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Mr K Gritton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Gritton

### **Ofsted 2014 15 survey inspection programme: schools' use of alternative provision**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your assistant headteacher and students, during my visit on 9 March 2015 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, an assistant headteacher, an English teacher who delivers one-to-one tuition, and a house administrator. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Rathbone Derby and Derby Skillbuild.

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 academy takes advantage of a local alternative provision academy (not part of this survey) to place some students who are struggling in a large school but are able to cope with a balance of academic and vocational learning in a smaller institution. For a very small number of students, established alternative providers known to the local 14-19 partnership are used. Shared knowledge of providers helps to inform the academy's choices.
- The use of off-site provision is confined to those students who are at risk of permanent exclusion and/or of failing to move on successfully to education, training or employment post-16. The aim is to re-engage students, some of whom are school refusers, in learning by assembling bespoke programmes linked to their interests and aspirations. Each

student has the opportunity to gain qualifications through alternative provision, but this is not the academy's main rationale for placements.

- The providers visited have suitable accommodation for the vocational courses offered. For example, students have the opportunity to run a 'mock shop' if interested in retail, use professional standard laptops for media studies, and practise construction and maintenance skills both indoors and outside. Providers have full risk assessments in place for premises and activities. Students are provided with appropriate personal protection clothing and barred from practical activities without this.
- Providers have safeguarding policies and procedures in place and staff complete regular training to ensure their understanding of risks is current. Providers know who to contact at the academy should any concerns arise: they are confident of a rapid response.
- Considerable, relevant information about students' needs is shared with providers by the academy. Providers have their own referral forms which cover key areas including special educational needs, agency involvement, academic levels, and behaviour. These are completed in discussion with students and, where possible, their parents. This is augmented by frequent communication between providers and academy staff as they support students to maintain their placements.
- Students attending alternative provision follow functional skills courses in English and mathematics. In addition, some students return to school periodically for one-to-one tuition in core subjects where they are likely to gain a GCSE. In 2014, two of five students on alternative provision gained GCSE passes at grades D-G in English and mathematics. The remainder gained functional skills qualifications, either at Level 1 or 2. Given their starting points, these students did not make the nationally expected rate of progress. However, alternative provision has helped these students to move on to apprenticeships or college courses post-16.
- Students' currently on alternative provision are not making the nationally expected rate of progress. However, there has been a marked improvement, from approximately 20%, in the attendance of one student. For another, better engagement in alternative provision and a clear understanding of the value of an apprenticeship post-16, is providing the motivation to work hard during one-to-one tuition in order to gain a GCSE.
- Students follow recognised courses with alternative providers. These cover both the first steps towards a particular area of work, such as painting and decorating, and the skills needed for employment. Based on students' prior attainment, these courses are not demanding enough in terms of academic level. However, in relation to their personal and social development and the shortfalls in learning resulting from these, these courses are appropriate tools for re-engagement.

- The academy monitors the impact of provision through regular reports from providers on students' attendance, engagement and progress. These include evaluations by students linked to the courses they are following. Written reports are supplemented by regular informal communications with providers as well as visits by staff.
- Students say they enjoy the opportunities they have through alternative provision. They appreciate the informal atmosphere and feel more secure in small groups. Students like being treated as adults and say this helps them behave in a more mature way. The provision is helping current students to shape their ambitions and recognise the work they need to do to move towards realising these.

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

- continuing to move towards providing 25 hours of education per week for students on alternative provision. The nature of students' needs means that they do not attend the academy at any point during a week. A very small number are currently on part-time alternative provision placements. The academy should continue to extend these individual programmes to full-time as promptly as possible.
- monitoring the quality of providers' course delivery once placements are fully established.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**