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Mr M Connor
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Dear Mr Connor

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 16 and 17 January 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision.

During the visit I met with senior leaders at the school who are involved in the co-ordination of alternative provision and with three groups of students who attend alternative providers. I examined a range of documents and published materials. I also visited the following providers that your students attend: Riseholme College, Lincoln College and The Acorn Behaviour Support Service.

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 academy's work

- This provision is given a high profile within the school's curriculum planning. It is very well co-ordinated by a team of senior and middle leaders within the school including the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- Provision is arranged through two different types of partnerships. Collaborative work with two local further education colleges provides curriculum opportunities that would not generally be available to students. This is arranged through the local authority's '14 – 16 Opportunities

Programme' which makes available high-quality off-site provision in a range of vocational settings. Collaborative work with an independent behaviour support service provides high level, skilled educational support for students at risk of exclusion or who are difficult to manage.

- Students who might benefit from a wider and more vocational curriculum are carefully identified early in Year 9. The school gives them comprehensive information, advice and guidance to ensure that courses are well-suited to their needs and aspirations. These students are then encouraged to apply for their chosen course. Both the school and the providers interview the students to check that their educational and personal needs can be best met in this way. Success rates are high across Level 1 and Level 2 courses in vocational areas including agriculture, land based engineering, equestrian, horticulture and small animal care. Nearly all students who attend these courses make progress into further education, training or apprenticeships, often in related vocational areas.
- The local authority, through its '14-16 Opportunities Programme', provides a comprehensive directory of off-site provision which the school finds very useful. Through good collaboration between school and alternative providers this extensive programme provides students with a good choice of pathways and opportunities, all with clear progression routes. Importantly, the partnership is committed to thorough quality assurance through statutory checks and vetting, coupled with continuous review and improvement to ensure that the placements are safe, are of high quality and can provide appropriate qualifications.
- The quality of support provided by the school and the outside providers working together for students on alternative provision is excellent. Students' academic progress, attendance and personal development are regularly and closely monitored both by the school and external providers so that any issues or problems can be resolved quickly as they arise. Parents and carers receive termly progress reports so that they are well informed of developments. Assessment information from alternative courses is included in the whole school tracking system so that staff at the school can see if any students are falling behind with their work or require additional support. This high level of support ensures that virtually all students succeed and achieve well in their chosen courses.
- Students on behaviour support programmes are well supported by school staff, staff at the centre, and their parents and carers. Students receive tailored programmes that are carefully designed to meet their specific needs and the vast majority are quickly and successfully re-integrated into school, where previously they experienced difficulties.
- Timetables are carefully constructed so that alternative courses or other external placements enhance the existing curriculum and not replace it. This means that all students still receive their entitlement to a qualification in English, mathematics and science and their other option subjects. If any lessons are missed, sufficient opportunities are given to catch up.

- Students interviewed were highly satisfied with their provision. They feel that it particularly helps them to prepare for life by gaining useful qualifications and getting experience of work. Furthermore they report that through their participation they can see clear routes to the next stage of their education and now believe that they are possible.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- considering a wider range of providers and a wider offer of courses in order to cater for the growing number of students that would benefit from vocational courses in the coming years
- reviewing options for work-based learning opportunities that could lead directly to apprenticeships.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector