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Mr S Fell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fell

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 25 and 26 November 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the Head of School, the alternative provision leader, the alternative provision coordinator, and four students who attend alternative provision. I examined a range of documents including records of students' work at a range of alternative providers. I visited your off-site provider 'Active Support'.

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

- The school makes judicious use of off-site alternative provision following a strong team effort to promote students' inclusion. Extensive case studies show that school support programmes and the work of external agencies combine to keep the proportion of students accessing off-site provision to a minimum. However, for some students this means that their off-site courses do not start until Year 11, which limits the level of courses they can follow.
- A small number of providers are commissioned, based on the school's evaluation of the quality provided. The highest proportion of students

using off-site alternative provision take courses at a local college judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in 2014. School leaders are using best practice to support improvement in less well-established settings that the school is planning to use in the future.

- Tailored information, advice and guidance provided for students contribute to the match between off-site placements and career aspirations. Students effectively use the college courses taken off-site as a foundation for further study. This contributes to the school's success in ensuring that no students leave the school without employment, further education or training. Governors track the progression of all students.
- The efficient process of setting up alternative provision contributes to students feeling safe and supported off-site. The action plans students write with their key worker helps them reflect on their contribution to learning and gives clarity to the purpose of their work off-site. However, although staff monitor attendance and performance regularly and visit providers should any concerns arise, students do not review any specific targets for alternative provision routinely with school staff.
- Students understand what is expected of them off-site because well-presented prospectuses and handbooks, taster sessions and meetings make expectations clear. Although the school works closely with providers to ensure that students' needs are well met, providers do not always have enough information to reinforce the school's work. This includes the school's safeguarding policy and current improvement plan.
- Students receive additional support in school with their English and mathematics should the time taken off-site detract from these lessons. As a consequence, all Year 11 students using off-site provision in 2013 and 2014 attained a GCSE grade in English and mathematics. Evidence to show how students develop and apply their mathematical understanding and literacy skills off-site is limited because little work is exchanged. However, one student talked about the links between her animal care course and her science lessons, which had deepened her understanding.
- Off-site alternative provision contributes to students' improved attendance and behaviour. Students talk with pride about their achievements off-site. They consider themselves better prepared for life and work as a result of the positive relationships they develop and the accredited courses they all follow. Their parents and carers are supportive because they are involved from the outset by visiting the provider with the school. They receive regular reports about the good progress that students make off-site.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using students' action plans as a basis for setting and reviewing targets with the involvement of students, parents, providers and school staff
- giving providers feedback on the quality and impact of alternative provision, based on spreading the very best practice that exists

- ensuring that providers are given sufficient information to reinforce the school's work, including the safeguarding policy and improvement plan
- working with middle schools to ensure that students who might require alternative curriculum provision are identified early.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector