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Mrs Christine Staley
Executive Headteacher
Guilsborough School
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Dear Mrs Staley

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 22-23 April 2015, to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the associate headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator, progress leaders for Key Stages 3 and 4, and Key Stage 4 learning mentors. I also spoke by telephone to the headteacher of Hospital and Outreach Education. I also met with a group of students at the academy, and spoke with some student while they were attending their off-site placements. I visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Swan CIC
- On Track Education Centre, Northants
- Moulton College
- Seeds of Change

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 academy's work

- The academy's relationship with a group of other schools, academies and colleges from across the south west area of Northampton has enabled you to source a group of suitable and varied providers of off-site learning. Through the SWAN Education Partnership, the academy is able to identify

provision that is high quality, meets students' needs and is capable of offering an appropriate level of support.

- Checks undertaken by the partnership and feedback shared amongst this group support your selection of alternative provision. You also request risk assessment information from placement providers and reassurances that providers have completed the appropriate checks. Although providers are clear to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns, you need to seek greater assurances that providers are fully conversant with the academy's expectations in this area.
- Provision is well selected to best fit the individual needs and aspirations of the students. These needs are diverse and varied, ranging from behavioural difficulties, medical issues, social and emotional vulnerability, or the need for the curriculum to be adapted to promote better engagement and outcomes.
- Students mainly complete a range of accredited academic and vocational courses at Level 1 or Level 2 depending on their needs, abilities and interests. A small number of students are currently undertaking part-time provision with non-accredited study. However, this is to develop these students' personal, social and employability skills in the short-term in order to provide a stepping stone to progress to accredited study programmes. This pathway is therefore thoughtfully designed to promote these students' long-term success.
- Students' timetables are well designed so as not to narrow the range of subjects they are studying. All students attending alternative provision complete GCSE English and mathematics qualifications. Extended study periods are built into Key Stage 4 students' timetables so that students are supported to catch-up on any work missed as a result of their placements with their learning mentor or key worker.
- The academy places a high priority on ensuring that all students attending alternative provision progress to employment, education or training when they leave the academy. Alternative provision placements work hand-in-hand with a range of other programmes offered by the academy to provide vulnerable students with confidence and skills to succeed in their next phase of learning. In a number of cases I looked at during the visit, the vocational learning covered through alternative provision provided a clear pathway to post-16 progression, with students pursuing linked qualifications, or apprenticeships in occupational areas, for example in agriculture or engineering. As a result of this work, all students entered education, employment or training last academic year.
- The academy has a thorough understanding of the needs of its students and gives providers detailed referral information. Providers regard highly the quality of information offered. Support from the academy is readily available to providers and key personnel are identified to liaise with placement providers. Providers value the quality of support offered and

are confident that if issues should arise, the academy will give the necessary support to resolve them.

- Although visits to providers do take place, particularly in the early days of a placement, and information about the quality of provision is shared across schools in the partnership, the frequency and purpose of these visits varies. There is a need for more systematic and robust checks on the quality of provision offered.
- The progress of students on their placements is evaluated through regular reports sent by providers. Providers are required to report on students' progress in their placements at least every six weeks and some do this more frequently. These reports record students' academic progress and students' personal and social development. Information about students' progress in qualifications is integrated into your tracking and reporting systems.
- The progress of students who attend alternative provision is given a high priority through the academy's achievement and intervention forums. As a result, although attainment for some students is low, the majority of students are making good progress in English and mathematics from their individual starting points. You are also able to demonstrate how alternative provision has been a factor in improving students' attendance and behaviour, for example, through a reduction in behavioural incidents or fixed-term exclusions.
- The providers visited offered a range of accommodation that suited to the types of learning offered. In some providers, high-quality purpose built-facilities cater for a broad range of vocational learning, ranging from agriculture, construction, engineering, hairdressing and beauty, to equine facilities. Buildings and classrooms are well-appointed and students have access to areas for theory work. Many are well equipped with information technology, although this does vary between providers.
- Students enjoy and value their alternative provision placements. They talked positively about their experience and about how these have helped them to improve their behaviour, attendance and engagement with education. They enjoyed the opportunity to learn in more practical, work-based environments. Nearly all students felt that these placements had helped them to develop new skills and in many cases, these placements were playing a crucial role in helping students to identify their post-16 choices and career pathways.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that more systematic checks on the quality of teaching and students' learning at providers are carried out
- sharing these checking procedures amongst the network of providers within the SWAN Education Partnership to strengthen on-going quality

assurance, monitoring and evaluation routines to promote on-going improvements in provision

- making sure, through checks or by delivering training, that all provider staff fully understand the academy's priorities and protocols for keeping children safe.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman
Her Majesty's Inspector