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Dear Dr Vann

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: economics and business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 20 and 21 October 2010 to look at work in economics and business education.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with representatives from the Educational and Business Partnership (EBP), staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and brief visits to three lessons drawn from across the whole school curriculum.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability, is outstanding.

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- In Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE business studies has been broadly average in recent years. In a range of other business-related courses, including a level 3 course, students attain well above average scores.
- In GCSE business studies, most students reach or exceed their challenging targets. A thorough progress monitoring system exists and students' progress is carefully tracked and encouraged. Good progress has been made in reducing the differences in achievement between boys and girls.

- The economic and business understanding and financial capability of students not taking examination courses are outstanding. Their experience is validated through an ASDAN course in Key Stage 3 and a COPE qualification in Key Stage 4. This ensures excellent outcomes across the range of economic and business understanding.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

The quality of teaching in economics and business education is good.

- In examination courses, teaching is knowledgeable and confident. In GCSE business studies, very good resources and schemes of work have been set up on the school's intranet. Relationships between staff and students are very positive and students clearly enjoy learning. Teaching links the subject to the real world using case studies and examples that are relevant to students' experience. Students have some opportunities to engage in first-hand evidence collection for their controlled assignments but opportunities to engage directly with businesses are not a regular part of provision.
- Students feel very well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback. In a range of business-related subjects, including work skills and GCSE business studies, they appreciate the availability of additional help when needed both in and out of lessons.
- Marking and frequent assessment are helping students to make good progress. Students are actively engaged in setting their own targets and working out strategies to reach them. Teaching makes a good contribution to students' development as independent learners.
- In Key Stage 4, a strength of the provision for whole-school economic and business understanding is that some aspects are taught by specialists.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

The quality of the curriculum in economics and business education is outstanding.

- The examination course offered at GCSE in business studies is increasingly popular and one of a range of business-related courses that strongly meets the needs and interests of different ability groups.
- The curriculum includes excellent opportunities for those students who are not following examination courses in business to develop their economic and business understanding. Students take part in a wide range of enterprise activities that includes raising substantial funds for good causes. The school fosters an environment that supports student enterprise. The school's work in this area has been validated by the awards of investors in careers and investors in work-related and enterprise learning. Many subjects make an important contribution to economic and business understanding.

- As they progress through the school, coherence is brought to students' economic and business understanding experience by external qualifications. This ensures that all students receive a minimum entitlement while many complete a lot of additional relevant activities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education is outstanding.

- Work-related learning and economic and business understanding are given a very high priority within the school. This stems from your and other senior leaders' clear vision. Excellent productive links exist with external partners.
- Effective evaluation of the GCSE business studies course includes using the intranet for anonymous feedback from students. Analysis of the course that best meets the needs and interests of students has resulted in a syllabus change.
- The school's previous work in developing such strong provision in economic and business understanding and in raising achievement in business studies provides powerful evidence of its excellent capacity for further improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for students in examination classes to engage directly with local businesses.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics and business education in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector