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Ms J A Potts
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Dear Ms Potts

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 30 June – 1 July 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and the senior leaders who co-ordinate the provision. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Christchurch Learning Centre, Paragon Technology Centre and Cheese and Alfie's restaurant.

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 manages the use of alternative provision well. It selects alternative provision carefully to ensure it meets health and safety and safeguarding requirements and gives value for money.
- The school has established effective partnerships with key providers and other schools in the area. It does not use many alternative providers, but those used meet students' personal and social development and academic needs well.
- Students are prepared very well for making their choices through 'taster' sessions, 'open evenings' and meetings, held with parents and carers, to

explain possible career routes. One provider conducts interviews to check on each student's suitability for attending the course.

- Providers offer a positive environment with suitably trained staff and appropriate safety arrangements. They report that they have good communication with the school and that any concerns are followed up quickly. They send regular information to the school on students' attendance, progress and personal development.
- Providers receive a suitable range of information to help them in supporting students. All are given written copies of child protection and safeguarding arrangements. School staff meet the providers and share additional information on students with particular needs. They are particularly effective in giving additional support to students who may encounter difficulties adjusting to a work-related learning environment.
- The school timetable is organised effectively so that students choose alternative provision alongside other optional courses. This ensures that all students follow a balanced curriculum which leads to a broad range of qualifications. However, it is unclear whether a few students who attend one provider receive sufficient taught time in the week, and whether others following a Level 1 course receive enough challenge.
- The number of students leaving school at the end of 2013 who had used alternative educational provision was quite small. Almost all Year 11 students who attended off-site provision last year achieved at least five GCSE passes. All gained a pass in English, with a quarter gaining grade C or above. Most gained a pass in mathematics, with a quarter gaining a C grade or above and the rest gaining a pass in functional skills. The school's evidence also shows that the large majority of students improved their attendance and attitudes to learning. Taken together, this information shows that given students' starting points, they made accelerated progress and closed the gap in attainment with their peers.
- The current cohort of Year 11 students using off-site provision is larger, and the GCSE pass grades that these students are predicted to gain confirms a picture of good progress.
- The school has recently begun monitoring the progress of students who attend work-related courses as a discrete group in order to evaluate the overall impact of provision. Staff visit off-site provision approximately once each term to make a general check on the quality of learning, and there is frequent informal discussion around the progress of individual students. Formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is less well established.
- Students' personal, social and employability skills are promoted well by the alternative providers. This links closely with the school's own established programme of careers advice and guidance. Most students who left at the

end of Year 11 in 2013 have pursued further training linked to their off-site course, while the rest have progressed to suitable destinations.

- Students are extremely positive about their experience at the off-site provision. They particularly enjoy learning through practical work and appreciate how this adds variety to their overall experience of school. Typical comments made were, 'It's something to look forward to', and 'It makes the week feel better.' Students also recognise how the courses fit in well with the rest of the timetable so that they do not miss other subjects that they wish to study.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- checking that all students attending alternative educational provision receive sufficient taught time in the school week
- exploring the provision of more Level 2 courses for the more academically capable students attending work-related courses
- gathering information more systematically on the quality of teaching and learning at off-site provision.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector