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20 June 2014

Mrs L Halbert
Principal
Freebrough Academy
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Dear Mrs Halbert

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 9 and 10 June 2014 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the Deputy Principal who is in charge of teaching and learning, the Assistant Principals and the Connexions adviser to the academy. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

- East Coast Training
- Prior Pursglove College
- Redcar and Cleveland Training Services

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

- About a third of each year group in Years 10 and 11 are involved in alternative provision, together with a very small number of students in Year 9. The academy's use of alternative provision is a key factor in improving attendance and behaviour of students and making sure that the academy successfully retains these young people in education.
- The academy works effectively in partnership with the local authority and it commissions suitable provision from the local authority list of approved providers. The local authority's arrangements for vetting and selecting

potential providers include a requirement for all courses to be accredited, development of literacy and numeracy skills to be a priority and checks on the suitability of premises and the providers' knowledge of safeguarding.

- Academy leaders have detailed knowledge of students and very carefully select provision that allows students to develop skills in their areas of interest. All courses offered lead to qualifications for students. Case studies show how parents and external agencies working with students are involved in discussions prior to choosing suitable provision.
- Sometimes the course available may not, initially, be sufficiently demanding for students but, where students demonstrate a particular aptitude for a course, providers can move students on at a faster rate and will tailor the course to suit individual needs. Post-16 progression routes are provided for students which build on earlier accreditation.
- Development of skills in literacy and numeracy is a priority. All students involved in alternative provision are entered for examinations in functional English and mathematics. This is in addition to entry for GCSE English and mathematics. Learning in functional skills effectively complements GCSE studies and students say this extra support is helpful.
- Accommodation at providers visited includes a range of workshops and classrooms which are bright, clean and tidy, and with access to computer facilities. In one of the providers visited, students have access to a breakfast club which provides a meal for students before they start work. Lunchtime arrangements at some providers have very recently changed and students now have their own dedicated facilities to avoid them having to leave the provider's site during the day.
- Providers receive detailed information on students' academic and other needs prior to starting the provision. This includes suggestions on supporting students with particular behavioural concerns and also strategies to accelerate learning. Some providers carry out their own baseline testing of students, or carry out a transition interview, which is then used to shape the training and support that students receive.
- There is a strong partnership between the academy and providers, with plans in place to help providers to develop their teaching skills further through sharing the academy's programme of professional development. Providers greatly appreciate the ease of communication with the academy, the high quality support and prompt intervention they receive.
- Students' timetables are constructed to avoid students missing other subjects when they are attending their alternative provision. Students appreciate the extra help they receive if they fall behind with their alternative provision work, or English and mathematics and attend the academy's support unit, the Hub.
- All students on alternative provision are able to achieve English and mathematics qualifications appropriate to their needs. In English in 2013, 72 out of 77 students were successful in achieving a GCSE grade A*-G, whereas in mathematics this figure was 68 out of 77. For 2014, the academy's analysis of data indicates that all students on alternative

provision will achieve GCSEs in English and in mathematics, with all achieving further qualifications in functional English and mathematics.

- In 2013, 41% of the students on alternative provision made expected progress in English, and 31% in mathematics. The academy's analysis of its data for current students in Year 11 indicates that 72% of the alternative provision cohort will make expected progress in English and 49% in mathematics. Students on alternative provision make similar progress in English and in mathematics to those students not on alternative provision. Academy leaders monitor closely any gaps in achievement for students on alternative provision compared with others in each year group.
- In addition to academic outcomes, academy leaders noted improvements in students' attitudes to learning and in their working and employability skills such as their ability to work with others and their organisation skills.
- Providers have their own system for reporting to parents on the progress being made by students. Academy leaders have plans to ensure a more consistent approach to monitoring and reporting on progress using the academy's system.
- Students who I met with during the visit greatly appreciate the opportunity that they have been given to attend alternative provision and talked confidently about how this has helped them to better manage their behaviours and to improve their attendance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring there is greater consistency in the practice seen across all providers through sharing information regarding the academy's expectations of safeguarding and there is a consistent approach to providing parents with the information they need regarding the provision
- presenting an evaluative summary of the impact of alternative provision to the governing body once a year, so that they can see the impact of the academy's spending on alternative provision on students' achievements and on their personal development.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector