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Mr J Doyle  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Doyle

**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 14-15 January 2015, with Christopher Chapman HMI, to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit we met with you, the acting deputy headteacher, other assistant headteachers and the head of key skills and alternative curriculum. Additional meetings were held with the director of learning support and a representative from the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. We also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Midstream Garden Centre
- West Lancashire Training and Learning Centre
- BDS Training Ltd
- West Lancashire College Construction 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 school has very effectively identified suitable vocational provision for its students through its working relationship with a group of providers forming the West Lancashire Partnership. Through the partnership, a list is produced providing a wide variety of provision for 14-19 year olds. Where

work placements are involved, you use providers who you know from experience are capable of providing a good level of support.

- You are a director of the West Lancashire Training and Learning Centre, and this direct involvement means that you have a good knowledge of the effectiveness of the pre-employment and safeguarding checks at this provider. The school does not have the same first-hand knowledge about the effectiveness of these checks in other providers. It would be beneficial to check a random sample of risk assessments and pre-employment checks.
- Provision is carefully selected to meet individuals' academic as well as personal needs, for example in order to support students in developing their social skills. Students complete a range of courses at different levels, mainly Entry Level and Level 1. Where students demonstrate particular strengths, they are supported in achieving Level 2 qualifications.
- Purpose-built, or recently adapted, accommodation is characteristic of providers visited, and this provides high quality facilities for students. Buildings and classrooms are well-maintained and students have access to a variety of workshops including discrete areas to develop different construction skills, a hairdressing salon and beauty room. Separate areas for theory work are well equipped with information technology facilities.
- Detailed information on students' academic achievements is given to providers including information about any special educational needs, support with behavioural issues and removing barriers to learning. However, some providers felt there was too much information and they were not confident about how the information should be used to best effect.
- School leaders and providers work hard to involve parents in their child's alternative provision. Parents are invited to meetings where initial options are discussed, followed by invitations to visit and tour the provision. Providers regularly hold celebration events and open evenings for parents and say these are usually well attended. No record is kept of this attendance and so school leaders do not know which parents are unable to attend, or to intervene to remove any barriers preventing them from attending.
- Support from the school is readily available to providers through the head of key skills and alternative curriculum and other staff who visit the providers. However, the frequency and purpose of these visits varies and there is need for greater consistency to ensure all students and providers have access to the same high quality support.
- Alternative provision is planned effectively for students so that they do not miss out on their core subjects of English, mathematics and science and also have access to a range of courses in school including 'Skills for Life' and other optional subjects. Together with work-related learning, this

provides students with a variety of useful qualifications. All students have the opportunity to achieve GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics.

- The majority of students who are currently attending alternative provision are making good progress in their work-related courses and subjects studied at school. Attainment in GCSE art was a strength for the 2013/14 group of alternative provision students and this trend continues this year.
- Progression to higher level courses is possible from all courses followed by students as part of their alternative provision. In 2013/14 about a third of students chose to continue their studies in their alternative provision course either at the same provider or at other colleges.
- Monitoring of students' progress in their alternative provision is set to improve as you incorporate providers' judgements into your own assessment and reporting system. This will not only improve the quality of the information made available to parents and students, but will enable you to better identify when progress slows and to intervene to identify the reasons for this.
- Students very much so enjoy their alternative provision, and prefer these courses to those studied in school. They talked very positively about their experiences and value the opportunity they have been given to develop their skills. All recognise that the qualifications they will obtain will help them to secure a college course or apprenticeship in the future and most talked enthusiastically about their post-16 plans.

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

- giving each provider a copy of the school's policy on child protection and making sure, through checks or by delivering training collaboratively, that all staff understand their responsibility to keep children safe
- reviewing your curriculum for students involved in alternative provision to make sure they receive their entitlement to find out about other faiths and cultures, and to take part in physical education (PE)
- making visits to providers more purposeful by carrying out checks on the quality of teaching; and looking at the quality of students' work.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**