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Mrs P Mason
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mason

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 3 and 4 February 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the alternative provision coordinator, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Motorvations, Goldtrowel Limited and Lambourne End.

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 alternative provision coordinator has a considerable amount of time to lead this aspect of the school's work and has had this responsibility for a long time. This means that the coordinator has a good understanding of what each provider offers and is available to respond quickly to concerns when they arise. Providers feel well supported by the alternative provision coordinator, as do students and parents.
- Placements are tailored to the students' individual needs and interests well. The alternative provision coordinator, heads of year, the deputy headteacher and providers take a lot of time to make sure that each student has a placement that is right for them, and that each student and their parents or carers commit fully to the expectations for attendance, behaviour and course work.

- Alternative provision fits well with the rest of the students' weekly timetables so that English and mathematics remain the priorities and other courses are not unduly interrupted. Students are very positive about how alternative provision helps them gain the skills that they want for their chosen careers and about the help that they get to make sure that they do well in the rest of their school work.
- The school uses alternative providers that are on the local authority's approved list and this helps to make sure that arrangements to protect students are checked frequently and robustly. It also means that providers keep up to date with child-protection training.
- There are common themes among the small amount of providers used by the school: high priority for students' safety and well-being, high expectations of parents or carers as well as students to commit to what is on offer, purposeful and well-organised working environments, small groups so that students get a good amount of support and guidance, opportunities to use mathematic and literacy skills in their practical work, respectful and positive relationships between adults and students that put students at ease, and very few students drop out of courses.
- Improved attendance and good attitudes to work help most students on alternative provision to make expected progress in English and mathematics. Thirteen of the seventeen students in Year 11 last year gained a GCSE in English and mathematics. Three gained five GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics.
- Sixteen of the seventeen students who attended alternative provision last year went on to college courses, which should build upon the vocational qualifications that they gained by the end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing detailed, written information to providers about students' individual needs and levels of attainment, including specific information about any special educational needs, and the skills that need to be worked on
- when making the termly visits to providers, ensuring that the quality of teaching and students' achievements are formally monitored and recorded
- targeting and tracking students' personal development while on alternative provision
- following up students when they go on to post-16 provision to check how well prepared they were as a result of their experiences of alternative provision
- providing senior leaders and the governing body with a detailed, written analysis and evaluation of how well this group of students achieve as a result of alternative provision.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector