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Mrs J Turner
Principal
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Dear Mrs Turner

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 14 and 15 January 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with the senior leadership team including the assistant principal responsible for co-ordinating alternative provision. I met with a group of students and examined a range of documents including students' examination results and their termly progress reports. I also visited Bexley College and Informal Education, two of the providers that your students attend.

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

- Most provision is arranged through the partnership with the local authority, which helps the school to know what is available. The needs of students are clearly identified and the school works well to locate suitable provision that is not always offered through the partnership. As a result of the highly effective measures that school leaders are implementing within school to meet the needs of this group of students, there is a diminishing need for off-site provision.
- All students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Good arrangements have been made to ensure they receive the required time and teaching to undertake GCSE English and mathematics, either at school or at the providers.

- Students receive relevant information and good advice and guidance from the providers to inform them of the content of their chosen course and the progression routes available to them once they have completed the course. This ensures that courses meet students' expectations and are well-suited to their needs. Success rates are high on Level 1 courses in hair and beauty.
- There is a high level of parental engagement and support for this provision especially with providers who work with the most vulnerable students who are at risk of exclusion.
- Students are very positive about their experiences on alternative provision and feel they are very well supported by tutors and staff at school. They say they have developed better skills in preparation for employment and have improved their levels of confidence.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a co-ordinated approach that is consistently led by a senior leader to evaluate and quality assure the work of providers including the quality of teaching. School leaders have recognised that this aspect requires improvement and have implemented actions that have begun to address this
- using the best examples of providers' practice in reporting students' progress to improve the information that students receive about their academic progress and how well they are developing their employability skills
- providing a suitable level of detail in the students' 'pen portraits' that the school gives to providers so that providers can more effectively meet the special educational needs that students may have
- recording and evaluating all accredited outcomes for students attending alternative provision and informing the governing body how well this provision is performing in helping students to gain positive outcomes
- ensuring 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