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8 December 2014

Mr S Penney  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Penney

### **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 17-18 November 2014 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and members of your senior and extended leadership teams. I had a meeting with the Director of Worklearn which is an organisation specialising in identifying and managing alternative provision placements for schools. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Impact (Sefton secondary pupil referral unit), National Tyres - Crosby branch (Worklearn) and Crosby Auto and MOT Centre (Worklearn).

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 proportion of students at Chesterfield High School who are identified as those who would benefit from attending alternative provision is very low. Leaders have reduced the need for off-site alternative provision by using the PRIDE Centre well. This centre is the hub of the school's in-house alternative curriculum.
- Leaders employ Worklearn to identify and manage most alternative placements. The manager of Worklearn has established good relationships with the employers who provide placements. He is able to give assurances

to the school, supported by his records of visits, that health and safety requirements are met to a sufficiently high standard. Visits to two of the Worklearn placements confirmed that the health and safety of students taking part in alternative provision is taken seriously.

- Leaders also make effective use of their links with the local authority by using Impact as alternative provision for students who are in need of intensive and specialist support. Impact is a local authority pupil referral unit which provides regulated alternative provision. Impact has high standards in terms of both the health and safety and safeguarding of students. Excellent monitoring and reporting systems between the school and Impact ensure that school leaders can be confident that students placed at Impact are safe and well cared for.
- The school has put in place a robust procedure to match the specific needs of students at risk of underachieving to an appropriate alternative provision. Consequently, leaders are able to give very careful consideration to the personal needs of each student. The school's own data show that this measured approach is successful in supporting students with the next steps in their education or career.
- Students who participate in off-site alternative provision recognise that they miss lessons while they are out of school. Individual learning plans minimise the impact of attendance at alternative provision on students' progress in core subjects. Each student has an individual plan, including catch-up lessons in the PRIDE Centre, individual tuition and specialist support during form time. All of the students I spoke to said that they are able to keep up with their peers in English, mathematics and science lessons. The school's own data show that the large majority of students who attend alternative provision accelerate their progress and achieve at a higher level than was expected of them prior to taking part. For example, of the 14 Year 11 students who took part in alternative provision last year, all of them are in employment, education or training and many gained mathematics and or English qualifications at an appropriate level. These are admirable outcomes for this group of students.
- All of the provisions I visited provided suitable accommodation in relation to the type of working environment and purpose of the placement. In the vocational placements visited, students were observed gaining valuable hands-on experience in real life work settings. The students I spoke to said that this experience helped them with their learning back in school because they now see a purpose for their mathematics and English lessons. The same students said that being out of school and active helped them concentrate more and also improved their behaviour back in school. Leaders' analysis of behaviour records support this view on improved behaviour.
- All of the providers I spoke to felt that they were supported well by the school. Where students are placed by Worklearn, contact with the director of Worklearn is daily although visits by the school are infrequent and

irregular. Visits by the school to Impact are regular and planned to coincide with six-weekly progress monitoring meetings. However, all providers said that they had the contact details of a school leader responsible for safeguarding, that they were confident they could contact the school at any time and that school kept them informed of any potential issues with students.

- The quality of the information and training given to the providers and the extent to which this supports them in supporting the students varies considerably. Providers identified through Impact receive detailed and appropriate information about individuals' additional learning needs. These providers also receive additional training on child protection procedures so that they can ensure their own practices complement those of Impact. Other providers used by the school do not receive appropriately detailed information about the students placed with them because such records are not made available to Worklearn. Although each employer is given a copy of the school's child protection policy, leaders do not check that employers understand it nor do they ensure employers are aware of other relevant school policies.
- Leaders have frequent contact with both Worklearn and Impact. Consequently, they are made aware quickly of any issues relating to the placement of a student and can and do act swiftly to resolve the matter effectively. However, school leaders rely too much on the information provided by Impact and Worklearn to form their judgements on the quality of alternative provision. Leaders do not systematically check the provision for themselves and are therefore not in a position to give an accurate and independent view of quality.
- All of the students I spoke to felt that attendance at alternative provision is helping them maintain their place at school. All of the students felt that they are now better able to concentrate in lessons and that their behaviour overall has improved since attending alternative provision. Students felt that they have learned new skills on their placement and most said they wanted a career in an area similar to that they were currently working in. Approximately half of those I spoke to felt that they would benefit from an increased choice of types of placements available. My observations during the visit would concur that students who attend alternative provision are well motivated to succeed in school.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that the good practice of sharing appropriate information with some providers is applied consistently well across all providers
- putting in place a robust system to monitor the safeguarding of students placed in unregulated settings, for example by introducing a thorough service level agreement for all placements and an appropriate risk assessment tailored to each setting and delivering appropriate training for providers on the school's expectations and procedures related to child protection

- ensuring that leaders' monitoring of the quality of alternative provision is systematic and to the same high standard as that of their monitoring of the quality of learning and teaching in school.

Yours sincerely

**Drew Crawshaw**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**