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Mrs G Labrum
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Labrum

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 26 and 27 February 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and the assistant headteacher who co-ordinates the provision. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: The Green Room and Buttons Nursery.

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 employs a range of successful strategies and provides courses which meet the needs of almost all students on the school site. Consequently, only a very small proportion of students require arrangements that include the use of alternative educational provision.
- The school works closely with the local authority's behaviour support service to commission alternative provision that meets students' personal needs and interests well.
- Students are prepared well for choosing alternative provision, usually through visits with parents and carers, followed by a trial period of attendance. Providers get a suitable range of information to help them in

supporting the students, often shared through joint planning meetings. However, the school does not share written information outlining its child protection policies and procedures.

- The alternative provision offers a safe environment with highly skilled staff who have a deep understanding of students' individual needs. Typical comments from students include, 'It's like a family, I feel safe here.'
- Providers report that they have good communication, either with the school directly or with the behaviour support service, which ensures any problems that might arise are resolved quickly. They send the school regular reports on students' general progress, employability and personal skills and academic achievement, although information on attendance is not always shared promptly by one provider.
- Attendance at alternative providers is organised flexibly around the individual needs of students. Students' overall curriculum includes an appropriate balance of mathematics, English, science and vocational courses. Some students attend an alternative provider full-time. They follow a suitable range of academic and vocational courses, with a strong emphasis on personal development and employability skills. These students benefit from additional specialist subject teaching provided by visiting teachers from your school.
- The school has only been using alternative educational provision for a relatively short time, which limits the use of historic information to measure students' progress. However, information provided by the school shows that all the students currently attending alternative provision are expected to gain a GCSE pass in English and mathematics, half of whom should achieve a grade C or above. All students have been underachieving previously. Since attending alternative provision they have re-engaged with learning and made accelerated progress. Their attendance has shown a marked improvement.
- The small number of students who attended alternative provision last year and left at the end of Year 11 gained in confidence and have pursued further training at local colleges linked to their study at off-site provision. Good progression has been helped by the 'skilled for life' course, team building and individual counselling sessions provided by the alternative provider.
- Visits are made to the off-site provision by either the school or the behaviour support team approximately once each half term. The school has a good understanding of the general quality of learning and the progress students are making. Formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not yet established.
- Students are extremely positive about their experiences at the off-site provision. They particularly appreciate the skill and dedication of the staff in helping them cope with personal difficulties. As one stated, 'Whatever

the situation is, they will always help me.' Students like working in small groups where they receive individual support with their work in a relaxed atmosphere. As a result, they feel they have gained in confidence and been able to re-engage with learning. In the words of one student, 'This place gave me a second chance.'

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- informing providers of the school's safeguarding policies and making sure that the governing body take account of off-site provision when reviewing the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures
- receiving information on students' attendance more quickly from one of the providers
- introducing regular, systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in alternative provision
- linking the work of one of the providers more closely with the child development course offered at school.

My concerns about the registration status of one of the providers you are using have been reported to the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector