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Ms D Upton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Upton

**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 8 and 9 December 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and with the assistant headteacher and the director of Key Stage 4 who co-ordinate the provision. I met students and visited the two sites of the North Herts Education Support Centre that your students attend. I also met an outreach teacher from the centre who came into school to discuss the provision.

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 employs a range of strategies which are successful in meeting the needs of almost all students on the school site. Consequently, only a very small proportion of students require arrangements that include the use of alternative educational provision.
- The school has established an effective partnership with the local Education Support Centre which provides targeted support for students not engaging fully with education. This support includes regular mentoring in school, part-time 'Back on Track' programmes at the centre and, for a small number, full-time attendance at the centre.

- Students who are struggling to cope in school are identified at an early stage. The level of provision is chosen carefully, following a thorough assessment of each student's individual needs. The school provides the centre with a good range of information to help them in supporting students. School and centre staff work closely with parents, carers and students through joint planning meetings and home visits.
- The school and centre staff work together effectively to safeguard students and involve other agencies as required. However, where students attend the centre full time, procedures for sharing information and alerting the school of any safeguarding concerns are not set out formally.
- The centre accommodation offers a pleasant and safe environment. Staff are highly skilled and have a good understanding of students' individual needs. They send the school regular reports on students' attendance, personal skills and academic achievement.
- Students who attend the centre full-time follow a balanced curriculum which includes mathematics, English, science, optional subjects and vocational courses. A small number of students who have started to attend the centre recently, following a period of absence, do not yet receive sufficient taught time in the week. There are plans to review students' timetables at the end of their introductory period.
- The school monitors thoroughly the progress of students who attend the centre full time and those who benefit from part-time support. Staff visit the centre at least once each term to make a check on the quality of learning and informal visits occur more frequently. Detailed reports are made to the governing body on the progress of students across the school who need additional support. However, information is not presented to show, as a discrete group, the progress of students who access centre support.
- The number of students leaving school at the end of 2014 who had used centre provision was small. All gained GCSE passes in English, mathematics and science at a grade D to G and progressed to suitable destinations. This represents positive progress, since students had been underachieving previously and had been at risk of disengaging from education.
- The part-time 'Back on Track' programme is particularly successful in developing students' personal skills, which are then used by students to improve their performance back in school.
- Students are very positive about the centre provision. They find staff understanding and approachable; as one commented, 'You can talk to people here.' Those who attend full time like working in small groups where they receive individual help with their work. Students who attended the 'Back on Track' programme recognised how they had learned skills to

manage situations that they had previously found difficult. In the words of one student, 'It made such a difference....I can overcome my anger.'

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

- strengthening safeguarding procedures by setting out formally the arrangements between the school and the centre for dealing with any concerns about a student's safety
- monitoring the progress of students who receive support from the centre as a discrete group, in order to check the impact of the provision more effectively
- checking that all students attending alternative educational provision receive sufficient taught time in the school week.

Yours sincerely

**Andrew Redpath**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**