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Ms C Smith  
Principal  
Bedford Academy  
Mile Road  
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Bedfordshire  
MK42 9TR

Dear Ms Smith

### **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 11 and 12 February 2015 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision.

During the visit I met with you, the assistant principal, the alternative provision manager, the lead teacher for DESC (dedicated education support centre), the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a parent. I met students and visited the following providers that your students attend: Develop, First Place Training and A4S (Angling for Success).

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 has comprehensive arrangements for students' safety when they are off site. The arrangements include undertaking risk assessments before students start the placement and frequent face-to-face contact between the academy's alternative provision manager and each provider throughout the students' placements.
- The selection of students for alternative provision is a serious business for the student, their parents, the staff that teach in all subjects and the staff that provide pastoral support. The process is set out very clearly, based on

how well the changes to timetables and courses will engage students in education and improve their prospects for post-16 courses. A taster day works well for students to commit to their placement before the final decision is made. Most alternative provision is for one day each week and frequently reviewed to make sure that the time off site works well for the rest of the students' week.

- Alternative provision has a high profile within the senior leadership team and the governing body. Meetings between the Principal, the assistant principal, the alternative provision manager and the lead teacher for DESC make sure that the welfare and academic progress of students accessing alternative provision is reviewed frequently and formally. The Vice Chair of the Governing Body keeps well informed about the alternative provision.
- There is an action plan specifically to improve the provision and outcomes for students on alternative provision. This action plan links well with the academy's improvement plan and makes sure that the achievements and wellbeing of students on alternative provision achieve as well as all other students. The assistant principal leads on this and uses the information from monitoring well to identify the priorities.
- Students attending alternative provision feel well supported and like the additional responsibilities that it gives them for their attitudes to work and socialising with others.
- For those who are at risk of exclusion, alternative provision helps them to stay at the academy and gain the qualifications that they are capable of. For students who find learning a challenge for a variety of reasons, alternative provision helps to develop their confidence and aspirations.
- Last year, 19 of the 20 Year 11 students on alternative provision went on to college courses or training at levels that should build upon their academic achievements. Twelve students achieved a GCSE in English and 15 achieved a full GCSE in mathematics. For the majority of students, this represents achievement in line with their predicted grades.
- This year, 13 of the 14 students are on track to achieve what they need to do well by the end of Year 11 and go on to further education or training successfully.

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

- monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching at each alternative provider, linked to the quality of teachers' targets set for each student's achievement and personal development.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**