

12 November 2010

Mr G Lloyd
Headteacher
The Wycombe and Chess Valley Grange
56 Amersham Hill
High Wycombe
HP13 6PQ

Dear Mr Lloyd

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation and that of your staff when I visited your school on 6 October 2010. Please pass on my particular thanks to the students who gave up their time to talk to me.

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.

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

Outcomes

- The centre manages and coordinates the South Buckinghamshire programme of alternative provision very effectively. As a result, the great majority of the 150 students identified as most at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training are re-engaged in learning and motivated to do well.
- Of the students who attended courses last year, 85% are now in some form of education or employment and most of their current activities build on last year's opportunities.
- Students enjoy the courses; they are motivated and very positive about their learning. As a result, attendance at the off-site courses and the core skills sessions in the centre is generally very good: many students' attendance is over 95%. None of last year's students was excluded from alternative courses.

- Through partnerships with other providers, students gain meaningful and relevant vocational qualifications. Most also achieve appropriate qualifications in the core subjects as well as improving their personal skills and attitudes towards work.
- Students currently attending placements feel that they are learning important skills which will help them with their future employment or training. They also appreciate being treated with respect and believe that the opportunities are helping their all round development as more responsible members of their communities.

Selecting and commissioning

- The centre commissions and coordinates this area of work on behalf of the local authority with the aim of reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training and to ensure coherent high-value alternative provision is targeted at those students who need it the most.
- The centre's staff are effective in ensuring that there is consistency in the selection, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and quality of providers. Consistent and effective systems are also in place for referring students, coordinating support and matching students to suitable courses.
- Courses are provided specifically for this group of students and there is flexibility in enabling students to start at various times during the year according to their needs.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- Monitoring is rigorous and effective. Attendance is monitored at each session and absence is followed up immediately. Regular liaison between the centre and providers identifies potential difficulties quickly and the centre works hard to place students on courses where they will be successful. This good communication between the off-site providers and the centre ensures that all concerned know the students and their individual needs very well.
- An induction period at the centre and weekly core-skills sessions mean that the individual needs, interests and abilities of students are very well understood and developed.
- The quality of the support and ongoing monitoring mean that the centre is able to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision and demonstrate its impact on students, particularly those who spend all of their time either in the centre or in alternative provision.
- However, a number of students spend some of their time at mainstream schools and the centre has not yet evaluated whether the positive impact seen in the centre and in the alternative courses is reflected in their progress and achievement in mainstream schools.

I hope that this visit has been useful in the further development of this aspect of the centre'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

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector