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Mr Ian O'Donnell
Headteacher
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East Riding of Yorkshire
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Dear Mr O'Donnell

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Longcroft School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 December 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on special thanks to the students who met with me at lunchtime, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority link adviser.

There have been a number of changes to the governing body since the inspection including the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair. An assistant headteacher has also joined the senior leadership team.

As a result of the inspection on 18 April 2012, 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 is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Achievement is improving well in all year groups. The proportion of Year 11 students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, rose by six percentage points in 2012. The improvement in mathematics was particularly marked, with an increase of 11% on the proportion of students obtaining A* to C passes. Too few students gained the highest grades in English and mathematics, however, but a change in the early entry policy is addressing the issue this year. Initiatives to develop literacy skills across the curriculum are well underway but plans for numeracy are less developed. A number of vocational courses have been added to the curriculum and these are already proving successful.

The monitoring of students' progress is much more rigorous. A good range of summary reports is available, presented in an easily digestible format. Frequent reviews identify any students who are falling behind so that remedial action can be taken quickly. School leaders,

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

including governors, use data well to assess the impact of initiatives, identify any areas of weak performance and monitor the progress of different groups of students. Assessment and performance data show that the progress of students, including those eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and disabilities, is accelerating across the school.

Teaching is improving rapidly and making a major contribution to raising achievement. The proportion of good or better teaching has increased markedly over the last year and inadequate teaching has almost been eradicated. Teachers plan lessons that include a wider variety of activities that are more closely tailored to the needs of students. Lessons move at a lively pace. Sharper questioning enhances learning and teachers provide more opportunities for discussion, although some teachers still talk for too long which slows students' learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well in most lessons. The vast majority of teachers are keen to improve their skills and are taking full advantage of the wide range of professional development on offer. Joint lesson observations show that senior leaders are skilled at identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Visits to lessons and the scrutiny of students' books show that the quality of marking is getting better and most teachers are providing helpful feedback that is enabling students to improve their work. There is some excellent practice, for example in religious studies and geography, but the overall quality of marking is still too variable. Students agree that, although the quality of marking has improved, it is inconsistent and tends to mirror the quality of teaching.

The headteacher provides an ambitious but achievable vision for the school that has lifted staff morale and won their support. He is pushing improvements through at a fast but well-judged pace and prioritises well. The introduction of a more robust appraisal system and clearer lines of accountability underpins the drive to improve. Governance is increasingly strong. Governors have a more business-like approach and a good blend of expertise and skills enabling them to challenge and support the senior leadership team well. Communication with parents has been strengthened since the inspection through meetings, newsletters and half-termly reports home.

The local authority provides very good support through its specialist advice and the monitoring reviews. Its statement of action is fit for purpose and the link adviser attends governors' meetings, providing an independent update on progress against the school's action plan. The headteacher receives valuable support from a National College adviser who is a former headteacher. Middle leaders are benefiting from a management development programme at Driffield School and a number of teachers access professional development at Healing School in Grimsby.

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

Jan Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2012.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate the progress students make and therefore raise standards across the curriculum by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of students' capabilities, particularly those known to be eligible for free school meals
 - ensuring that all available data are used by teachers to plan lessons that fully meet the different needs of all students
 - ensuring that students understand and can identify how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - making sure that teaching assistants are deployed effectively in lessons.

- Expand the choice of subjects available to students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and ensure that literacy and numeracy skills are developed in all subjects.

- Fully embed the newly implemented policies and procedures, especially those relating to tracking progress, by ensuring that all leaders take full responsibility for students' progress.

- Strengthen and develop communication with parents and carers by:
 - making them aware of how well their children are doing
 - ensuring that any concerns raised are investigated and the findings reported to them.