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Mr B Slater
Joint Acting Principal
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Dear Mr Slater

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 6 and 7 March 2013 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with staff at the academy and at the Oakfield off-site provision. This provision supports groups of students who are not likely to complete their education at school through the collaboration of a group of five local schools and academies. I talked to students and analysed documentation. I also visited New College Swindon and Swindon College, 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

- The academy works well with students who arrive from other schools as part of a managed move. These students often are not able to continue with the full range of options they started in their previous school, so they often follow a course of study at college.
- The timetable is planned so that students who attend alternative provision in Year 10 do not miss any lessons for their other options or for English or mathematics. Students in Year 11 miss some lessons when they attend their alternative provision but the academy makes sure they have opportunities to catch up on any work they miss. They all complete a GCSE in mathematics and English.

- A small group of students attend the alternative provision for the whole week. They study appropriate vocational courses as well as GCSE mathematics and English.
- Students who attend the Oakfield unit, an off-site unit which is shared with several other schools, do so full time and complete a variety of GCSE courses, including English and mathematics, as well as vocational courses. Many of these students are successful at GCSE art and design, having been excluded from art lessons because of poor behaviour in their previous schools.
- Students who are educated of all or part of the week off site are well supported. The academy makes sure it gets constant feedback on both attendance and how well students are progressing. The academy visits all providers monthly and checks with individuals how they are getting on.
- Providers give good feedback on how well students are progressing and any issues regarding behaviour or attendance. Providers also check on how well students are developing work-related skills.
- The academy gives a good range of information to providers, including any particular learning or social needs. Providers are very praiseworthy of the support they receive from the academy and how effectively students are prepared for their placements.
- Students report that they enjoy their placements, they find the work challenging and enjoy working in a more adult environment where they are able to take more responsibility for their work and behaviour.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- systematically recording the development of students' key employability and personal skills during their placements.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector