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Mrs L Exley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Exley

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 30 January and 1 February to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with the co-ordinator of alternative provision and with a group of students and examined a range of documents. I also visited the following providers that your students attend: Springland Training & Assessment Centre, Humpty Dumpty Pre-school, B & B Motors, Homebase, Nanas Day Nursery and CM Cadman & Son.

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

- Alternative off-site provision is an integral part of the school's strong emphasis on work-related learning for all students. A wide range of providers add to the opportunities provided on-site, for example the 'bike workshop' which give students an authentic, well-structured educational experience of cycle maintenance and repairs, under the guidance of a well-qualified instructor.
- Procedures for selecting and commissioning alternative providers demonstrate effective partnership work between the school and the Hertfordshire Careers Service (HCS) which ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met and that all successful placements are certificated. Partnerships with other local schools and further education providers add to the range of provision.

- Alternative provision is passionately led and efficiently managed by a coordinator with recent first-hand experience of business, supported by a Deputy Headteacher responsible for inclusion. Together they ensure that provision is well matched to students' immediate needs and longer-term aspirations. Off-site provision contributes to an extensive range of interventions designed to support students' achievement and progression.
- The range and quality of alternative provision benefits from the groundwork of the coordinator, who regularly visits providers and frequently monitors students' progress, sometimes unannounced. The involvement of providers in school-based initiatives such as careers interviews and an annual careers convention adds to the professionalism of the programme and continuous dialogue between school and provider.
- On three days each week all students have equal access to GCSE English, mathematics and science courses. Optional courses on the remaining two days include alternative provision which is either accredited or designed as a foundation for courses, training or employment. Students enjoy high success rates in pursuing their options, including the 'ACE' programme provided in school. Some students successfully gain apprenticeships with off-site providers.
- Students are very positive about their experience of alternative provision within school and off-site. Journals, annotated scrapbooks, portfolios and self-assessments maintained by students add to the sense of value because they regularly reflect on their experience and target improvements. Students are strongly motivated by their clear understanding of the academic, personal and social skills valued in the workplace.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending the range of accreditation that is available through alternative provision
- ensuring that the best practice in relation to students' assignments are expected of all placements.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector