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Mr G Payne
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Payne

Ofsted 2013 14 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 17 and 18 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, examined a range of documents and met with some students. I also visited the following providers that your students attend: The Bishop Bell Motor Vehicle Training Centre, Glebe Field Riding School and Equestrian Centre, and Opt In Plus at Sussex Downs College.

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

- Strong collaborative work with other schools in the area through the Eastbourne Schools Partnership has helped to identify suitable providers that meet students' academic, social and behavioural needs.
- Providers offer a positive environment with highly skilled staff. As a result students follow challenging courses and gain recognised qualifications.
- Students are very positive about their experience at off-site placements. They enjoy working in smaller groups, like the practical aspects of learning and appreciate the individual support they receive. Students describe how they take on increasing levels of responsibility, grow in confidence and feel

better prepared for their future careers. In the words of one, 'My experience was fun, enjoyable but downright hard work.'

- Providers report that they have good communication with the school and that any problems that might arise are resolved quickly. They send regular information to the school about students' general progress, personal development and attendance which is included in the school's termly reports.
- The use of off-site provision is timetabled to make sure that all students are provided with a balanced curriculum which leads to a broad range of suitable qualifications, including GCSE in both English and mathematics. Almost all Year 11 students who attended off-site provision last year gained GCSE passes in English and mathematics, with the remainder gaining qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy.
- Evidence from the school, individual providers and from students shows that as a result of attending off-site provision, several students have improved their attitude to learning. Most students who left in 2012 progressed to future training, study or employment linked to the work-related qualifications they gained through attending off-site provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- preparing students more thoroughly for attendance at some off-site provision by giving students more information in advance, for example through meeting staff or making visits
- making sure that the good arrangements that exist with some off-site providers for sharing information about students' individual needs and abilities are extended to all providers
- checking whether students receive a sufficient amount of taught time at one external provider
- supporting students to apply in school some of the very appropriate social skills and strategies they acquire at one of the off-site providers.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector