three years since Longfield opened. Much has improved and a number of aspects of the academy's work are outstanding. Three things in particular have supported this rapid improvement; they leave the academy extremely well placed to continue its improvement.

Excellent leadership and clear direction. The principals' co-leadership model works well and provides considerable leadership capacity. Other senior and middle leaders also provide very effective leadership.

Rigorous monitoring. The way in which leaders monitor and evaluate the academy's work, and check the impact of any new changes, is very thorough.

Highly effective use of data about students' achievement. Students are assessed regularly, and excellent use is made of this information to check the progress of individuals and groups.

Improving teaching has been leaders' top priority. The overall quality is now good, although a little variability remains. As a result, achievement is rising rapidly. The way in which staff care for and support students, and keep them safe, are also significant strengths. The impact of this can be seen, for example, in dramatic improvements in attendance and behaviour.

The academy's highly successful partnership work within the federation has been instrumental in its improvement. The governing body has also played an invaluable role. Longfield's work as a specialist college is developing, although the specialisms currently play only a limited role in the academy's wider improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the remaining variability in teaching by ensuring that:
  - all teachers make full use of information about students' targets and current achievement when they plan their lessons, so that the lessons' tasks and activities provide the right level of challenge and support for students of different abilities
  - students have sufficient opportunities to learn how to work independently.
- Strengthen Longfield's work as a specialist college so that it is able to play a more extensive role in the development of teaching across the academy.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Students' achievement is good: their attainment when they join the academy is low, but they make good progress and reach average levels by the end of Year 11. Examination results have risen sharply with, for example, the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades including English and mathematics has doubled in two years. Many Year 11 students have already taken a number of examinations; the results clearly indicate that the academy is on track to exceed last year's results. Patterns of achievement across different groups of students are very consistent. Students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the Spectrum Centre, also make good progress. The academy has missed some of its specialist targets. Achievement in the specialist subject of science improved considerably last year, but achievement in art is more variable.

The academy is a pleasant and positive environment. Students are polite, courteous and rightly proud of the academy's improvement. They say that they feel safe and very well supported, and they behave well in lessons and around the site. Students say that the systems teachers use to manage classroom behaviour have helped to improve behaviour, but also that a few teachers do not make best use of the system. Students enjoy school and respond enthusiastically in lessons. Opportunities for students to contribute to the academy and wider community have improved and are good. Many, for example, play a valuable role by acting as 'buddies' to other students. However, although the academy council plays a useful and increasing role, not all students are sufficiently aware of its work.

Attendance has improved enormously and is now above average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has fallen appreciably. The current site is very large; nevertheless, students arrive punctually to their lessons.

Much is done to prepare students for the future. Students are now able to develop good wider skills, for example the ability to work in groups, speak clearly and confidently, and listen to one another. Intensive individual support helped to ensure that everyone who left last year went into education, employment or training.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is now good in the large majority of lessons; it is sometimes outstanding. A great deal has been done to improve the weaknesses identified by inspectors when they visited last year. Lessons are typically well planned, carefully structured and closely matched to students' different abilities; this means that everyone is challenged, but also able to make rapid progress. There are frequent opportunities for students to work, discuss and learn independently and in groups. Teachers' questioning probes and extends students' learning well.

The small minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory typically have one or more of the following features:

- not enough account is taken of students' current achievement when the teacher plans the lesson; this means that activities do not provide the right level of challenge and support for students of different abilities
- the pace of the lesson is too slow
- the teacher over-dominates, with little opportunity for students to learn more independently
- the teacher does not make good use of questioning.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The curriculum has been developed and improved to ensure that it meets students' needs well. Close partnerships with other academies, schools and the local college have helped to widen the range of available courses. More is now being done to support students with poor literacy, for example through an innovative reading recovery programme.

Highly effective teamwork ensures that students receive very well-targeted support. Staff work very closely with a range of external agencies to support students and their families when they are in difficult circumstances. The impact of this work can be seen, for example, in a significant reduction in persistent absenteeism. Individual students' achievement is tracked very carefully. This information is used to provide precisely targeted additional help and support. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the Spectrum Centre, are very well supported. Transition arrangements for students joining the centre are extensive, helping to ensure that they transfer successfully.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The three principals provide the academy with highly effective leadership. They work very closely together. The model allows them to share the burden of leadership and pool their strengths and expertise. One of the principals, for example, has taken the main responsibility for the new building programme, allowing the other two to focus on other areas. This high quality leadership extends across the senior and middle leadership teams. The governing body helps to provide clear, strategic direction and excellent challenge and support; its members played an invaluable role in supporting the successful transition to academy status.

Leaders' detailed and accurate understanding of the quality of provision, and the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, is based on a range of systematic monitoring. Teachers are provided with highly effective support and advice to help them to improve; any weak practice is dealt with quickly. Leaders' use of student achievement data is a model of good practice. Students are assessed at six-weekly intervals and the results are thoroughly analysed. Leaders make excellent use of this data to test the impact of any new initiative or change and to hold staff accountable for the progress of their students. As part of their strong commitment to equal opportunities for all students they track the achievement of different groups very carefully, taking determined action to reduce even the slightest variation. As a result, patterns of achievement are very consistent and all groups do well.

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The way in which the academy safeguards its students is excellent. One of the principals leads practice in this area across the academy group and has provided safeguarding training and advice in a number of other schools.

The academy's partnership work is excellent and a wide range of very effective provision is in place to promote community cohesion, grounded in leaders' thorough understanding of the backgrounds and needs of their students and local community. The academy works very closely with a number of other schools and academies in the local area, a range of agencies and a number of community and international partners. Highly effective links across the academy group have helped to strengthen leadership and support rapid improvements in a range of areas. A very good balance is struck between a useful element of commonality across the group, and the freedom for the three Longfield principals to run their own college.

The academy's work as a specialist college is developing. Provision in the specialist subjects is improving, but is not yet strong enough to support the wider drive for improvement and development in teaching across the academy.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form is very well led: the same relentless drive for improvement and thorough monitoring seen in the rest of the school are also evident here. As a result, the sixth form has improved rapidly.

Achievement is good: examination results improved last year and students currently in the sixth form are on track to achieve even more this year. Student retention has also improved and attendance is high. Sixth form students now have many opportunities to make a positive contribution in the academy. Teaching is, if anything, more consistently

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good in the sixth form, although at times lessons do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. The collaborative sixth form arrangements are well managed and provide students with the opportunity to access a wide range of vocational and academic courses. The particular strengths in care, guidance and support are also seen in the sixth form.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

A relatively low proportion of parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire. Responses were generally positive and a number of parents and carers wrote to praise the work of the Spectrum Centre. One wrote to say that, 'My child is progressing beyond expectation. I am totally confident with the staff to look after his needs in a safe environment.' There was little pattern to the negative comments made, although quite a few parents and carers said that students are not given sufficient homework. Senior leaders had already noted and acknowledged parents' and carers' views in this area and recognised it as an area for development.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Longfield Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 887 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	29	36	61	4	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	36	35	59	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	41	31	53	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	32	34	58	5	8	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	15	25	38	64	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	27	31	53	9	15	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	19	36	61	8	14	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	36	29	49	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	36	28	47	7	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	20	33	56	11	19	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	24	32	54	8	14	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	17	29	33	56	5	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	41	30	51	3	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 May 2011

Dear students

**Inspection of Longfield Academy, Longfield, DA3 7PH**

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

We were very impressed! Many things have improved over the past three years and students that we spoke to were rightly proud of the academy's achievements. Longfield is a good academy, with much that is already outstanding. Examination results have improved and your attendance is now better than in most schools. Teaching has improved a lot in the past year and is now good, although a small minority of lessons are not quite so good. The most important thing for the academy now is to ensure that all lessons are good. Staff support you very well. You behave well around the academy and in lessons.

The three principals and their colleagues have achieved much in the past three years. They have an excellent understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development, and are very clear about what to do next to continue the rapid improvement. The way in which they measure your achievement, and use this information to help you to do even better, is outstanding. They realise that more needs to be done to develop the academy's work as a specialist college. The academy's partnership with the other academies is extremely useful and has helped Longfield to improve quickly.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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