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Mrs R Harker
Principal
Shenley Academy
Shenley Lane
Northfield
Birmingham
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Dear Mrs Harker

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 12 and 13 December 2012 to look at the academy'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 academy's work

■ The academy's use of alternative provision is highly effective in helping a small number of selected students to remain in education or training after Year 11. Records of students' destinations post-16 indicate that all but one student who left in 2011 is currently in education, employment or training.

■ Case studies provided by the academy and interviews with students indicate that participation in alternative provision has improved attendance and motivation, re-engaging students in learning. Students themselves are highly positive about the benefits of alternative provision.

■ The academy is pro-active in seeking suitable alternative provision that best meets individual students' needs and circumstances. For most students, the academy's main curriculum is flexible enough to meet varying needs. However, the academy considers each individual student in detail and, where the flexible curriculum may not meet an individual's needs well enough, it makes a range of additional interventions to support

learning and complement the main curriculum, one of which is alternative provision.

- Thoughtful curriculum planning and timetabling ensures that a focus on English, mathematics and science remains a priority so that students who attend alternative provision can continue their studies in important basic skills.

- In addition to the alternative provision that the academy arranges itself, excellent partnership within the local network also helps the academy to find suitable placements. Seven schools and the local college collaborate effectively in the Edge Inclusion project, making referrals through the network's sharing panel. The panel, chaired by the academy's Principal, takes responsibility for considering needs, allocating provision and closely monitoring the outcomes.

- The academy is suitably selective in choosing providers of alternative provision, based on accessibility to students, capacity to meet needs and the provision of accredited courses. Each provider benefits from a detailed report on each student's abilities, attitude and needs prior to commencement.

- The quality of support provided for students on alternative provision is excellent. Very good use is made of staff's experience and expertise to carry out this role. The two key members of staff have a wide range of relevant skills and make good use of a network of useful contacts with external agencies. They are passionate about this work, forming a highly effective team.

- The academy monitors and tracks each student's progress rigorously. Daily checks are made on attendance at provision with issues followed up quickly. Regular visits are made to check on outcomes. Detailed information is collected on students' achievements and progress through half termly reviews involving students, their parents or carers and staff and written reports.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reporting to governors on those students placed in alternative provision as a discrete group

- ensuring that the outdoor recreation area at Flexible Learning centre is suitably cleared of loose materials before students start to use the facility in spring.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Additional Inspector