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Mr X Bowers
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bowers

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 June 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During my visit I met with you, your assistant headteacher and your pastoral development manager. In addition, I met with three students who attend alternative provision, and examined a range of documents, including case studies and monitoring and evaluation records. I also met staff from the providers below, which your students attend off-site:

- Accrington and Rosendale College (ACROSS)
- North Lancashire Training Group (NLTG).

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 school recognises that a small number of students are 'switched off' from learning and present inappropriate behaviours, which leads to them being in danger of permanent exclusion or refusing to attend school. The school does some positive work with this group of young people, which is helping them to develop socially, emotionally and academically, and still feel a part of the school.
- Committed and experienced staff ensure that a range of suitable placements are secured for these students.

- The school has sourced and commissioned the services of a number of providers independently of the local authority. They were chosen primarily for their ability to satisfy students' varying needs, ambitions and interests.
- The quality of some of the teaching and training accommodation at both ACCROS and NLTC was first-class.
- There is effective liaison between the school and providers before and during the students' placement. Providers receive relevant information about students' prior attainment, social and emotional maturity, and other data that may help them better understand and meet the specific needs of the student. Any issues that occur at the placements, such as those relating to attendance or behaviour, are quickly brought to the school's attention.
- Staff, students, and sometimes their parents and carers undertake pre-placement visits to assess the placement's suitability. This is followed by taster days and an induction to help acclimatise students to the setting.
- Providers are closely scrutinised and undergo robust quality assurance vetting before they are accepted by the school, particularly in regard to safeguarding and health and safety.
- A team of three non-teaching pastoral support officers are on hand to respond quickly should issues at providers arise and on occasion this has led to almost daily contact with certain students.
- Students receiving alternative provision all study mathematics, English and science to help them develop these key skills. However, in 2012 none of them gained five A*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- Completion and retention rates at the providers are generally good and students gain City and Guilds, BTEC and ASDAN qualifications in a range of work-based learning subjects. Some benefit from courses designed to develop their social and emotional maturity. Most gain functional English and mathematics awards. Progression rates are strong and almost all of them enter education, employment or training when they leave school.
- School data and feedback from providers indicate that these courses have a positive impact on students' behaviour, sociability and attendance. The number of incidents when they are back on site has also reduced.
- The school carries out twice yearly monitoring visits to the providers, review the progress reports submitted by providers, and have on occasion amended courses or changed providers where issues arose.
- Students appreciate the school's efforts to find them suitable alternative provision. They recognise that it had saved them from being permanently excluded and credited the experiences with helping them to re-engage

with education and/or modify their previously anti-social behaviours. They particularly praised the support of the pastoral development manager.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the aspirations and achievements of these students by always matching the targets set and the courses taken to their true capabilities
- making more regular visits to providers to verify standards of teaching and formally evaluate students' relative progress against agreed criteria
- ensuring that all students receive their full curriculum entitlement
- formally reporting the progress and outcomes for this group to governors.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector