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Mr D Greig
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Greig

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 20 and 21 May 2015 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, head of inclusion and the managers of the off-site provision. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Wizeup and Right Choice.

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 school uses off-site provision for only a small number of students who have quite complex needs. It is currently reviewing its use of provision to focus on the identification of students' needs and on the development of preventative measures at an earlier stage.
- Students generally attend alternative provision full time, sometimes for a short period, following the breakdown of their school place. They are prepared well for attending off-site provision through careful discussions with pastoral staff and by visiting the provision with their parents prior to taking up a place.
- The local authority has effective arrangements in place for overseeing the quality of alternative provision used by the school. It keeps a register of

approved alternative providers and conducts regular checks to make sure that the providers meet health and safety requirements and that teaching and learning is of a sufficiently high standard. This work complements effectively the visits made by school staff.

- Staff at the alternative provision are highly skilled and have a very good understanding of students' social and emotional needs. They send the school regular reports on students' attendance, personal skills and academic achievement.
- Students who attend alternative provision follow programmes that meet their individual social and emotional needs very well and include the study of English and mathematics. The school has in place effective systems for tracking students' academic progress, although a clear picture is sometimes difficult to establish given the interruptions to schooling experienced by some students. Evidence suggests that a few students who attend alternative provision are capable of taking a wider range of accredited courses that lead to higher level qualifications.
- The school has some evidence to show that individual students are improving their personal and employability skills through attendance at alternative provision. All students who left school in 2014 progressed to further training or study. A few students have returned to school successfully following a period of attendance at an alternative provider. Some students who currently attend off-site provision are unclear about longer term plans for their possible return to mainstream school.
- Providers feel well supported by the school and there are frequent informal discussions around the progress of individual students. Staff at the school and at the off-site provision work together effectively to safeguard students. However, procedures for sharing information and alerting the school of any safeguarding concerns that might arise are not set out formally in writing.
- Students hold very positive views about their experience at the off-site provision. They prefer learning in smaller groups where they receive more individual attention. Students value the trusting relationships established with staff, in the words of one 'You can talk to staff anytime, even about confidential stuff.' They appreciate how they are helped to understand and manage some of their behaviour and emotions better through the counselling and therapy sessions. As a result they felt that they had improved their overall attitude to learning since attending the off-site provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening safeguarding arrangements by giving the providers written copies of the school's policies and procedures

- checking that all students who attend alternative provision receive a sufficiently broad and challenging curriculum
- clarifying the procedures for reviewing students' progress and their possible return to school
- monitoring the progress of students who attend alternative provision as a discrete group in order to check the impact of provision more effectively.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector