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Ms S Bora
Principal
Westminster Academy
The Naim Dangoor Centre
255 Harrow Road
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Dear Ms Bora

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 2 and 3 July 2014 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and several of your senior leaders. I also met students and a parent. Your students attend a number of different providers and I visited four of them: The Jubilee Academy, Westside School, Endeavour Education Centre and EPIC Community Interest Company.

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 place a high importance on ensuring that this group of students achieve as well as possible. Providers are chosen because they have a strong focus on academic as well as pastoral success and a careful match is made to ensure that the individual needs of students are met. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of provision is now included in the performance management arrangements of the most senior academy staff.
- The providers I visited were passionate about wanting to do their best for the students. There was a good range of suitable resources and well-cared for facilities which were appropriate for learning and social times.

- Alternative provision is augmented and enhanced by academy staff, including teachers, regularly working alongside some of the providers. In addition, students are able to study additional courses at the academy outside of normal school hours.
- You are not afraid to try different approaches. For example, with one provider I visited, you are trialling a partnership which includes a full time member of the academy working with the provider to re-focus and re-engage a group of younger students.
- The evidence provided shows an improvement in the attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative providers. This has a positive impact on their academic achievement. Last year a high percentage of this group achieved at least five A*-C grades in GCSE examinations or their equivalent. They make progress which is in line with, and often better than, that expected for all students nationally.
- As well as studying English, mathematics and science, the students also study a range of other academic and vocational courses and are therefore well prepared for the next step in their education. Almost all go on to further education courses in college or sixth forms.
- The students I spoke to said that, although they were initially very resistant to attending alternative providers, they realise that this had given them an opportunity to change for the better. They appreciate the small group and one to one support and believe that this helps them to think about their behaviour and make better choices about what sort of person they want to be. They are also emphatic about how it is helping them to make up lost ground academically. One said that his grades were shooting up now. Several of the students had attended alternative provision in the past and are now confident that they are more able to succeed in the mainstream school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- tightening your quality assurance and monitoring systems
- increasing the opportunities for students to follow courses in the humanities subjects
- reducing the variation between, and improving the quality of, providers' reports on students' achievements and progress.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector