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Ms A Crawshaw  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Crawshaw

### **Ofsted 2013 14 survey inspection programme: schools' use of alternative provision**

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 11-12 November 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and several of your senior leaders; and your year leader for students in Year 10. Additional meetings were held with the newly appointed Regional Director of SkillForce, and SkillForce tutors. I also met with 11 students who attend alternative provision and visited the Acklam Green Centre, used by SkillForce tutors, the provider that your students attend.

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 is selective in its use of alternative provision. About 12 students are engaged in alternative provision each year, with roughly equal numbers from each of Years 10 and 11. Only those students who are most at risk of permanent exclusion are considered for alternative provision. They are allocated to this pathway, with considerable success, with the aim of achieving at least five GCSE grades at A\* to C, to provide access to further education or training.

- The local authority list of approved providers of alternative education in the locality is not used by the school. The school's use of alternative provision is commissioned using SkillForce which has been identified as being particularly effective from DfE pilot 'zero exclusion' projects.
- Students are well-cared for and are kept safe while in the off-site centre. SkillForce tutors work with students in recently built accommodation which provides classrooms with access to high quality learning resources including laptops, and outdoor space for physical activities. SkillForce staff take responsibility for checks on the suitability for employment of their tutors and risk assessments such as those carried out for outdoor activities. These checks are further quality assured through use of local authority on-line systems and additional checks are made by school staff.
- Students receive suitable small-group teaching in English and mathematics which is taught by the school's own teaching staff in the off-site centre. However they have far less time in English and mathematics than students at the school who are not in alternative provision. SkillForce's own bespoke programme of PSYCHE (Personal Skills for You in Careers and Health Education) helps to meet students' personal development needs. Students follow other vocational courses, taught by SkillForce tutors, including science and travel and tourism, which lead to accredited qualifications but they have no choice in the selection of these courses and all follow the same courses.
- The school provides SkillForce tutors with a wide range of information about students before the placement is started. A range of personalised targets are particularly effective in supporting students in improving 'identity and self-image', 'health and well-being' and 'future aspirations' in addition to attendance and behaviour. Attainment information is also provided but is less well used by tutors in adapting work for students.
- SkillForce tutors are well supported by the school and greatly appreciate their established point of contact who makes weekly formal visits to the centre. Additional informal 'drop-ins' or telephone calls are made to rigorously check on attendance, behaviour and progress.
- In 2014, all students were successful in achieving GCSE English, and almost all achieved GCSE mathematics, but these were at lower grades. Very few made the progress they should have done based upon their ability when starting in the school. However, all students achieved at least four qualifications and only one student in alternative provision is indicated to be NEET (not in formal education, employment or training) at this time. Without this provision, the school's information indicates that these students were at risk of achieving no formal qualifications.
- The school's analysis of its data indicates that all students who are currently attending alternative provision are making good progress in their equivalent GCSE, or vocational, courses but far less progress in GCSE

English and mathematics. However, students' overall attainment has improved rapidly since starting their alternative provision.

- Information provided by the school confirms the view expressed by SkillForce tutors that alternative provision is making a positive difference to students' attendance, behaviour and punctuality. It effectively develops employability skills whilst providing the opportunity for students to continue with their education or training post-16. Most students have little interest in continuing with further study in any of the courses provided through their alternative provision.
- School leaders have developed very effective systems for monitoring and tracking personal and social development as well as the academic progress being made by students. An 'assessment and progress matrix' is used to provide a score in a range of categories which then inform the setting of targets which are regularly reviewed in weekly meetings together with identifying where further support may be required.
- The alternative education co-ordinator carries out regular checks on the quality of teaching at the off-site centre. All units of work completed for vocational courses are marked by subject teachers at the school who are able to keep a close check on the progress being made by students in their alternative provision and set targets to improve the quality of the work. Students' learning is further checked through the school's own quality assurance programme which includes formal observations of teaching, informal short visits and checks on students' work.
- Most students recognise their learning is better in their alternative provision compared with when they were in school, but say they would prefer to be in school. Many of the Year 11 alternative provision students have had interviews for places at college and say these 'went well'.

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

- making sure that students in full-time alternative provision receive their full entitlement to the curriculum including spiritual development and awareness of how to keep themselves safe from a range of threats including extremist views
- including alternative provision tutors in all aspects of training, related to improving teaching, safeguarding and supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities, to guarantee continuity of care for students between the school and the off-site centre
- continuing with frequent checks on the quality of teaching in alternative provision to make sure that the information being taught to students by non-specialists, in particular in science, is correct.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**