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Mr B Parker
Executive Headteacher
Thomas Tallis School
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Dear Mr Parker

13 survey inspection programme: schools' use of alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 5 and 6 November 2012 to look at the school's use of alternative provision.

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.

Strengths of this aspect of the school's work

- A well-planned curriculum enables students who attend alternative provision to access appropriate courses in English and mathematics from which they can gain relevant qualifications. Extra-curricular provision is also well provided for.
- The local authority has robust quality assurance procedures that monitor the services of most providers well, although the registration status of providers is not always given sufficient attention. The 'G-Choice' portfolio provides the school with established providers who have undergone effective safeguarding checks.
- Providers' accommodation seen during the survey visit is highly suitable for students especially the outdoor facilities for those students with complex needs.

- The majority of students, especially those attending construction placements, are very happy with their placements and feel they have gained valuable skills which they would not have achieved at school, for example working to project deadlines and partnership skills. Many students in Year 10 are keen to pursue a career in their chosen placements.
- Effective communication between providers and the school is working well to monitor students who are the most vulnerable to being permanently excluded.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that guidance is given to providers to enable them to be fully informed of students' personal and academic history, so that appropriate support is identified. Clear guidance should also be given to providers to assist them in completing progress reports so that they contain useful information on the progress students have made in their personal, social and employment skills development
- developing a more robust review of students' achievement, including the clear identification of appropriate qualifications and progression pathways for all students. Some qualifications achieved by students on full-time placements are of a very low level. Also, there are insufficient opportunities for some students to progress further than level 1 in their chosen placement
- ensuring that senior leaders scrutinise carefully the monitoring of providers' quality and the evaluation of the progress that providers make in improving their provision. In addition, sufficient checks need to be implemented to confirm that alternative provision placements are registered with the Department for Education if required.

My concerns about the registration status of one of the providers you are using have been reported to the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector