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Ms J Shepard  
Executive Headteacher  
Beechwood School  
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Dear Ms Shepard

### **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 10 and 11 December 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**

- Procedures for selecting and commissioning alternative providers are excellent. Schools in this unitary authority work closely in partnership with each other and with Haybrook College which provides a pupil referral service and alternative education.
- Haybrook College ensures that all providers, whether they are directly managed by the college or are local employers, robustly meet requirements for the safeguarding, health and safety of students. Observation of the provision for catering, construction, car mechanics, behaviour management and a full-time vocational programme known as 'Activate', confirmed that due consideration is given to students' safety and the suitability of accommodation.
- The college is supported very effectively by the local authority and local business partnership, and provides a wide range of alternative provision that Beechwood School buys into.

- The inclusion team at Beechwood School considers carefully the personal and academic needs, interests and aspirations of each student in selecting the most appropriate internal and external provision.
- The providers are well informed about the individual needs of each student through detailed referral forms provided by the school.
- Individual students are supported very well by mentors provided by the college. The mentors visit them in their placements and meet with them each week. Students, providers and mentors say they can contact an identified person in the school with any issues at any time and they feel confident that their concerns would be addressed promptly.
- For some students, off-site provision is timetabled so that they do not miss any other lessons. Other students have to miss some lessons in order to attend the provision and they are given extra support by their teachers to help them to catch-up. The result is that all students have a balanced curriculum and, with the exception of a few Year 11 students, they study GCSEs in English and mathematics at school.
- A few Year 11 students study full-time at 'Activate', which is a centre based in a business setting operated by Unilever. These students follow a balanced curriculum of GCSE mathematics, functional English, ASDAN and BTEC vocational courses. Their workplace skills are suitably developed through attending work placements for one day a week. The placements are matched well to the students' interests and aspirations.
- All alternative provision in Key Stage 4 leads to some form of nationally recognised accreditation. The range is wide. It is used to provide a clear pathway for the students, and most of the courses they go on to study at college relate to their placements.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative provision are detailed and rigorous. This ensures that the provision is of consistently high quality, that students attend regularly, behave appropriately and make good progress. Providers contact the school immediately if a student is absent and give the school a written progress report after each session.
- Detailed case studies show the impact of alternative provision throughout the student's time at school. Most students learn to manage their behaviour, develop positive attitudes to learning, improve their attendance, and go on to study courses at a further education college or enter employment. Some case studies also show a reduction in the students' involvement in crime.
- The positive achievement of students attending alternative provision contributes to the school's overall strong progress and attainment for vulnerable students.

- Students value the alternative provision highly. They say that the individual attention they receive, together with the opportunity to excel in practical work, gives them the confidence and self-esteem to continue their studies and to achieve.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Frater**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**