

8 October 2010

Mr A Wood
Headteacher
The Compass
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Dear Mr Wood

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September 2010 to look at your centre's use of alternative provision. Please also thank your colleagues from the local authority whom I met.

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 majority of students gain a wide range of suitable qualifications in the core curriculum and other subjects such as art and history. You have also developed provision in the centre so that students gain skills in hairdressing and catering. Through partnerships with other providers students gain qualifications in handling power boats, construction and land-based studies.
- Students currently attending placements felt that they were learning important skills. They said they were gaining confidence and learning how to work in an adult environment. This is preparing them well for their future education, employment or training.

Selecting and commissioning

- The centre has a wide range of alternative provision. It has made decisions about when it is more appropriate for courses to be delivered on-site to ensure their success and developed provision such as a hair and beauty salon and a catering kitchen.
- Through a detailed knowledge of the local area, staff have developed a network of providers. The Pupil Programming Officer ensures that checks are made on all providers and that students are matched to areas that interest them.
- The centre is currently part of a project to commission providers which is intended to bring some county-wide consistency to this area of work as well as potentially improving the selection, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and quality of providers.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- Very close working relationships with providers and centre staff as well as detailed knowledge of each student's needs means that any problems can be quickly addressed.
- Attendance is monitored carefully. Providers give regular reports on progress. The centre has a wealth of anecdotal evidence of the outcomes and how well students are progressing. It is currently developing a system to improve the tracking of progress and attitude to learning of individual students. This has the potential to also result in more effective evaluation of different provision.
- Students recognise that the provision they receive helps them to decide what they know, what they would like to do when they leave school and appreciate the opportunities they receive which is helping them to achieve.

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

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

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector