

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr S Allen
Principal
The de Ferrers Academy
St Mary's Drive
Burton-on-Trent
Staffordshire
DE13 0LL

Dear Mr Allen

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 11-12 March 2015 to look at the school's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and two of your senior colleagues. I also met students and visited the following providers that your students attend:

Curzon Street Trades Skills
Project Wired
Paget Farm
Chameleon School of 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 school's work

- Your approach to alternative provision has changed this academic year; currently there are no Key Stage 4 students placed in alternative provision outside of the academy. This reflects your close attention to considering carefully the differing requirements of each year group and a clear resolve to provide an appropriate curriculum that meets students' needs well. You demonstrate a relentless commitment to ensuring that students achieve the highest grades possible at GCSE, particularly in English and mathematics.

- The academy uses alternative provision if this is deemed appropriate for students. In these circumstances, such provision is chosen with care to meet individual needs and circumstances. For example, last year three Year 11 students attended alternative provision as they were considered at risk of exclusion. This strategy worked well with successful outcomes; these students were able to remain at the academy and study for a range of GCSE examinations. Two students gained a C grade or better in GCSE mathematics and one gained a C grade or better in GCSE English. Further, there were notable improvements in motivation and attitude, with all of the students remaining in the academy and continuing with further education or training post-16.
- You and your staff know your students well and this knowledge is successfully used to provide a supportive, academic environment and additional individual student support where required so that all students are given every opportunity to succeed. Attendance and other indicators of positive student behaviour are above average, indicating that your approach is highly successful. The use of alternative provision at Key Stage 3 for a small number of Year 9 boys once each week is proving valuable for some of those involved. This provision is sensibly targeted on building students' confidence and self-esteem and providing a practical activity beyond the traditional curriculum.
- Positive relationships have been established with the provider. The academy ensures that students are transported to and from each session. Good attention is paid to safety procedures and students are well taught and supervised during their practical activities. Students appreciate that they have an element of choice about their involvement. For some, the activities undertaken are enjoyable and rewarding; others appreciate that if they feel it is not suited to their needs, they can opt to remain in the academy and continue studying their normal timetable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring the possibilities available in alternative provision that may be attractive to girls so that this might be used when appropriate
- ensuring that visits to providers include monitoring the quality of learning at regular intervals with similar rigour to that applied to the mainstream provision.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu

Additional Inspector