

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



27 June 2014

Mrs D Strutt  
Headteacher  
Whitecross Hereford; High School and Specialist Sports College  
Three Elms Road  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR4 0RN

Dear Mrs Strutt

### **Ofsted 2013 14 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 and 19 June 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and colleagues responsible for this aspect of the school's work including the assistant headteacher, the careers education and guidance (CEG) manager, the CEG administrator and the member of staff responsible for health and safety checks at work placements. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Arctic Circle
- Royal Volunteer Service
- Sensations Hair and Beauty
- Easy Garage.

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**

- All of the staff involved demonstrate a clear commitment to providing essential work skills for targeted students. An achievement award is presented to one student who has excelled in their placement in the school's annual award evening. This cohesive team has built up and maintained good relationships with local businesses and training providers.
- School leaders have been judicious in the choice of placements for students based on the school's excellent level of understanding of

individuals. Local authority-organised provision is used for only a very small proportion of students. Some placements and schemes are no longer chosen because leaders did not feel they were good enough for their students.

- A member of staff has been trained by the Institution of Occupational Health and Safety to undertake health and safety checks of providers. During this check, the school's expectations in relation to child protection and safeguarding are explained to placement managers. However, this information is not always provided in a written format.
- The majority of placements are weekly one-day work experiences and are provided without charge by local businesses. While these placements do not result in accredited qualifications, the school's evidence confirms that the placements make a good difference to students' personal, social and educational development. Each of the students involved in the local authority-organised placements achieve an industry-related qualification at an appropriate level.
- Placement managers are provided with students' basic personal and emergency contact details but not details of each of the students' levels of skills. Providers are very happy with the regular verbal communication with the school and this is when information is provided about any students with very specific needs. However, the school does not provide placement managers with personal and social development targets, or sector-specific targets for students to achieve during their extended work placement. This means that it is difficult for providers to report specifically on students' progress beyond attendance, punctuality and attitudes.
- Each of the providers I visited was happy with the support they receive from the school and believe that the school has prepared students well for the placements. One provider insists on meeting and conducting student interviews before agreeing placements. School leaders ensure that all students have visited the placement before it starts, including accompanying students when appropriate. Some providers said that they would value a clearer steer from the school about what students should be aiming to achieve from the placement, and one manager said that he would value direct feedback from the school about the students' views on the placements.
- One measure of success of the school's work in this area is that all but one student involved in the programme in the last three years has left school to be in education, employment or training. Almost three quarters of the students involved in alternative provision last year went on to further study or training in the same sector as their placement.
- Alternative provision is incorporated very well into the school's timetable. Students choose this as one of their options and so this means that they do not miss out on English or mathematics teaching. Almost all of the Year 10 students are also taught as a group for a work skills course.
- Each student currently attending alternative provision is studying for appropriate qualifications in English and mathematics. Almost all of these students are studying at GCSE level. The school's records show that many

students are making expected progress in English and mathematics, with a small number of students making quick progress.

- Of the students who left school last year, all but two achieved qualifications in both English and mathematics, as well as other subjects. Almost half of these students made good academic progress when compared to their starting points. However, the school's records show that all students made at least steady progress in these subjects and these records demonstrate that attending alternative provision had a significantly positive impact.
- Personal and social development is tracked and reviewed well. This is both formally and informally in the regular contact all of these students have with a range of school staff. The school's evidence shows that alternative provision placements are helping students be prepared well for the next stage in their lives.
- The school receives weekly verbal feedback from providers and this allows leaders to have a 'big picture' overview of how well students are doing on their placements. However, staff do not visit placements when students are attending. Therefore, they have not been able to evaluate the quality of the provision first-hand.
- Each of the students I spoke to were very positive about their placements and described improvements to their levels of confidence and a better understanding of their career aspirations. Some described significant improvements to their behaviour in school and attitudes to learning as a result of their placements. One student could describe in detail what he now knew about car servicing and maintenance including: 'I didn't know what a spark plug was when I started and now I know how to change one'.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- agreeing and sharing written protocols and expectations for working with all placements in relation to safeguarding, behaviour, visits to the providers and details of how progress is to be reported
- setting clear and measurable personal and social development and sector-specific targets for students attending each placement which then allow progress to be evaluated and reported
- viewing the placements as another classroom in the school and so including regular onsite visits to each provider as part of the school's quality assurance cycle to make sure that students are experiencing high quality learning and development
- reviewing the impact of the placements currently being used to be assured that each one is providing students with sufficient opportunities to develop meaningful skills and experiences.

Yours sincerely

**James McNeillie**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**