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Mrs S Skinner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Skinner

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 9 and 10 November 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of a lesson.

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

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- In Key Stage 4, attainment has been above average in recent years. The GCE applied A-level course in the sixth form has been discontinued. Very small groups took the course.
- The record of students' progress in examination courses is good. In Key Stage 4, students generally reach and sometimes exceed their challenging targets. A small group of students in Year 13 take a Level 3 BTEC business course. The school's monitoring data indicate that they are making good progress.

- The economic and business understanding and financial capability of students who do not take examination courses is good. This is particularly true of economic awareness and financial understanding.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and the assessment requirements of courses. Both are communicated well to students. An increasing range of teaching and learning approaches is used, but work is not always sufficiently adapted to match the wide range of abilities in the class.
- Good opportunities are being developed for students to reflect, assess and feedback on their own work and that of others.
- In the sixth form, students are positive about the oral and email-based support they receive. They value the breaking up of tasks in the very long lessons through opportunities to discuss business-related issues in the real world.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- There are some good opportunities to enliven examination courses through visits to real businesses and the contribution of visitors. The school is making the examination subject more engaging and interesting through increasing the direct contact with employers and the business world.
- The very well-planned personal, health, social and economic education (PHSE) programme together with citizenship and relevant 'stop the clock' off-timetable days provide a coherent approach to developing students' economic and financial understanding. Students have relatively fewer opportunities to develop other aspects of enterprise education.
- The current provision of one examination course in business at Key Stage 4 and one in the sixth form does not meet the full range of students' needs. Despite the limited provision, business is a popular option at Key Stage 4. The choice of units for the new course in Year 10 better reflects the interests of students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

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

- Currently the staffing of examination courses is in transition as the school's sixth form is phased out. Despite this, the school has made good use of resources to maintain effective provision. Staff have selected and amended courses to better meet the needs and interests of their students

and the positive impact of these decisions is seen in markedly improved achievement.

- Students' progress in examination classes is monitored closely and appropriate interventions are made when they are identified as underachieving.
- You and other managers have a strong commitment to the development of economics and business and enterprise education across the school as a way of promoting students' economic well-being and raising achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- observing students more systematically during lessons to assess their learning and better support and challenge the full range of ability in the class
- increasing opportunities for developing enterprise capability in the curriculum to match the high-quality provision in other areas of economic and business understanding.

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