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Dr A Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Evans

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 school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, a member of the governing body, a range of senior leaders and other colleagues including the school's Diverse Curriculum Coordinator. Please pass on my thanks to the SWASH Consortium Manager and the headteacher designate of the Aspire Academy with whom I also met. I spoke to students and visited YDC Worcester and Pershore College, two of the providers 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

- Leaders at all levels of the school, including governors, are heavily involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluating of this aspect of the school's work. Leaders and support staff are prepared to 'go the extra mile' for the students involved and this provides good evidence of the school's inclusive ethos.
- School leaders have carefully considered the choice of placements for each student. These choices take into account students' interests as well as providing them with opportunities to fulfil their career aspirations. Each of the placements results in a nationally-recognised qualification. All of the current Year 11 students have a place at college to continue to study at a higher level the vocational areas related to their placements. Two of the

students that I spoke to described their courses as being interesting but also challenging.

- Working in partnership with the South Worcestershire Consortium, leaders have made sure that there are arrangements in place to keep pupils safe when at the providers. One of the providers explained how their safeguarding policy had been strengthened at the beginning of this academic year after being reviewed by the consortium manager. In addition, members of staff visit each of the placements and can therefore keep a watching eye on what is going on.
- Leaders are positive about the collaborative arrangements with the South Worcestershire Consortium and the work of the consortium manager. The providers I met have similarly positive views. There is a suitable range of providers from which the school can select and there is a consistency in the approaches to the management of student information across all the provision. Managers at each of the placements I visited also spoke very highly of the support they receive and levels of communication with staff from Prince Henry's.
- My short visits to each of the providers confirmed that the accommodation was suitable and safe. For example, in both providers there are appropriate classroom spaces for students to complete theory and written work, with access to information and communication technology (ICT). At Pershore College, practical workspaces are clean and well-maintained.
- The school uses the consortium-wide 'pupil profile' proforma which gives providers appropriate personal and medical information about students. This proforma also provides information about what grades in English and mathematics the students are predicted to achieve at the end of Key Stage 4. Good detail is given about students' personal and social needs, including strategies for providers to use to help students.
- The school has a good system in place to make sure that students have the chance to catch up with any subjects they miss when attending their placement. Catch-up sessions are supported by subject specialists. All students continue to study GCSE English and mathematics.
- All of the previous group of Year 11 students attending alternative provision achieved a GCSE in English and mathematics. The school's records show that students made steady progress in each of the subjects since joining the school in Year 9, although they did not make nationally expected progress from their Key Stage 2 levels. Records show that each of the students made good progress in the placement they attended and achieved qualifications that allowed them to progress to further study.
- Almost all of the students currently attending placements are making good progress in what they are studying and learning about. Three of the students I spoke to were able to describe the skills they had developed during the placements and how they intended to use these in the future. All of the Year 11 students are making steady progress in English and mathematics and where a few students are not doing so in Year 10, the school has made suitable arrangements to remedy this. School leaders monitor and evaluate the progress of these students individually, but also as a group and report the findings of this to governors on a termly basis.

- A significant strength of the placements is that all students make good progress in their personal and social development. Some are making exceptional progress. The number of incidents of poor behaviour in school has decreased for all these students and, for almost all, their levels of attendance have increased. The school's records and surveys also show that students, and parents and carers, have commented on increased levels of confidence and self-esteem. Students have much better ability to talk sensibly and in detail with adults in a range of familiar and unfamiliar situations.
- Regular and structured visits are made to each provider as part of the consortium-wide approach to check on the quality of alternative provision. Sessions are observed formally at least annually and feedback is given to tutors on the quality of teaching and students' learning. The school's Diverse Curriculum Coordinator provides support each week at the provision attended by the highest number of students from Prince Henry's. This member of staff visits each provider at least twice per year and the assistant headteacher responsible for alternative provision also visits students on their placements.
- The students I spoke to and the school's records show that students are very positive about the placements they have experienced. One student's only complaint was that she would have liked to have been able to spend more time there.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that each student attending alternative provision also has access to full time education and that academic study at providers is always as challenging as students would receive at school
- providing placement leaders with more specific information about each student's strengths and development needs in English and mathematics
- ensuring that more detailed targets are set for students' achievement while attending the placements and so give greater clarity to providers on what aspects of progress to report
- including more opportunities for students to make links between the skills, knowledge and understanding they are developing on their placements and the rest of the subjects they are studying.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector