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10 February 2014

Mr E Wong  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Wong

**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 28 January 2014 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with senior leaders who co-ordinate the provision, two groups of students and the project manager for Teens & Toddlers who came into school to discuss the provision. I visited Motor Industry Training (MIT) that your students attend and held discussions with the staff responsible for the provision.

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 my discussion with the assistant headteacher at the end of the visit.

**Strengths of this aspect of the school's work**

- The use of alternative provision is managed well. The school selects alternative provision carefully to ensure it provides value for money and meets health and safety and safeguarding requirements.
- The school has used effectively its own connections and network meetings with other schools to learn about the availability of provision in the area. It does not use many alternative providers, but those used meet students' social and academic needs well.

- The provision is chosen to ensure that students follow challenging courses and develop employability and social skills. All students can gain Level 2 qualifications through attending the alternative provision. The use of provision is evaluated annually and, where necessary, new provision is commissioned to meet the changing interests and needs of Key Stage 4 students.
- The providers offer a positive environment with suitably trained staff. The quality of the accommodation and safety arrangements at the provision is of a good standard.
- Students are prepared well for making their particular choices through 'taster' sessions and meetings, held together with parents and carers, to explain possible career routes. Providers get a suitable range of information to help them in supporting the students. All have completed training in child protection, are aware of the school's procedures and are made aware of the school's child protection policy on its website. However, some of the information shared between the school and other providers is not always recorded formally.
- 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 on students' attendance, progress and personal development.
- The school timetable is organised so that alternative provision is included alongside other optional courses. This ensures that all students follow a balanced curriculum which leads to a broad range of suitable qualifications. The work students complete through one provider is linked very effectively to the school's BTEC Diploma course in health and social care.
- Almost all Year 11 students who attended off-site provision last year achieved at least five GCSE passes. All gained passes in English and mathematics, half of whom gained a grade C in English and a third of whom gained a grade C in mathematics. The school's evidence suggests that in relation to their starting points students made expected progress overall. However, several students had been underachieving previously, and since attending alternative provision they had made accelerated progress and closed the gap in attainment with their peers.
- All courses provide suitable challenge and enable students to gain Level 2 qualifications. The large majority of students who left at the end of Y11 have pursued further training linked to their off-site course, several at Level 3. One provider is only in the second year of operation and has not yet had a cohort of leavers. Those who are leaving at the end of 2014 are expecting to gain apprenticeships or continue with work-related training in the field.

- Students' personal, social and employability skills are promoted very well by both alternative providers. One provider is particularly successful in teaching 'work-finding' skills, to help students actively seek employment. Students are made aware, for example, of such attributes as work ethic, participation, attitude and conduct. These qualities are regularly scored and lead to the award of 'apprentice of the term.' At the other provider, students' self-esteem and social skills are measured at the beginning and end of the course and students gain a Level 1 award in interpersonal skills.
- Informal visits are made by the school to the off-site provision approximately once each term to make a general check on the quality of learning. Also, regular feedback is provided by a member of staff who accompanies students during the first term. Formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is less well established.
- Students are extremely positive about their experience at the off-site provision. They particularly enjoy learning through practical work and feel the experience has helped them grow in confidence. Typical comments made were, 'Time flies by', and 'I look forward to it every time.' Students also recognise how the courses fit in well with the rest of the timetable so they do not miss other subjects they wish to study.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- monitoring the progress of students who attend work-related courses as discrete groups, and as a whole, in order to evaluate the overall impact of the provision more effectively as the number of providers expands
- recording formally the sharing of information and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning at off-site provision.

Yours sincerely

**Andrew Redpath**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**