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Mr J Horsley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Horsley

**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 5-6 May 2015 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the off-site learning coordinator, the Heads of Years 7 and 11, and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met students past and present and visited the following providers that your students attend: West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service; Wakefield Riding for the Disabled; Chevin Construction.

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**

- The academy follows rigorous procedures when selecting off-site provision. The starting point is providers approved by the local authority, from which the academy makes direct arrangements in some instances. Thorough checks are carried out by the academy to ensure that providers meet students' needs, have high expectations of their conduct, and a working ethos which fosters students' personal and social development well. Sharp attention is paid to checking that providers meet health and safety requirements and have robust systems in place to safeguard students.

- The academy benefits from well-established local authority systems covering all aspects of the process of selecting, commissioning and placing students on off-site alternative provision. A virtual learning environment is in place for secure communications between schools and providers: the academy makes some use of this. A wide range of well-considered proformas are available for use by and with schools, students, providers and parents.
- The academy has two distinct groups of students for whom it makes off-site provision. The first and much larger group selects alternative provision, with parental approval, as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum. The academy promotes equal opportunities well in this regard, making the off-site construction course available to students with visual impairment. Courses followed off-site are at the same level as those followed in school. The second group, a very small number, are students who are unable to cope successfully with full-time mainstream schooling for various reasons. Personalised provision is made to meet their social and emotional needs, academic progress being a benefit of the resulting reengagement.
- The providers used take effective steps to keep students safe. There is a suitable ratio of adults to students and premises have secure entrances. Clear procedures for reporting a student's absence are followed. Providers have high expectations regarding students' behaviour. Personal protective equipment is provided and its use is obligatory. For instance, young firefighters have their own full safety uniform, measured to fit, that they wear for each session. The work each provider does means that health and safety forms a key part of students' learning. For example, when visited construction students were role-playing health and safety inspectors, successfully identifying a myriad of hazards in a building yard run by 'Botch It and Scarper Builders'.
- The amount of information providers require about students when they start off-site courses varies. The fire service likes to give students a fresh start so has its own referral form which captures only information essential for health and safety. The academy adds to this when necessary to keep students safe. Other providers value the local authority's referral form which is more wide ranging. This covers academic levels in English and mathematics, special educational needs, social skills and behavioural issues.
- Relationships between the academy and providers are strong. The academy is increasingly working directly with providers to secure discrete, high-quality provision for its students. Providers are confident of a rapid response should they need to contact the academy.
- Where off-site provision is an integral part of the curriculum, it forms part of students' timetables. Students with personalised timetables spend varying amounts of time off site. When in school they attend some mainstream lessons and also work in the Supported Learning Centre to help them keep on track. Support staff and senior teachers help them

complete work set and marked by subject teachers. The academy has created capacity within the mathematics department to provide one-to-one tuition for these students and a similar level of support is available in English.

- All students follow GCSE courses in English and mathematics in school. In 2014, all students who had followed a course off-site gained GCSEs in mathematics and English. Half gained a grade C or above in English and almost as many reached this level in mathematics. All of these students are now in education, employment or training.
- In the academy's judgement, the majority of the current Year 11 cohort following courses off-site is making both good academic progress and good progress in the development of their employability skills. All are making at least the expected rate of progress. All students have a confirmed post-16 destination.
- The qualifications students gain through off-site provision are at the same level as their work in school and can be built on post-16. Senior leaders, including governors, have made the decision to continue with one course even though it does not contribute to the performance tables. This is because it makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development and preparation for the next stage of their lives.
- The academy uses a range of ways of monitoring the quality of off-site provision. Weekly feedback is gathered from students and from any support staff who may attend to help students with disabilities or special educational needs. Staff make regular visits to providers to ensure that course delivery is on track and half-termly reports on students' progress are taken into account. Where provision has been arranged through the local authority, the academy can draw on the quality assurance work of officers who conduct regular visits.
- Students enjoy the opportunities they have through off-site provision. They like the practical aspects of the courses and meeting some of the challenges presented, for instance in tackling the smoke house as young firefighters. They value what they are learning about team work and have a sense of achievement in gaining new skills. Students appreciate being treated more like adults in a workplace environment. Some students recognise that off-site provision is helping them to cope more readily with school life and so giving them opportunities to gain qualifications which might otherwise have been squandered.

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

- ensuring that students' progress on off-site courses is included in the academy's tracking system in the same way as all other qualifications
- rationalising the detail and timing of reporting by providers so that off-site courses are included in the academy's regular reports and the information is shared with parents.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**