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Mrs K Jasper
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jasper

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 16-17 December 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers responsible for inclusion and behaviour, and 10 students who attend alternative provision. This included opportunities to see the work of students who attend Lincoln College and to meet with a tutor from the provider 'First Class Tailored Solutions'. I examined a range of documents including case studies, progress records and the academy improvement plan. I visited 'Maple', the alternative provision you have developed in partnership with a local academy, 'Education and Youth Services' (EYS) and 'CAST' angling and land management project.

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

- Developing the range and quality of alternative provision is an integral part of the academy's strategic planning. The plans and actions taken include collaboration with the academy sponsor, Lincoln College and Magnus C of E Academy, both providers of education in Newark, and the local authority. This coordinated approach is helping to reduce numbers of local students not engaged in education, employment or training.

- The academy uses information about students' achievement and attitudes to learning judiciously to identify their suitability for alternative provision. The use of full and part-time, vocational and academic, individual tuition and group work is matched to students' differing needs. However, leaders are also using this information to ensure that inclusion is prioritised by developing the quality of teaching and the curriculum at the academy.
- Students' programmes include a suitable focus on the development of their basic skills and on accreditation. All Year 11 students using off-site provision in 2013-14 attained a GCSE grade in English and mathematics. However, students who join the academy in Year 7 are more likely to reach the higher grades than those transferring from other educational establishments during their secondary education. This means that some students using alternative provision still do not do as well in their English and mathematics as their attainment at primary schools indicated that they should.
- Communications between the academy and providers of alternative provision, and with students and their parents, ensure that students settle quickly. Students feel safe and supported through the arrangements made to monitor their attendance, punctuality and performance. However, visits by academy staff are not yet made routinely, although the new system of monitoring recently implemented addresses this. As a consequence, the individual information, advice and guidance students have received from the academy is limited.
- Monitoring records show that alternative provision has a positive impact on students' attendance and punctuality. The improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are evident in their engagement, particularly in the practical sessions such as angling, catering, motor maintenance and decorating. One student shared an excellent portfolio of woodwork he had made, photographed and marketed. His entrepreneurial skills and determination to gain an apprenticeship were impressive.
- The academy's new system of monitoring the progress of students who attend alternative provision benefits from clear targets related to their achievement and personal development. However, at this early stage, providers and students do not know enough about the system to ensure that different forms of monitoring are synchronised. As a consequence, reports to parents or staff, for example about behaviour when accessing alternative provision, are not always coordinated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using visits from the academy to providers to help students reflect on their progress and to use information, advice and guidance to help them plan their futures
- sharing with providers the targets set for students to ensure that the feedback students and their parents receive about the progress students are making is coordinated

- liaising with the academy sponsor to increase the range of work-related approaches, including as a context to achieve their academic potential.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector