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Mr E Winstone
Principal
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Dear Mr Winstone

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 visit on 21 and 22 February 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with senior staff, the alternative provision coordinator and students, and examined a range of documents. I also visited the Young People's Centre on the academy site used by students following an alternative curriculum, and two providers that your students attend: Alternative Curriculum in Education (ACE) and John Mansfield Training Centre.

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 development of alternative provision is a high priority within the academy. A highly personalised 'foundation curriculum' minimises the need for alternative provision off-site. Clear procedures focused on inclusion, known as 'the 36 steps' ensure that a range of support and intervention precedes the use of off-site provision.
- For the small proportion of students whose attendance or attitudes continue to fall short of the academy's expectations a limited range of alternative provision is accessed off-site. Taster sessions help to give students an insight and choice in order to promote their commitment.

- The coordinator maintains regular links between the academy and providers through visits and exchange of information. The governing body is kept informed about the progress of students accessing alternative provision alongside that of other groups of students.
- Although the quality of accommodation and resources used off-site is widely variable some is of high quality. This includes opportunities for students to use professional resources in order to develop specialist skills such as motor maintenance or hairstyling in realistic settings.
- The students interviewed clearly understood the purpose of their education off-site. This motivates students when progression onto post-16 courses or the terms of reintegration into the academy are made clear. The accreditation of all off-site courses adds to their value.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the level of accreditation available through off-site provision challenges the more able students
- giving off-site providers a full profile of students' prior achievements
- ensuring that all students who access off-site provision part-time receive a full-time education
- making students' point of contact at the academy clear when off-site
- integrating reports from providers into the academy's reports to parents
- continuing to explore a wider range of alternative provision in order to meet the individual needs of all students, for example sports-related provision
- seeking and using the views of students using alternative provision systematically in order to inform curriculum development
- thoroughly evaluating all off-site provision available to ensure that the learning environment, quality of teaching and assessment reflect the academy's mission and provide value for money.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector