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Mrs E Young
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Young

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 2 October 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, those members of staff responsible for coordinating alternative provision and the five students who attend the off-site placements. I also reviewed a range of documents. Together, we visited the two providers that your students attend: Where Next Sernal and Barnardo's Redditch Wheels.

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

- As headteacher, you set high expectations that the small number of students attending alternative provision have placements that are best suited to their personal, social and academic needs.
- The school has a good and established relationship with each provider. Managers of each provider are fulsome in their praise of how well prepared the students are when they begin the placements.
- School leaders and managers have regular informal contact with staff in each of the providers. This includes updating the provider's staff on any personal or social challenges that the students are dealing with.

- Clear systems are in place so that the provider informs the school immediately if any student does not attend or there are any serious concerns.
- Excellent arrangements are in place to make sure that students still access a balanced curriculum. They are very well supported to make sure that they can catch up with any learning they miss when at their placements. For example, subject specialists provide individual teaching and support in English and physical education.
- All of the students currently attending alternative provision, and those who have done so in the past, take GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics that are appropriate for their ability as well as other relevant literacy and numeracy-based courses.
- Each of the providers is offering relevant work-related qualifications at levels appropriate for the students involved this year.
- I spoke to parents of a student currently on a placement and one who has now left school. Both parents are positive about their child's experiences and the support school leaders and managers have given to all of them. Increased levels of confidence and self-esteem are key improvements and one parent described her child's better attitudes to learning as a result of the placement.
- Each of the students I spoke to were similarly positive about their placement, including those who had started very recently. One student described how he had developed his team work skills; another spoke about increased levels of confidence in interacting with adults. Two students explained that attending the placement had resulted in a decrease in the number of 'debts' they had received because of poor behaviour.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making sure that there is a more systematic approach to sharing information about students' skills and needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy with each provider
- agreeing and sharing with providers the information required by the school about students' personal and academic progress so that this can be shared with parents as part of the school's reporting cycle
- having a clear purpose and structure for the regular visits to providers which enable leaders and managers to gather evidence about students' progress
- incorporating opportunities for students to share and use the skills they have developed when attending placements when they are back in school.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector