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Mr A McGlown
Headteacher
St Peter's Catholic High School Visual
Arts College
Howards Lane
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Dear Mr McGlown

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 23-24 February 2015 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher and recently retired deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the co-ordinator for students with special educational needs and the information, advice and guidance co-ordinator. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

- BodyMech
- Fir Tree Fishery
- Tyler Lee Hairdressing Salon

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

- School leaders have increased the range of courses available to students on the school site, which includes opportunities for work-related learning such as construction and hairdressing theory. Only a small number of students need to go off-site for their alternative provision. School leaders are very selective in the way they choose this and use providers they know from experience will provide a good level of support for students in Years 10 and 11.

- Talents are developed through the school's sporting excellence programme in which three Key Stage 3 students are developing their skills in football and tennis to a high level.
- The local authority, very helpfully, provides a range of policies for their schools to use and to adapt. The child protection and safeguarding policy, which is routinely shared with providers, includes a separate section on how students who attend off-site alternative provision are kept safe. Safeguarding checks and health and safety procedures in alternative provision are the responsibility of the providers and school leaders check these arrangements. However, this is not always done before students start their placements, or following changes such as to courses or when new tutors or assistants start to work with students.
- Courses are carefully selected to meet individuals' academic as well as personal needs where possible. However, there are a few inconsistencies such as where a more difficult course may be more suitable or where students are not always completely satisfied with their provision. All courses lead to a recognised qualification which will enable students to progress to a higher level, or to gain entry to college or an apprenticeship.
- Providers' facilities are fit for purpose and enable students to experience a 'work-like' environment. Students have separate areas for theory and practical activities including access to computers. Practical areas are clean, light and well supervised, providing access to necessary tools, equipment and resources. Students' safety is given a high priority and tutors were observed giving clear instructions and reminders on the use of safety equipment or safe working practice.
- A range of written information is given to providers before students start their placement. This helpful information includes attainment, difficulties with literacy and numeracy and any special educational needs. Providers say they would like more information about how to help students with special educational needs to learn best and how to adapt work to remove any barriers to learning.
- Providers say they feel very well supported by the school and are confident that senior leaders can be contacted immediately in the event of an emergency or to address any concerns such as the very rare incidents of poor behaviour. Attendance issues are dealt with promptly by the school attendance officer who makes immediate contact with parents. In addition, the minibus driver who transports some of the students to or from their alternative provision alerts the school to any concerns.
- Careful curriculum planning by school leaders ensures that many students in alternative provision do not miss out on any subjects in school. Where students do miss lessons they are provided with separate times during the week to catch-up with any work missed. Although this work is supervised, sometimes students do not have access to a subject specialist for the work missed and they are not always able to catch-up on practical work such as

in science. Students on the sporting excellence programme do not always receive their full entitlement to information technology.

- The school makes certain that all students in alternative provision are successful in achieving GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics in addition to qualifications in their alternative provision.
- Scrutiny of reports sent to the parents of students in alternative provision shows that students are making the progress expected of them in most of their subjects and providers state that students are 'on track' to pass their alternative provision course. Progress in mathematics for this small group of students is slower than nationally expected rates, but this slower progress is similar to the progress made in mathematics by other students in the school at this stage in the course.
- Providers discussed the enormous social benefits to students from having the opportunity to work with students from other schools, including those from other backgrounds and those requiring support for their behaviour. This view was reiterated by school leaders who gave examples of how students' self-confidence and communication skills had improved through working with other young people and adults. This, together with a range of academic and vocational qualifications, prepares students well for college, apprenticeships and employment.
- School leaders' accurate self-evaluation has identified that the school does not do enough to monitor the progress of students in alternative provision. Plans are in place to align reports to parents from providers with the school reporting system which will enable school leaders to identify when progress in alternative provision slows and to do something about this.
- Most students enjoy their alternative provision and greatly appreciate the opportunity that the school has given to them to develop their work-related skills. Some students are successfully combining their interest with their work aspirations such as through angling or gardening.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- giving providers written guidance on how to support students with special educational needs and disabilities, including adaptations to teaching
- inviting alternative provision tutors to take part in your staff training on safeguarding updates and improving teaching
- improving the effectiveness of visits to providers by checking on the quality of teaching including checks on the quality of students' work
- presenting governors with summaries of the progress made by students to enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative provision.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector