

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 J Jackson
Principal
Launceston College
Hurdon Road
Launceston
Cornwall
PL15 9JR

Dear Mr Jackson

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 3 and 4 October 2013 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and your leadership team and groups of students. I also met the Principal of the North Cornwall Alternative Provision Academy and staff from the Duchy College. I visited your off-site centre, your construction and vehicle mechanics centre and your hair and beauty provision as well as your cooking and catering facilities, where I was privileged to enjoy an excellently prepared and served lunch. I also visited Duchy College and the North Cornwall Alternative Provision Academy.

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 academy greatly values all students and through its excellent curriculum opportunities it ensures all students can, and do, achieve well. Students attend an alternative placement for a complete day which is timetabled so that they do not miss any lessons and they are still able to choose options which interest them. This also allows for some students to choose courses which will give them valuable insight for future career options; for example studying construction while achieving high academic standards with a view to becoming an architect.

- Your off-site centre works very well at supporting students who are likely to be excluded and the occasional student who has been temporarily excluded. This has greatly reduced the number of exclusions from above average six years ago to almost non-existent today. This centre supports the behavioural needs of students by ensuring that all achieve well academically. Expectations of behaviour, work and uniform are the same at the centre as they are back at the main academy site. Consequently students achieve well and the proportion of students within the academy that do not progress to employment, education or training is well below both the county and national average.
- Some of the courses students follow are highly appropriate for their career aspirations and meet the needs of local employers, particularly for those who wish to work in agriculture, other land based areas and construction. These courses give the students suitable qualifications but they are not recognised when the school's achievement is evaluated against national data. Students who follow these courses gain in self-confidence along with improved behaviour, attendance and attitudes. They are very well prepared for future employment.
- Students who study the land based activities at the Duchy College are very well supported by staff at the academy. Students receive good career advice and then can attend taster days at the college prior to starting their course in Year 10. Tutors at the college plan the practical work to include real life applications of mathematics and science, for example working out the amount of seed needed to plant a field using a mechanised seed drill or the difference between genetically modified and other crops. Subject teachers back in school do not always take opportunities when covering similar topics to use students' experiences to enhance their learning.
- Many students continue with their studies at the college after they leave the academy at the age of 16 or 18. The college has introduced post 16 courses for students who have not yet gained a GCSE grade C or better for both English and mathematics, using work being covered in land based studies, or equine studies. The academy recognises how close cooperation will enable them to use the same activities to motivate and engage similar students who are also studying to improve their GCSE grades.
- Students who attend the academy's highly effective construction and motor vehicle centre are very well prepared for working in the industry. In construction many continue to study at the academy after 16. The strong links between the academy and local employers mean that many students gain employment because they have shown they have suitable attitudes and qualifications for them to work safely on a construction site.
- The academy has purpose built industry standard hairdressing, beauty and catering facilities. Students are taught by experts with relevant industrial experience and this ensure they are very well prepared for taking up a job either while still at the academy or after they have left.

- Students who attend the North Cornwall Alternative Provision Academy are supported for a short time in order to help them improve their behaviour. Students maintain the academy's strong work and behaviour expectations. Occasionally students are supported through the Cornwall Hospital Education Service (CHES). They receive support from direct contact with staff and through online tutoring. Across the service half the students who were in Year 11 last year gained 5 or more higher level GCSEs including English and mathematics.
- The academy gives a good range of information to providers, including any particular learning or social needs. All placements have direct contact weekly with the academy and staff are frequent visitors to the various establishments. This close cooperation supports the effective work to ensure all students succeed.

An area for improvement, which we discussed, was:

- incorporating work done by students when attending different placements into lessons when back in the academy to ensure teachers use the real life applications to give their lessons greater relevance.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector