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Mr J Richardson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Richardson

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 22 and 23 October 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher responsible for inclusion, the special educational needs co-ordinator, the pastoral support manager and a group of students. I held two telephone discussions with parents and carers. I examined a range of documents including students' progress records. I visited students who attend alternative provision for some of the week in their lessons at the school and visited the following off-site providers that your students attend: Bedford Training Group; Vehicle Technology Centre; Greys Academy; 'Yes' Education.

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

- Effective partnership work underpins the quality of alternative provision. In school, liaison between the deputy headteacher in charge of inclusion, the special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral support manager contributes to support programmes being well matched to students' needs. Links with off-site providers are well established and clearly focused on provision that adds to that provided on-site, for example the Emmaus Centre in school which students using off-site provision also use. Regular meetings with other local schools to discuss

the impact of alternative provision contribute to the judicious use of off-site providers.

- Alternative provision has a profound and positive impact on the students. They are deeply reflective about what they have gained by alternative provision because they are very clear about the purpose. The application process, interview and pre-visit involve school staff, students, parents and carers where possible. All are confident that attitudes to learning and employability have improved. One student prepared an impressive computer presentation about her readiness for the world of work and another was observed creating a CV in the form of a film off-site. Providers give students an authentic experience of the workplace.
- Students receive regular feedback about their progress, facilitated by the accreditation of all off-site provision. In addition, some providers have introduced interim 'recognition' alongside 'concern' reports to help keep students well-motivated and on track. Half-termly visits by school staff are used effectively to discuss progress with students and staff working off-site. The reports that parents and carers receive, as part of the whole school reporting system, help to evaluate the impact of off-site provision on students' progress in other subjects.
- Systematic policies and procedures contribute to students feeling safe and supported off-site. Regular risk-assessments, where appropriate involving the students, swift follow-up with regard to students' attendance and punctuality and students' full timetables help to maximise opportunities for them to learn. One provider has recently increased opportunities for students to evaluate the quality of provision in order to refine approaches further. Another provided an evaluation of alternative provision following an Ofsted inspection that judged other aspects of the provider's work inadequate. The school de-selects providers that are not good enough. The 2011 Ofsted survey report is used evaluatively by the school to question and strengthen provision.
- The school is determined that as a Teaching School all aspects of its work should be exemplary, including alternative provision. Senior staff and the Governing Body give equal importance to monitoring performance data and well-being if students are following a school-based or off-site curriculum. However, the school's systems for observing lessons, scrutinising students' work and giving feedback to staff in school are not yet reflected in the visits to off-site providers. Providers are receptive to this and keen to learn from some of the inclusive teaching that the same students benefit from in school that was shared as part of this inspection.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- involving alternative providers in the school's work as a Teaching School by sharing best practice in school and off-site, including teaching, learning, monitoring and evaluation

- considering an area-wide approach to the assessment criteria used to evaluate students' achievement and employability through alternative provision, by building on your collaborative work with local providers and schools.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector