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11 February 2013

Mrs J Mitchell
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Dear Mrs Mitchell

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 Tuesday 22 January and Monday 28 January to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and members of the pastoral and curriculum leadership teams. I also observed a 'Guidance Forum' run by these leaders, which reviewed the provision for students vulnerable to underachievement and the progress they were making. I met with students individually and in groups, and examined a range of documents and students' files. I also visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Brakes Training, Coventry
- Arthur Rank Training, Kenilworth
- Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa campus.

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

- Curriculum and pastoral leaders give very detailed consideration to the suitability of alternative provision to match students' needs, interests and aspirations. By completing individual learning plans before a placement is selected, students are encouraged to think carefully about possible career aims and pathways and how these can be achieved.

- All current Year 11 students were offered a very wide choice of vocational options delivered in specialist centres across the campuses of Warwickshire College. Students went through a very detailed application process in school to ensure that they had genuine interests in the occupational area selected. As a consequence, these students have very positive views of the provision and a significant proportion are expecting to continue in education, employment or training in the chosen field. These courses remain available for those with specific aspirations or interests although as the school's own vocational and applied provision has grown, they are no longer published alongside other options and only one student in the current Year 10 is pursuing the programme.
- Regular meetings of the Guidance Forum review the provision for the few students in or due to enter Key Stage 4 who are showing signs of underachievement or disaffection. These meetings determine whether their needs are best met wholly in school or through spending part of their week with vocational training providers.
- For a few students with specific behavioural, emotional or social needs, the school works closely with the Area Behaviour Partnership to manage students' placements with providers. This partnership has contributed to a marked reduction in exclusions within the school.
- A small number of providers are used, drawn from a list approved by the local authority for their quality and safe practices.
- Communication between the school and providers is excellent. The school's coordinator of work-related placements has good working relationships with key personnel in the providers. She visits and calls regularly and maintains thorough records of contacts which check on students' progress, attitudes and dispositions.
- Communication is further supported by a highly effective information and communication technology system which links all providers with schools in the local partnership. This system allows the school immediate sight of the provider's registration of students' attendance, and daily progress reports where appropriate.
- Students' progress is monitored carefully. Students' progress and attitudes are checked systematically on a six-weekly cycle, and concerns are addressed through the Guidance Forum.
- Students in Year 11 who attend vocational provision at Warwickshire College do not miss lessons in other subjects as their time out of school is blocked against other options. Other students who do miss lessons when they are off-site have specific time allocated, with appropriate support from teaching assistants, to help them catch up.

- Students feel well supported and achieve well. Many are successful in gaining vocational accreditation at Levels 1 or 2 through their alternative placements. In 2012, all gained accreditation in English and mathematics: all attained a GCSE in English and nearly all a GCSE in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- working with alternative providers to ensure that their teachers and instructors receive the detailed written information available in school on students' special educational needs and the teaching strategies that are best used to meet those needs
- ensuring that the school systematically and regularly scrutinises health and safety audits and quality assurance reports on providers
- further strengthening the school's systems for measuring the quality and impact of alternative provision, through surveys of students' views and gathering data students' progression into chosen occupational areas
- working through the Area Behaviour Partnership to develop more common approaches to the format and timing of summative progress reports from providers.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector