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Mrs E Bradshaw
Headteacher
The Limes College
Sutton Alternative Provision Service
Sutton West Site
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Dear Mrs Bradshaw

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit to your pupil referral unit on 23 November to look at your use of alternative 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.

Outcomes

- The college uses alternative provision as part of an inclusive approach which seeks to re-engage students who are disaffected with all aspects of school. This provision is part of a continuum rather than an alternative curriculum.
- Attendance at external courses is integrated with the individual learning programmes for each student and as a result of this joint approach the majority of students achieved some qualifications at the end of year 11; all of them went to employment or training at the end of the year.
- The majority of these students have improved both their attendance and their behaviour and those spoken to felt that they were learning important skills, including taking greater responsibility for their work and how to work effectively with others.

- The students are clear that attendance at external providers has helped them understand the purpose of other lessons in the college.
- The students are positive about the difference that alternative educational provision has made and that this is preparing them well for their future education, employment or training.

Selecting and commissioning

- The college commissions a range of providers to meet students' individual needs and has a thorough and detailed approach to assessing their suitability and their ability to keep young people safe.
- The college is rigorous in monitoring attendance and progress.
- The students' aspirations are a significant factor in determining the appropriateness of a course. Students see their attendance as part of a process to enhance future employment or training prospects.
- Before any placement is made, all providers are visited to ensure that they understand the needs of the students and are clear about the college's expectations. This dialogue is a key part of the partnership between the provider and the college. Students are then closely involved before a final decision is made.

Monitoring, evaluation and support

- Both attendance and behaviour are monitored over time and the college's data show that there has been an overall improvement in both.
- Key workers play a key role in maintaining the students in their placements and are often instrumental in ensuring that they attend regularly and on time.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop alternative provision in the college.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Maureen York
Her Majesty's Inspector