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Ms B McLaughlin
Headteacher
St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School
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Whitchurch
Bristol
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Dear Ms McLaughlin

Ofsted 2013 14 survey inspection programme: schools' use of alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 July 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with senior leaders who coordinate the alternative provision and examined a range of documents. I also visited Include, a provider 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 school provides a range of courses which meet the needs of almost all students either on the school site or through established college links. Consequently, the school does not feel the need to place any students with part-time providers and only a very small proportion of students require arrangements which involve the use of full-time alternative educational provision.
- Provision is selected following the use of a range of strategies and a thorough consideration of a student's particular needs.
- Partnership work with the local authority and other schools in the south Bristol area has helped to identify suitable providers that meet students' academic, social and behavioural needs.

- Providers receive a good level of information about the individual needs of students prior to their attendance and report they have good on-going communication with the school.
- All students are provided with a broad curriculum which includes a strong emphasis on developing students' personal and social skills. While most students are studying a suitable range of subjects, including English and mathematics, at GCSE level, a few students are studying some subjects at Entry level, which may not offer sufficient challenge.
- Providers send regular reports to the school on students' general progress, personal development and attendance.
- Since alternative provision was not used in the previous academic year, a picture of its long term success has yet to emerge. Recent evidence shows that attending alternative provision has helped students to re-engage with learning and to make suitable career choices for when they leave school. Of the four students who used alternative provision, two have enrolled on college courses for September 2013 and one will begin an apprenticeship. The fourth student is still considering her options and receiving guidance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- checking students' progress more closely to ensure that courses are giving students the right level of challenge
- monitoring the attendance and the amount of taught time students receive at the alternative education provision, including considering whether extended study leave is appropriate for vulnerable students.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector