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Ms P Ashworth
Headteacher
Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit
Franciscan Road
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Dear Ms Ashworth

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit to your pupil referral unit on 22 November 2010 to look at your use of alternative provision.

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

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

- The unit uses alternative provision as part of an inclusive approach which seeks to re-engage pupils who are disaffected with all aspects of school.
- Attendance at external courses is integrated with the individual learning programmes for each pupil and, as a result, of this joint approach the majority of pupils achieve some qualifications at the end of Year 11.
- The majority of these pupils have improved both their attendance and their behaviour and those spoken to felt that they were learning important skills, including taking greater responsibility for their work and how to work effectively with others.
- The pupils are positive about the difference that alternative educational provision has made and think that this is preparing them well for their future education, employment or training.

Selecting and commissioning

- The local authority provides a comprehensive evaluation framework which ensures that safeguarding requirements are met and that external provision is quality assured effectively.
- The unit commissions providers to meet the individual needs of the pupils and it is rigorous in monitoring attendance and progress.
- Before any placement is made, all providers are visited to ensure that they understand the needs of the pupils and are clear about the unit's expectations.
- Pupils are then closely involved before a final decision is made.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- Attendance and behaviour are monitored over time and it is clear that there has been an overall improvement in both.
- Key workers play an important role in maintaining the pupil in their placements and are often instrumental in ensuring that they attend regularly and on time.
- Although the PRU evaluates the impact of alternative provision on outcomes for pupils the local authority is aware that more work is needed to ensure that this is the case for all schools in the borough. This work is underway. I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop alternative provision in the PRU.

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.

Yours sincerely

Maureen York
Her Majesty's Inspector