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Mr P Halcro  
Principal  
The Bulwell Academy  
Squires Avenue  
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Nottingham  
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Dear Mr Halcro

### **13 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 13 and 14 March 2013 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. I am also very grateful to the members of the Nottingham City Secondary Education partnership who came to talk with me about the partnership work undertaken. During the visit I met with you and the academy's deputy headteacher, interviewed a number of students and examined a range of documents. I also visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Pedal
- Nisai Learning Hub
- East Midlands Roofing College
- R.E.A.L Education

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 academy's work**

- From interviews conducted with staff and students, visits to a range of providers and consideration of all documentation provided, it is clear that carefully considered placements in alternative provision are successfully supporting a number of students to re-engage with their education. Students interviewed are highly positive about the benefits.

They feel these placements meet their varying needs, motivate them and provide direction. When one of them described this as 'the highlight of my week', the others readily agreed.

- The academy's varied and personalised curriculum pathways provide the vast majority of students with an appropriate curriculum that effectively meets their needs. For some students, who struggle to cope with a traditional timetable, this includes some alternative provision together with an adapted timetable in the academy. Consequently, a relatively small number of students routinely attend alternative provision off-site each week. Careful consideration is given to the use of alternative provision for this small group of students, many of whom have complex needs.
- Very good use is made of the city's secondary education partnership to source and quality-assure placements. The robust scrutiny undertaken by the partnership is complemented well by monitoring from academy staff, including checks on the quality of teaching and learning provided.
- The academy carefully considers each student's individual needs, aptitudes and interests in selecting provision. Students appreciate that they have some input into this; their views are taken into consideration as they are able to select one of two options made available for them.
- The documentation held in the academy on each student is exemplary. Records are detailed and comprehensive, providing a clear overview of each student's circumstances, needs and achievements. The quality and detail of these indicate the care with which these students are monitored and supported to achieve as highly as possible. Further, the academy's clear commitment to retain students and keep them in mainstream education is commendable; flexible and innovative approaches are evident in devising solutions to the barriers to learning that some students face.
- Wisely, the academy maintains a continuing focus on the importance of students improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is increasing emphasis on supporting students to gain the best possible outcomes in GCSE English and mathematics qualifications. Additional sessions are made available after school and on Saturdays for this purpose. Further, alternative providers are clear about their roles in supporting basic skills; many providing work-based sessions in literacy and numeracy in addition to vocational qualifications.
- Alternative providers are positive about the relationships they have established with the academy; they appreciate the quality of detail provided on students' backgrounds, needs and aspirations; the smoothness of the referral process and the subsequent communications with a named member of the academy's staff.

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

- supporting alternative providers in completing progress and achievement reports on students more consistently to match the best practice noted at the visit.

Yours sincerely

**Judith Matharu**  
**Additional Inspector**