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Ms J Heffernan  
Headteacher  
Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School  
Morning Lane  
Hackney  
London  
E9 6LG

Dear Ms Heffernan

### **Ofsted 2014 15 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 17 and 18 November 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. Your students attend a number of different providers and I visited three of them: The Boxing Academy, Include-Catch 22 and Queensgate College.

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 and your senior leaders know your students well and leaders, including governors, strive to make sure that the individual needs of all students are met within the school. For the very few where this is not possible, you work closely with other schools and the Hackney Learning Trust to find provision which better meets their needs.
- A local pupil referral unit annually assures the quality of providers and their quality assurance reports cover a broad range of aspects including health, safety, teaching, learning, leadership and management. If providers are not good enough they are no longer used or recommended. All of the provision includes opportunities for students to acquire a range of GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics.

- There is a strong emphasis on involving the families throughout and engaging them in tackling difficulties and making decisions.
- The providers have suitable work spaces and facilities. The quality of the provision varies significantly however, as does the quality and usefulness of different providers' communication and reporting. Of the three Alternative Providers seen, provision was not suitable in one and did not meet the students' needs.
- I met with a group of students who were at risk of exclusion and who spent a short time at alternative provision. They are adamant that this enabled them to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes. They have reintegrated well and are achieving better as a result.
- The students currently attending alternative provision vary in their enthusiasm depending on the quality they are receiving. They all appreciate being part of a smaller group and their behaviour and attendance are improving. In some cases they are making good progress in their learning as well but this is not true of all the provision. However, although not all are making good academic progress, their behaviour and attendance have improved.
- Students who were seriously at risk of completely disengaging from education or of exclusion are currently involved in education and have ambitions for their next steps. For several years all students have gone onto some form of education, training or employment.

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

- replicating the tight monitoring and evaluation systems used in school to ensure that all providers are giving the students appropriate teaching and learning opportunities
- visiting the providers more often and making sure you are able to be confident about the quality of provision
- reducing the variation between, and improving the quality of, providers' reports on students' achievements and progress.

Yours sincerely

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