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Mrs T Rees  
Headteacher  
Fernwood School  
Goodwood Road  
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Nottingham  
NG8 2FT

Dear Mrs Rees

### **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 3-4 March 2015 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher responsible for alternative provision, and three students who attend alternative provision. I examined a range of documents including case studies, progress records and the school improvement plan. I visited the following off-site providers that your students attend: Notts County FITC; First Universal Enterprises Limited (FUEL); Buxton Training Enterprises.

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**

- Procedures to ensure that good quality alternative provision is delivered and developed are exemplary. The one-day annual inspections the academy contribute to as part of the Nottingham City Secondary Education Partnership (NCSEP) give providers clear and constructive feedback about the strengths of their work and areas to develop. The follow-up through partnership meetings, training and subsequent monitoring is well-focused and well-received by providers. Examples of improvement following feedback and training are plentiful.

- Well-informed self-evaluation ensures that the academy's part in using alternative provision is continuously refined. For example, the academy's use of Ofsted's previous reports about alternative provision has led to a sharper focus on the quality of careers education and guidance provided for students. Similarly, self-evaluation is a strong element of the academy's approach to half-termly visits to students off-site. Because students are expected to reflect on their progress using specific criteria they give importance to these skills and their role in their development. Nevertheless, students do not routinely record their reflections in between visits by the academy, or use examples of their work when evaluating.
- The central role of senior leaders and governors in relation to alternative provision reflects its importance in relation to inclusion at the academy. Detailed case studies show that before students access off-site provision a wide range of strategies, including work with outside agencies, have already been used. This evidence aligns with the academy's very clear alternative provision policy, specific alternative provision plan and the related responsibilities of the assistant principal leading this aspect of the academy's work. The very small proportion of students supported off-site, their positive achievements and their success in engaging in education, training or employment post-16, indicates the effectiveness.
- The academy contributes to the high quality support provided by NCSEP. Equally, the academy's confidence in using alternative provision off-site benefits from the procedures developed by the partnership. These include compliant safeguarding procedures, detailed referrals of students to providers and efficient systems of tracking students' attendance. The protocol of discussing placements with students, their parents and carers, and providers at the off-site venue proposed contributes to agreement about the expected gains. However, although expectations of students are explicit in relation to their personal development, targets are less clear in relation to the standards students are expected to attain. This is a weaker aspect of the success criteria in the alternative provision plan.

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

- encouraging students to reflect on their experiences and work off-site more regularly in order to support their preparation for academy visits
- ensuring that clearer targets for students' attainment and progress at alternative providers build on the good practice in personal development..

Yours sincerely

**Ian Middleton**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**