

12 November 2010

Mr D Struthers
Headteacher
Hylands School
Hatfield Grove
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 3DF

Dear Mr Struthers

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 November 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 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

- Students speak positively about their provision and the difference that it is making to their behaviour and attendance. While some still struggle to manage their behaviour, the majority have developed positive attitudes to learning; they are more confident and have a greater understanding of the personal skills that they need to apply to be successful in the workplace. This is reflected in better attendance by the majority and particularly those in Year 11.
- Students gain a wide range of accreditation in the key skills of literacy and numeracy as well as some vocational qualifications, for example in customer service and employability skills. The school does not know the destination of all of those who left last year, however the majority went into further education.

- Students also benefit from a carefully structured timetable at school. They welcome the fact that their study time varies between attending alternative provision and days in school to study core subjects such as English, mathematics and science. All those who left last year gained GCSEs in English and mathematics. Some students indicated that they would like to have more time to study core subjects.

Selecting and commissioning

- Staff monitor students' progress systematically and use this information to identify those who would benefit from attending alternative provision. Placements are identified carefully to meet the needs of each student by taking account of their learning needs, behaviour and attitudes, attendance patterns, personal circumstances and their commitment and potential to benefit from the provision. Parents and students are provided with information about the range of available options.
- The school values the support of its partners in helping to identify suitable placements, and the advice from services such as Connexions. The school indicates that there is no authority-wide database of providers to draw on and that it is becoming more difficult, because of the current economic climate, to access longer-term work placements which meet students' interests.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- A small team of staff has clearly defined roles for monitoring and evaluation. Attendance and progress are monitored carefully and regularly, and a record is kept of accreditations gained. The school is currently reviewing its arrangements and has rightly identified the need to tighten systems for evaluating the overall effectiveness of provision, and the quality assurance mechanisms for the variety of checks and assessments it carries out.
- Students appreciate the regular visits by staff to check on how well they are doing and the continued support and attention given to their personal needs.

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

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector