

13 October 2010

Ms J Thirkell  
Springwell Centre  
St Helen's Boulevard  
Carlton Road  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S71 2AT

Dear Ms Thirkell

### **Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 September 2010 to look at your centre's use of alternative provision. Please pass on my special thanks to the other professionals for the discussions and to the group of students that came to speak 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 off-site programmes contribute to students' aspirations to continue their education when they leave the centre. They achieve meaningful and relevant qualifications that help them to gain a place at college, as well as improving their personal skills and attitudes towards work.
- Consideration of students' commitment features highly when the centre's staff are trying to match students to placements and most students fulfil their part of the bargain. This includes students' contribution to the cost of transport and doing a longer day while on placement.

#### **Selecting and commissioning**

- Staff have a very clear view that commissioning off-site provision is about helping students to gain suitably challenging qualifications in tandem with improving their participation in work-related activities. The centre expects providers to offer qualifications at different levels, not only to suit students

of all abilities but also to enable them to progress to higher levels. They also expect high quality teaching that is firmly rooted in meeting the students' complex emotional and social needs.

- The cost is also a key consideration. The centre particularly values partnerships with the colleges. New partnerships are currently being sought to meet the needs of students with the most complex behavioural and social difficulties.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and support**

- The centre benefits from the local authority's procedures for monitoring and supporting the providers. This includes an electronic system for monitoring students' attendance and progress during the placements.
- The centre's staff work closely with each provider so that they have relevant information about individual students' needs. They also make regular visits and provide backup support when issues arise.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Heather Yaxley**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**