

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 March 2014

Mr E Murphy
Headteacher
Astley Sports College and Community High School
Yew Tree Lane
Dukinfield
Cheshire
SK16 5BL

Dear Mr Murphy

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 March 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, senior leaders and a governor. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Manchester United Foundation
- Tameside 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

- The school currently works with only two providers; it commissioned this provision independently and after thorough scrutiny of the quality, safety and cost of the placements. It switched provision to its new main provider at the start of the current academic year through this commissioning process. School and provider expectations are set out precisely in clear contracts of service.
- The provision is well-designed to meet the needs of the students. Students in Years 10 and 11 on the main provision at the Manchester United Foundation develop a wide range of employability and life skills as they work towards useful qualifications in enterprise and sports leadership.

They spend one day per week on the programme, and on other days at school have a well-balanced curriculum including a full programme of English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is well organised to ensure that they do not miss teaching in these core subjects. At Tameside College, current provision is made to provide a student with a broad range of academic and vocational courses over three days alongside a work placement programme.

- Students benefit from working in the first class facilities of a top football club, using the main stadium, training facility as well as local youth and leisure facilities. Business enterprise projects are set in the context of the commercial operation of the football club. Students are accompanied by an English teacher from the school to support their literacy, and are taught by a team of well-qualified coaches and instructors. At the college, students are able to access the classroom, workshop and studio facilities of a provider judged 'good' by Ofsted.
- The safety of students is given a high priority. The school works closely with providers to align their safeguarding procedures and to take common approaches, for example to the management of behaviour. Procedures for communicating between staff at the providers and the school are very clear and well-managed. At the main provision, students are transported by bus from school and the presence of a school teacher throughout the day further ensures that students are kept safe.
- The school gives providers comprehensive information about the backgrounds of the students and strategies to use to help them learn and keep them safe. This information is regularly updated. The school has worked closely with providers to ensure that all understand their roles and approaches to take with regard to child protection procedures.
- Providers feel very well supported by the school. At Manchester United, the teacher and coaches work closely together to ensure that students make good progress in developing their communication skills as part of their activities.
- All students are expected to gain GCSE accreditation in English and mathematics, and in 2013 nearly all attained this in both subjects. Students' progress in English and mathematics has strengthened markedly this year. Last year, very few made progress at the nationally expected rate, and none in mathematics. This year, four-fifths are on course to make at least the nationally expected rate of progress in English and a slightly fewer than half in mathematics.
- The improved rate of progress for students following alternative provision is supported by considerable improvements in their attitudes and behaviour. Very few have missed any alternative provision sessions during the academic year, and attendance at school has improved sharply for nearly all students. Incidents of poor behaviour, tracked by the school's red- and yellow-card system which is shared by the main provider, have

also declined very considerably. The main provider supplies the school with weekly reports and 'engagement scores' for each student to show how personal and employability skills are developing.

- All students from last year's Year 11 found places in further education, employment or training. While the programme at present does not prepare the students to follow specific occupational routes, it does much to boost confidence, increase self-esteem and raise aspirations.
- The school closely monitors the quality of education at the providers, through visits and reviews of outcomes. The regular presence of a member of the teaching staff at the main provider helps in this process. Visits by the deputy headteacher to assess the quality of teaching, where concerns have been raised, enables the school to ensure that the quality of provision continually enables its students to make real progress in their personal development and towards meaningful qualifications.
- Students speak very highly of the quality of provision they currently receive. In particular, they note its impact on promoting much better attitudes and behaviour, which they take with them into the rest of their school work. They appreciate the positive relationships with alternative provision staff, and also the purposeful activities. They like 'being treated like adults'.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that providers supply high quality summary reports which show how each student has made progress in specific skills and personal attributes over a term or half-term
- reporting regularly to parents on students' progress in alternative provision
- ensuring that governors systematically question leaders about the impact on outcomes for students of spending on alternative provision.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector