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Mr N Barrow  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Barrow

### **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 11 and 12 March 2014 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the head of Year 11. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Educational Excellence and Wellbeing school and the Skills and Integrated Learning Centre (SILC).

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 academy takes care only to use providers with a strong track record of success. Both providers used currently are quality assured and recommended by local authorities and colleagues in other schools. Where placements or providers are not successful action is taken quickly. The academy's annual quality assurance procedures, which involve visits, provide good opportunities to check that the provision is suitable.
- Before placements are agreed, the academy very carefully monitors and records the strategies used and actions taken to engage students. This includes regular communication with their parents and carers. Very few students are involved in off-site provision and careful consideration is taken to make sure that the placements suit their needs and interests. Their timetables are personalised and all of the students receive extra one

to one or small group sessions to help them make as good progress as possible.

- The off-site providers have appropriate facilities and are suitable for their purpose. There is a good range of flexible and well-appointed work spaces in both. Both providers require a reasonable level of information to be shared prior to placements and this is supplemented by regular communication and reviews. The providers supply the academy with termly reports which cover behaviour, attendance, attitudes, academic and course progress. The providers are happy with the level of communication and are particularly pleased that the head of year visits regularly. They believe that this supports them but more importantly supports the students.
- The academy has a guiding principle which means that 100% of students are expected and supported to achieve five GCSEs at grades A\*-C. Over the past three years all except one pupil have achieved this target. As a result, all of the students involved in off-site provision have well balanced timetables and are studying for a variety of qualifications.
- The qualifications gained in construction are relevant and, as the provider has good relations with local colleges and their construction departments, the students' work with SILC stands them in good stead when they apply for further education places.
- Both alternative providers place great emphasis on supporting students to develop good workplace skills such as punctuality, reliability and personal organisation. Although last year's cohort did not achieve particularly well academically, all achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at A\*-C grades, and made significantly better progress than they were on track to achieve prior to the placements. Current students have already achieved well in construction. The long term attender at Education Excellence has seen his rate of improvement rise significantly. The others have been placed more recently but improvements are already evident in their behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The Head of Year 11 visits regularly, weekly in the case of Education Excellence, to provide work for the students, and at least once every six weeks to SILC. Both providers send regular reports to the academy and keep academy colleagues informed of students' progress. Both providers and the academy provide personal support, such as helping them to prepare for interviews, complete curriculum vitae and portfolios. This ensures that students progress to the next stage of their education.
- Students are positive about the off-site provision. They like the practical nature of the construction course, learning valuable skills in a workshop environment. The modular approach means they achieve quick success which gives them confidence to take the next steps. They also transfer that confidence into other areas of academy life. Those in Education Excellence value the small group and 1-1 support and know that this is helping them achieve their academic targets. They also acknowledge that the experience is helping them to manage their own behaviour better.

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

- increasing the number of students who achieve qualifications in English and mathematics
- considering how to track and evaluate achievement and progress in behaviour and attendance more effectively
- incorporating the reports from providers into the student's academy reports
- implementing the plans to monitor more closely the quality of teaching and learning provided off site.

Yours sincerely

**Sheena MacDonald**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**