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Dame Yasmin Bevan
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Dear Dame Yasmin

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 28 and 29 January 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: Eden Therapeutic Centre, Active Support, Xers Motorcross Project and Woodlands Secondary School for students with special educational needs.

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

- Provision is very well coordinated by the assistant headteacher in charge of inclusion, and a team of staff specialist in pastoral, special educational needs and careers support who ensure that off-site programmes are very well matched to students' individual needs. This complements the school's wider approach to personalisation. The process is supported by individual interviews and tailored timetables for all students and managed by senior staff.
- Procedures for selecting and commissioning alternative providers benefit from the effective support of the local authority. Providers that the authority suggests have a successful track record of work with schools locally. The involvement of a partner school in re-integrating students into school life adds to the quality of provision.

- While different providers commonly focus on improving students' attendance and attitudes to learning, their approaches are wide-ranging. Their different specialisms, for example sports, enable the school to tap into students' specific interests. Accreditation adds rigour and contributes to developing the study skills that students might not have applied previously to their school-based work. Some students return to school sufficiently well equipped to take a leading role in the learning of others, for example by becoming mentors.
- The providers are very well informed about students' background and targets are clear. Detailed referral forms are supported by liaison meetings that involve the school, provider, student and parent or carer. The staff responsible for monitoring students' progress off-site maintain regular contact. This is supported by clear additional procedures should any concerns arise, for example with regard to safeguarding.
- The small proportion of students who access alternative provision off-site do so part-time. High priority is given to the continuous learning of English and mathematics in school, and the application of key skills in the context of alternative provision. Students follow GCSE, functional skills, ASDAN, City and Guilds courses and additional awards. The school's systematic procedures for tracking students' progress are strongly focused on achievement for all. The continuing commitment of school staff to students when off-site is a strong feature. For example, a student accessing education while in hospital still achieved well.
- Detailed case studies demonstrate the impact of alternative provision. Improvements in students' attendance, attitudes to learning, ability to work collaboratively and cooperatively are common. As a consequence, most continue their education or training at further education colleges. Some students enter employment directly having experienced part-time employment or having successfully completed work-experience, an expectation of all students at the start of Year 11.
- Students value the alternative provision highly. They appreciate the opportunity to develop positive relationships with other adults and students. They enjoy their taste of an authentic working environment which most providers successfully create. However, students' successful re-integration into full-time education at Challney remains their goal; time for reflection out of school is a contributory factor. Examples of students' personal statements show that attending alternative provision helps them to learn to take responsibility.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that providers' grading systems are compatible with those that students are familiar with in school

- incorporating off-site settings into the school's programme of lesson observations and teacher evaluations.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector