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Mr T Mullins
Executive Principal
Malcolm Arnold Academy
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Dear Mr Mullins

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 10 and 11 June 2014 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, an Assistant Principal and two other members of your staff who lead internal alternative projects. I also met students and visited Centurion Training Solutions, a provider that your students attend.

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

- You have taken an interesting and innovative approach to alternative provision over the past year following an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of off-site provision in re-engaging students and the subsequent academic outcomes. The result has been the development of a range of short-term intervention activities on-site and a significant reduction in the use of off-site provision.
- Your current drive to re-engage students through short-term alternative projects is proving highly effective. In particular, the work with younger students at Key Stage 3 reflects the determination evident in the academy to resolve issues as early as possible before these problems become insurmountable barriers to learning at Key Stage 4.

- The members of staff leading the alternative projects in the academy are clearly passionate about their work and the potential in their projects to transform attitudes to learning. Their enthusiasm and commitment is not lost on students who have responded well over the past year.
- Imaginative and inspiring curriculum materials have been introduced to appeal to learners. The personalised approach taken in the preparation of suitable materials is proving very successful in tackling some of the barriers to learning that students face. There is impressive evidence of impact; for example, three Year 8 girls who have participated in the Aspire programme have dramatically improved both their attendance levels and achievement across a range of subjects, including significant improvement in both English and mathematics. Consequently, these students are now achieving levels that are much closer to the grades they should be attaining.
- Comprehensive support is provided for students. Your records provide clear evidence of close tracking and monitoring of progress with frequent reviews and feedback to students and their parents and carers. This is inspiring confidence in the process and helping everyone involved to recognise the improvements that students are making in their learning.
- The current system enables students to continue with core subjects, receive intensive, alternative support to address any issues, such as behaviour problems and be re-integrated into mainstream learning as soon as possible. In this respect, valuable learning time is not lost and ensures that the curriculum remains balanced and appropriate.
- Careful attention is paid to safeguarding those students who attend off-site provision. For example, those students attending a motor vehicle course are accompanied by a member of the academy's staff who oversees their welfare and progress and supports learning as required. The quality of students' learning is good and provides an accredited pathway for students who are interested in a vocational route post-16.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that internal projects remain under review, are expanded when appropriate and evidence gathered of the impact over time on GCSE performance.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Additional Inspector