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Mr S Potter
Headteacher
Robertsbridge Community College
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Dear Mr Potter

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 October 2010 to look at your college'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 this has on the 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.

Outcomes

- The college has been using external placements for identified students for a number of years. This has often meant that students attend other education establishments to support their work. For example, there are very well-established arrangements with a local agricultural training provider. Students enjoy these placements and find them very helpful.
- The extension for students to complete a day's work experience each week is relatively new, so procedures to track students' progress are not as well developed. However, the college is clear that individuals' attendance has improved, as has students' confidence and maturity.
- All students attain suitable GCSE qualifications alongside their work-based skills. The students currently attending placements felt that they were learning important skills, including taking greater responsibility for their work, how to work effectively with others, how to control their behaviour and how to communicate appropriately with other adults, especially

customers. As one student said and the others agreed, 'it is far easier to get up and go to my placement than it is on college days because I feel valued and treated like an adult.' This is preparing them well for their future education, employment or training.

Selecting and commissioning

- The college works well with the local authority to identify suitable placements and then uses the expertise of an external agency approved by the local authority to undertake appropriate safeguarding and health and safety checks.
- The assistant headteacher, with support from the work-experience coordinator, ensures that students are matched to an appropriate area. Parents are involved closely with this selection for their children, including being part of the college, home and work-placement agreement. On some occasions, parents have prompted a change to their children's curriculum to try and get them re-engaged with college.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- The college checks students' attendance at their placement each time they are due to attend and students know that they must inform both their placement and the college if they are absent.
- The college has built up good procedures to monitor the progress of students who attend educational establishments for additional work and is extending this expertise to track and evaluate students' performance in work placements. The agreement with students before they go on their placement will form the basis of the evaluation.
- Students feel well-supported by the college and their placement, and they commented that it certainly had made a difference to the way in which they are working this year.

I hope that this visit has been useful in the further development of this aspect of the college's work.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector