

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr M Avoth
Principal
Avon Valley College
Recreation Road
Durrington
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 8HH

Dear Mr Avoth

Ofsted 2012 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 4 and 5 March 2013 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with the senior leaders who co-ordinate the alternative provision and with two groups of students. I also met with the Director of the Wessex Partnership and examined a range of documents. I visited the following providers and held discussions with the staff responsible for the provision: The CfBT-Education Trust Project, The GUL Outdoor Therapy and Riding Centre and River Bourne Community Farm.

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 employs a range of successful strategies and provides courses which meet the needs of almost all students on the school site. Consequently, only a very small proportion of students require arrangements which include the use of part-time alternative educational provision.
- Courses offered by off-site alternative providers complement very well the extensive vocational and work-related programme provided within the school.

- Strong collaborative work with other schools in the Salisbury area through the Wessex Partnership, and with the local authority, ensures that suitable providers are identified that meet students' academic, social and behavioural needs.
- The Wessex Partnership monitors closely the quality of students' learning at providers in the partnership, checks the suitability of provision and arranges training for staff, for example in safeguarding. Schools in the partnership meet regularly to evaluate the overall impact of the provision and to commission new provision where deemed necessary.
- Providers offer a positive environment where students achieve recognised qualifications, are able to take on increasing levels of responsibility and grow in confidence. As a result, students are very positive about their placements and look forward to attending. In the words of one student who attended on Fridays, 'I have something to look forward to at the end of the week.'
- Providers feel well-supported by the school and the Wessex Partnership. They receive a good level of information about the individual needs of students prior to their attendance, which helps students to settle in quickly.
- All students are provided with a balanced curriculum which is leading to a broad range of suitable qualifications, including GCSE in both English and mathematics. All students who attended alternative provision last year gained GCSEs in English and mathematics. Some are considering future study linked to the work-related qualifications they are gaining through their current alternative provision courses.
- All providers send regular reports to the school on students' general progress, attendance, and personal development. Students have key staff in school with whom they discuss their progress, often informally.
- The school's evidence shows that since attending alternative provision, students have made progress in their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning which is having a strong impact on their overall academic achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- adding more detail in reports on students' academic progress where students receive part of their English and mathematics curriculum at an alternative provider
- monitoring more formally the learning at some of the alternative provision.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector