

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



1 February 2013

Mrs S Weale  
Interim Principal  
RSA Academy  
Bilston Road  
Gospel Oak  
Tipton  
DY4 0BZ

Dear Mrs Weale

### **13 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 23 and 24 January 2013 to look at the academy's use of alternative provision. During the visit I met with you and the Executive Vice-Principal, and with the co-ordinator of alternative provision and the academy's inclusion manager. I also met with a number of students and their academic coaches, examined a range of documents and held a telephone conversation with one of your alternative providers. I visited the following providers that your students attend:

- Francesca Salvanti Hair and Beauty Academy
- Groundwork Environment Centre
- Nova Training.

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 selects alternative provision wisely in consultation with a small number of students and their parents or carers to provide personalised pathways that meet these individuals' varied needs, aptitudes and aspirations effectively.
- Good use has been made of the 'Sandwell Directory', a local authority list of providers in the local area, to identify potential providers and source local partners to work with the academy.

- There are numerous examples that illustrate the success of the academy's approach in fully re-engaging students who face challenging circumstances and have been at serious risk of alienation from mainstream education.
- Positive relationships have been established with providers. Provision is well organised and managed effectively. There is good communication between the academy and the providers, and clear procedures have been established to share any concerns. In particular, providers are clear about the academy's expectations of them to monitor closely students' attendance and achievements. All providers give the academy regular updates about these aspects and the academy takes prompt action if any concerns emerge. Regular liaison with home ensures that students are well supported to remain on track.
- Importantly, strong emphasis is placed on making sure that the placements offer accredited pathways that lead to a wide range of vocational qualifications and support progression post-16. The qualifications gained complement those gained at the academy, where all those attending alternative provision continue to study.
- The academy's commitment to retain close contact with students on alternative provision is demonstrated through the arrangements in place for individualised, part-time timetables for these students. This enables students to attend the academy and improve their basic skills, particularly in English and mathematics, with one-to-one teaching by academic coaches. This support is of a good quality; records indicate success in improving students' grades in the core subjects at GCSE and thus supporting future employment prospects well.
- Students are positive about both their current experiences and the benefits of alternative provision, indicating that the academy supports them well. All of those interviewed indicated that prior to attending alternative provision a range of issues had negatively affected their attitudes to education. One student said 'The academy could have given up on me but it hasn't. I want to go into this sort of work in future so this arrangement is best for me'.

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

- monitoring the quality of teaching at alternative provision with similar rigour to that applied to the mainstream provision at the academy.

Yours sincerely

**Judith Matharu**  
**Additional Inspector**