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Ms G Bal
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Dear Ms Bal

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 25 and 26 January 2011 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 eight lessons and one assembly.

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 outstanding.

- Overall attainment across all formally assessed economics and business courses is above average, although this is not the case for all courses at the highest grades.
- Given their starting points, the progress students make in their learning on formally assessed economics and business courses is at least good on all courses and is outstanding on some, including on A level economics and the BTEC first certificate in business.
- As a result of the school's excellent planned provision, students at all key stages are developing exceptionally strong enterprise and personal finance

skills and very good economic and business understanding. Students are able to talk knowledgeably about what they have learnt and why it is important to their future lives.

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning. They work very well when engaged in independent and group-based learning activities. They are articulate and thoughtful and feel confident to ask, and to answer, questions.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- All teachers are subject specialists who demonstrate excellent levels of subject knowledge. Their confidence and expertise gain them the respect of students.
- All lessons are very well planned. They involve a range of learning activities that engage and interest students, providing them with plenty of opportunities to learn independently and in small groups. Students say that they really enjoy their lessons.
- There is a very good focus on learning being broken down into small steps to ensure all students are able to successfully develop their knowledge and understanding. However, not all lessons provide sufficient challenge for the most able students.
- The support offered by teachers is exceptional and all students comment on how teachers are always available to provide additional help and guidance.
- Marking is accurate and the quality of written feedback is excellent, highlighting where key assessment objectives are being met. Students value how this helps them to improve their work in order to meet or exceed the challenging targets they are set.
- Questioning is good at confirming and consolidating knowledge and understanding. However, it is less effective in extending or deepening knowledge and understanding and students are rarely expected to provide oral responses that demonstrate their ability to analyse and evaluate.
- Information and communication technology is used well and good resources have been developed to enhance teaching and learning.
- Teaching is consistently related to real world economics and business contexts. Students value this and comment very positively on it.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- Formally assessed economics and business education provision includes an extensive range of courses to meet the needs of all students. It is broad and balanced, includes vocational and academic courses and clear progression routes for students of all abilities.

- Links with businesses and other external organisations are used to enhance the formally assessed economics and business education curriculum. However, this is not yet a consistent feature of all courses. For example, students at Key Stage 4 feel that business links would help them with their coursework assignments and their understanding. The school recognises that this aspect of provision is less well-developed.
- Whole-school provision for enterprise education is outstanding. It includes a programme of assemblies, tutor periods, and extra-curricular activities. An extensive range of business and other external links supports this programme. Impressive cross-curricular mapping, which identifies where elements of enterprise education are delivered within mainstream subjects, enables the school to plan additional provision effectively. The provision extends into the sixth form as part of the Personal Development programme, which includes, for example, opportunities for students to deliver enterprise-related sessions in local primary schools as part of the Young Enterprise programme.
- All students, including those in the sixth form, follow a range of accredited courses that provide opportunities for them to develop enterprise-related skills and economic and business understanding. Outcomes for students on these courses are excellent.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

Leadership and management in economics and business education are outstanding.

- Leaders of both the formally assessed economics and business provision and the whole-school enterprise education provision are passionate about, and totally committed to, increasing students' life chances. They aim to do this by ensuring that all students achieve at the highest level, have good employability skills and thus are well-prepared for their future economic lives.
- There are exceptionally well-planned and coordinated approaches to whole-school enterprise education provision, which are supported by clearly identified learning outcomes and assessment processes.
- Self-evaluation is of the highest quality and is informed by regular monitoring of provision and by students' views. As a result, leaders know the strengths and weaknesses and the priorities for development. This is evident in the way the curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure it provides appropriate and challenging opportunities for all students.
- Very challenging targets are set for students and rigorous systems for monitoring their progress are in place. These ensure prompt identification of underachievement and appropriate intervention.
- Rigorous and supportive systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are in place. The school's training school status ensures that staff development is a key focus, and one that involves encouraging and

developing the skills of the talented and aspiring middle leaders in the subject.

- The outstanding quality of the school's leadership and management in both formally assessed economics and business courses and whole-school enterprise education underpins the capacity for sustained improvement in these areas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- maintaining the focus on improving the proportion of students attaining at the highest grades on formally assessed economics and business courses by ensuring that learning activities and the quality of teachers' questioning always provide sufficient challenge for the most able students
- developing existing business links in order to support and enhance the quality of learning on formally assessed economics and business courses.

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

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector