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16 October 2012

Mr A Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Evans

Ofsted 2012 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 10 October 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

- This provision is given a high priority within the school's strategic planning. It is very well coordinated by an expanding team within the school. This team is led by an assistant headteacher in charge of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and has been boosted this year by the appointment of an independent careers adviser and a higher level teaching assistant to offer school-based support to students on the programme.
- Provision is mainly arranged through two very well-organised partnerships. The Young Apprentice programme operated through a lead partner school, and the 'Live and Learn' scheme arranged by the local authority's 14–16 team, secure high-quality off-site provision in a range of vocational settings. However the school does not limit opportunities to those offered through these partnerships, and arranges placements independently where practicable and appropriate.
- Students are given comprehensive information, advice and guidance to ensure that courses are well-suited to their needs and aspirations.

Success rates are high across Level 1 and Level 2 courses in vocational areas including construction, equine, hair-and-beauty, motor vehicle, catering and sport. Nearly all students make progress into further education, training or apprenticeships, often in related vocational areas.

- Strong success rates for students on these courses make a significant contribution to the school's very high GCSE pass rates and consequently high overall score for 'value added'. Overall school attendance has improved markedly over time, and this is reflected in the attendance records of many students on the off-site programmes.
- The providers are of a high quality. The local authority's success in attracting European Social Fund resources for the Live and Learn programme has enabled its officers to set very high standards when commissioning services from providers. This sets a benchmark for expectations for other aspects of provision. Students' progress and well-being is regularly and rigorously monitored by the school and the partnerships, particularly on the Live and Learn programme.
- The school provides a good range of information to providers, and makes sure that they know about any particular learning or social needs that the students have. Communication systems between providers, partnerships and schools are very well developed, and ensure that any concerns, for example over students' non-attendance, are tackled swiftly.
- Students are highly satisfied with their provision. They feel that it helps them to prepare for life by getting experience in real working environments, and for many it is helping to launch them on a chosen career path. Given the school's rural setting, many have to travel independently over long distances to attend their courses, but none appear to be discouraged by this.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- incorporating reports from off-site providers on students' progress, personal development and employability skills into regular school reports for students, parents and carers
- refining support systems and timetables to ensure that students who miss lessons when off-site, particularly in English and mathematics, are able to catch up and consistently meet their targets for progress in those subjects.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector