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Mr R Burman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burman

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 18-19 March 2015 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteachers, a student support and progress leader, the inclusion manager, and five students who attend alternative provision. I examined a range of documents including case studies, progress records and the school improvement plan. I visited the following off-site providers that your students attend: Hutton Park Vocational Centre; Morthyng Training; Rowan Centre; the school's Flexible Learning Centre (FLC).

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

- Alternative provision is supported by a clear policy, referral process, attendance, safeguarding, monitoring and reporting procedure. In addition, systems such as behaviour management plans add to the clarity of purpose, particularly in relation to students' personal development and well-being. However, personal targets related to the skills, knowledge and experience expected of students are not always clear to the students themselves and vary according to the individual providers or accreditation used.

- Off-site alternative provision is an integral part of the school's strategy to engage or re-engage all students in education. Although the range of off-site provision is limited, the off-site providers used complement well the work of the school's inclusion centre and recently opened flexible learning centre. Support for students is coordinated effectively between different forms of provision, for example a specialist in teaching English as an additional language supports a student in school and off-site.
- Students' attitudes and achievements are improved following the use of alternative provision. Students involved contribute positively to the school's above-average proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics from low starting points. Improved attendance and reduced exclusions are contributory factors. All students continue their education or are able to gain training or employment after leaving the school.
- Visits by school staff ensure that the quality of alternative provision meets the school's expectations. Judging the quality of provision, such as the learning environment, contributes to the positive experiences that students value. Resources include specialist equipment not available at school. Workshop, studio and study spaces give students an authentic experience of the workplace. However, quality assurance visits do not routinely evaluate the quality of teaching or students' work.
- Systematic use of feedback by students ensures that alternative provision is continuously reviewed in relation to meeting their needs. For example, the school has given greater attention to the range of enrichment activities students can access, following feedback from students. A high proportion of off-site courses are pitched at a level commensurate with students' school work. Nevertheless, while students rate individual support highly some consider classwork in which they complete the same tasks, less effective in developing their individual skills and knowledge.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that students, parents and carers are given clear targets for students' attainment and progress at alternative providers
- making more effective use of the school's visits to providers in order to monitor the quality of teaching and students' progress
- enabling students to diversify where appropriate, extending the range of courses and choices in relation to classwork.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector