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Mr S Haycocks
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Haycocks

Ofsted 2014 15 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 10 and 11 February 2015 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, students, a former student and a parent. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend or have attended in the recent past: Leyland Trucks; the Eric Wright Learning Foundation; Fix-it UK Ltd.

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 was a founding member of the Chorley and South Ribble Consortium, a large group of local secondary schools and a general further education college which collaborated on both the establishment and commissioning of alternative provision. While the consortium still operates, the changing educational climate has led to a diminution of this aspect of its work. This year the school is sending students to one provider set up through the consortium but has no plans to use off-site provision next year. The consortium's robust procedures remain in place for ensuring that health, safety and safeguarding requirements are met.
- The school also commissions off-site provision beyond the consortium and has worked hard to find the right thing for students for whom full-time

mainstream schooling is too great a challenge. Appropriate safety checks, following the local authority's risk assessment process, are conducted before students are offered places. However, where placements are with businesses rather than providers whose main purpose is alternative provision for young people, it is not clear that there is always a full, shared understanding of safeguarding.

- The school's clear rationale for identifying students for off-site provision is the promotion of their personal development. The aim is to raise students' aspirations by increasing their self-esteem, confidence and motivation to learn. In the main, the level of qualifications gained through alternative provision is similar to the level of those gained at school.
- The provisions attended by students are comparable with working environments and model good practice, for instance in the handling and storage of tools. They are well resourced, both for the practical and theory elements of the training.
- The school shares a helpful range of information about students with providers at the beginning of the placement. This includes an outline of students' academic performance, learning needs, attendance and behaviour. In some instances, students complete an application form drawn up by the consortium through which both they and their parents agree to the terms of the placement. Students also have to consider why they want to follow the course on offer.
- Communication between the school and providers is good. Providers are confident of a rapid response from senior staff at school should that be necessary.
- In almost all cases, alternative provision is offered to students as an addition to their full timetable. Students take responsibility for keeping up with the work missed while out of school. Students spoken to say they manage this with the help of their teachers who make time available, for instance during lunch breaks. The school's current progress data indicate that almost all of these students are successful in maintaining the rate of progress expected of them in all subjects. Where alternative provision students have additional learning needs, their timetables are adjusted to ensure that they receive individual support to keep up and meet their targets.
- In 2014, all 21 students who had alternative provision placements gained a GCSE in English. Nineteen also gained a GCSE in mathematics. Three of these students achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. About half of the cohort made at least expected levels of progress overall. The current cohorts of Year 10 and 11 students are following GCSE courses in English and mathematics. Almost all of the Year 10 students and about half of the current Year 11 students are meeting their progress targets. The qualifications students gain through alternative provision are recognised by post-16 providers.

- All students who left the school in summer 2014, including those who followed alternative provision courses, are in education, training or employment. The school can point to some striking individual successes resulting from alternative provision placements.
- The school monitors the impact of all its provision through regular tracking of students' progress, attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance. Consequently, leaders are confident about the positive impact of off-site provision for almost all students who have accessed it. They take swift action where a placement is not working.
- The school does not monitor the quality of delivery of alternative provision courses directly. Weekly checks are made on students' attendance and punctuality and their views are sought regularly. Periodically, staff visit to see how students respond when attending their placements.
- Students are very positive about the opportunity they have to attend off-site provision. They enjoy being treated as adults and say it motivates them to do well in school. Some acknowledge the positive impact off-site provision has had on their behaviour. Where there is no direct link between their placements and their post-16 aspirations, they recognise the value of the transferable skills and preparation for employment they are gaining.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the school and the employers where students are placed share a common understanding of safeguarding, for instance by sharing the school's policy and procedures
- ensuring that reports from employers and providers are included in the school's usual cycle of reporting to parents.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector