



Longdendale
HIGH SCHOOL

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Head of School

Andrea Jones

Executive Principal

Melanie Wicks

Dear Parents and Carers,

21st April 2023

As you will be aware, Ofsted carried out an inspection of the school on 2nd and 3rd February 2023, and I am writing to advise you that Ofsted have now published their report. A copy of the report can be read via the link later in this letter or via our school website. If you would prefer a paper copy, please contact the school. This letter is also intended to support parents, carers and learners to understand the judgements, and to provide further information regarding the school's response.

We were delighted that the inspection team **recognised the significant improvements made across the school** and they reflected that, despite the impact of Covid, the **quality of education has improved and is continuing to improve across subjects** leading to improved outcomes for our students. The **positive relationships between staff and students** were highlighted as a real strength in our school, and **students told inspectors that they feel safe and happy in school**, which is something we place at the heart of our work on a daily basis. In addition, the inspection team recognised the **wealth of wider opportunities our students benefit from** to support their **personal development and preparation for the future, which was judged to be good in all areas.**

We are exceptionally proud of the significant improvements made in terms of students' behaviour, which was also judged to be good in all areas. Inspectors observed the school throughout the two days, including before and after school, during break and lunchtimes as well as in a large number of lessons. They also considered the views of staff, parents and carers and students, who were all overwhelmingly positive about how well our students behave on a daily basis and the positive impact this has on their lessons and learning. We were pleased to note that inspectors recognised this in their report and commented that **"Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times"** and that **"The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Many pupils reported that lessons are rarely disrupted. This helps them to focus on their work."** **The vast majority of our students are polite and respectful, and demonstrate excellent attitudes to all aspects of school life on a daily basis.** We are exceptionally proud of them and everything they achieve, and they are a real credit to themselves, their families and our school, and it is testament to them and to our team of highly skilled staff that they have responded so positively to the changes we have made in the last few years to ensure that excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning underpin effective learning in lessons.

As you are aware, Longdendale is a highly inclusive school, and alongside our school being designated once again as a National Flagship School for Inclusion in March 2023, we were also pleased that the inspection team recognised some of the fantastic practice in place across the school. In line with the recent SEND review by the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN), the inspection team recognised that **"Leaders have improved many aspects of the school. They have developed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)"**, and they commented that **"Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND quickly. They share this information with teachers."**

At Longdendale High School, we place considerable importance on the need for all students to attend school regularly in order to maximise the learning opportunities on offer to them at school and to support them achieving their full potential in all aspects of school life in order to support their future aspirations and success. **Attendance for all groups of students at Longdendale, including those with SEND and those who are classed as disadvantaged, remains above**



national averages. Nationally, attendance to school since COVID has dipped, and we are fully committed to ensuring that all of our students benefit from strong attendance and this remains a key priority and focus for us. We appointed an additional Family Liaison and Attendance Officer in January 2023 to further improve and support our work with families to support excellent attendance to school for all, as we know that this has a direct impact on students' achievement and future life chances.

We are pleased that the school's safeguarding processes are recognised as being strong and effective, with praise for the extensive work done by the school to support students with their mental health and wellbeing. The report recognises that **"Staff benefit from regular safeguarding training. They know how to recognise the possible signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff know when to pass on concerns about a pupil. Leaders work well with external agencies, including the police and the local authority to help and support pupils when needed."** This is clearly an important area of our work, which impacts strongly and positively on our students on a day-to-day basis, and it is pleasing to see the ongoing strategic work of the school in this area recognised.

The majority of the recommendations from the inspection team had already been identified previously by the leadership team through our own evaluations of the school, and in the verbal feedback provided at the time, **the inspection team recognised that there is a clear direction of travel and that more time is needed to further develop and fully embed these improvements. Inspectors commented that "The quality of education is getting better than it has been in the past. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils."** The impact of the work done to date is already clear in student outcomes, which were the best in the school's history in 2022, and which were above national averages in the majority of key measures. As a whole staff, we remain fully determined and committed to address all of the recommendations highlighted in the report to ensure this trend of improvement and high performance continues in all subject areas. Robust plans are in place to continue to improve the consistency of curriculum provision across subjects and staff are well trained to support the delivery of this curriculum. As you aware we have made significant changes to the curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in order to ensure that a wider range of personalised courses are available for our students to study, as well as continuing to focus on improving the overall quality of provision in classrooms and the development of the key component knowledge, skills and understanding students need to be successful in each subject area.

One of the recommendations from the inspection team related to **continuing to ensure that reading is prioritised across the school** and that we **continue to strengthen and develop a culture of reading for pleasure.** As you will already be aware, this is an area that we have already been working on and have made significant progress in. We were delighted that Stamford Park Trust supported us with a brand-new library facility from September 2022, and our students are accessing and using this space on a regular basis both in and out of lesson time to encourage and support a strong reading culture across the school. As part of our programme to support students who are weaker readers, we have a team of highly trained and skilled staff who are already delivering a range of reading interventions to accelerate progress in this area. This was recognised by the inspection team who commented **"Leaders are implementing a new strategy to improve pupils' reading skills. They identify those pupils who are behind in reading in Years 7 to 10. Trained staff give younger pupils individual help to catch up."** The fantastic results in English year on year for all groups of students also demonstrates that this is an area on which there is a great deal of emphasis, focus and success. **Our students consistently achieve above national averages in English, and the development of reading is an integral part of this.** However, we have already put additional plans in place to ensure that literacy is given even greater strategic focus across all areas of the curriculum, and many actions have already been implemented to address this.

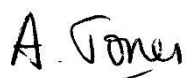
We were also delighted that inspectors recognised that our students enjoy school and benefit from a wide range of opportunities to support their wider personal development across all areas of school life. **The Personal Development provision was judged to be good in all areas**, and this is something we are exceptionally proud of. The inspection team recognised that **“Pupils enjoy school. They spoke positively to inspectors about a range of clubs and activities, such as dance, debating and sports. Pupils relish taking on leadership roles, where they can make a difference, such as school councillors, prefects and dance-club leaders. They benefit from the opportunity to take part in visits and trips.”** This is real testament to the skill, support and commitment of our whole staff team in ensuring that our students are provided with such a wide range of opportunities and learning experiences to support their wider development and enjoyment.

The school is recognised for the work done to ensure that students are prepared well for wider life and that they feel happy and safe in school and that they have a voice that is listened to and acted on. The inspection team noted that **“Pupils learn about the importance of respecting differences between people. Most pupils have positive relationships with each other and their teachers. Pupils who spoke with inspectors reported that they feel safe and happy in school. They are confident that leaders and staff will listen to their concerns. Staff deal well with incidents of bullying”**. Alongside this, the school has an extensive high-quality careers education programme that has been designed to support all students with their future aspirations and life chances in an age appropriate way. Inspectors commented **“Pupils receive appropriate careers information, education, advice and guidance, including about apprenticeships. This helps them to make choices about their future and prepares them for the world of work.”** At Longdendale High School, we have a team of highly skilled and dedicated staff, who are driven by a desire to ensure that we work together to continue to improve our school and provide our young people with the very best in all aspects of provision. This is one that I share, and I am absolutely determined and proud to continue to lead and work collaboratively with all members of our school community to continue to realise our shared vision, and to secure the ongoing rapid improvements necessary.

Stamford Park Trust is committed to Longdendale High School and to supporting improvements to the quality of education at the school. We are pleased that Ofsted recognised the rapid improvement made by staff since Longdendale High School joined the Trust, and the Trust's part in that improvement. We understand that there is further work to do and we remain committed to ensuring that Longdendale High School becomes a beacon of excellence and ambition for all. The future is bright for both Longdendale High School and Stamford Park Trust as we move through the next stage of our improvement journey together.

Thank you for your ongoing support for our school and our students, and we trust you will continue to recognise the many successes our young people experience at Longdendale High School, and value the education they continue to be provided with. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to continue to improve the areas highlighted in the report, and, as always, your support with this is much appreciated. but in the meantime, please be assured that as a team, we remain committed to providing your child with the learning experiences and opportunities they so richly deserve.

Yours sincerely



Andrea Jones
Headteacher

Yours sincerely



Anton McGrath
CEO

<https://www.longdendalehighschool.org.uk/about-us/ofsted>