

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr W Birks
Headteacher
Abbey College
Abbey Road
Ramsey
Cambridgeshire
PE26 1DG

Dear Mr Birks

13 survey inspection programme: schools' use of alternative provision

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visits on 8 and 18 October 2012 to look at the school's 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.

Strengths of this aspect of the school's work

- The college is inclusive. It provides a range of effective strategies to retain students in learning on the college site. Consequently, only a very small proportion of students require alternative arrangements to be made for them to continue their learning off-site.
- For those students who the school thinks will benefit, arrangements are made to enable students to study a range of suitable vocational courses and experience the world of work with local employers.
- Collaborative working with other schools in the Huntingdon area and the local authority support services enable the college to locate suitable providers that meet students' academic, social and behavioural needs.

- An in-school support worker, employed by the local authority provides a vital link between the college and local providers by visiting students at their off-site placements, reviewing arrangements and sharing their findings with school staff. This enables students to settle quickly in their placements, keep safe and continue with their education. Students' attendance and welfare are monitored closely. The school's own education welfare officer makes regular checks of students' attendance and local providers make immediate contact with parents and carers, and the school if a student does not arrive.
- The small proportion of students on part and full-time programmes at local, off-site centres for learning appreciate the care and support provided for them by both college staff and those at the centres they attend.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all students who attend alternative provision are studying for an English and mathematics qualification at the appropriate level, and closely monitoring their progress so that they are fully prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector