

13 October 2010

Mr P Fry
Headteacher
The Willink School
School Lane
Burghfield Common
Reading
RG7 3XJ

Dear Mr Fry

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 September 2010 to look at your school's use of alternative provision.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on examining the use of alternative provision for students who are vulnerable to underachieving, and the impact that this has on outcomes for these students.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

This letter briefly summarises our discussion at the end of the visit.

Outcomes

- Students who attend alternative education provision gain appropriate results in the core curriculum alongside qualifications such as BTEC, City and Guilds, National Vocational Qualifications, Adult Literacy and Numeracy, and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. This is due to the school's wide range of provision, including extended work placements and provision by the voluntary sector, which it believes opens up choices for the students.
- The students' success is also due to the way in which the school involves parents in supporting their children's education. Parents praised the vocational provision for motivating their children, re-engaging their interest in learning and enabling them to be more relaxed at home. Parents were concerned about their children's attendance at school and their prospects for the future before they started these alternative courses. They welcomed the progress that their children were making socially.

- Students currently attending alternative provision say that they enjoy the practical experience and also learning skills such as taking responsibility for their work and their attendance. They know they have to turn up on time or they will lose their place.
- The school's monitoring shows improvements in the students' attendance and behaviour since they joined the provision.
- Not all the students, however, are aware of the accreditation they are working towards.
- The large majority of students go on to college courses.

Selecting and commissioning

- The school borders, and draws on, a number of local authorities for support in selecting and commissioning a broad range of suitable provision.
- Some available provision is difficult to access because of limited transport in the rural area where the school is situated.
- Through visits to the placements, you ensure that they match the students' needs well and that all appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- The school uses an effective online system to monitor students' attendance, behaviour and progress through reports from providers.
- The school is not yet sharing the information systematically with students to help them monitor their progress towards accreditation or to inform them how to improve their work.
- While students appreciate that the school has adapted the timetable so that they do not always miss the same lessons when out on placements, they still find it a challenge to catch up with the work missed. They say they would like more support, for example from a dedicated teacher, during their allocated 'catch up' time.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop alternative provision in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector