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Mr Harry Dicks
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dicks

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 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five lessons.

This special school for students with physical disabilities and other complex and sensory needs does not provide examination courses in business; as a result the visit focused on the development of economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the Post-16 'Pathway to Further Education' provision.

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.

- Students have very positive attitudes to lessons and other activities, such as community skills, aimed at developing their economic well-being. They talk with enthusiasm about what they learn and how it promotes their

independence and economic well-being. In the lessons observed, students were fully involved in interesting and enjoyable activities.

- The school's focus on building students' self-confidence, independence and economic well-being through the development of personal financial understanding and work-related learning is highly successful. Students are building up a good range of skills that develop their economic well-being extremely well, such as budgeting, enterprise skills, communication and teamworking skills. The school rightly makes a priority of celebrating students' achievements.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and an excellent rapport with their students. The lessons observed were very well-planned to develop students' progress towards achieving clear objectives in highly tailored individual education plans (IEPs). Learning support assistants worked seamlessly with teachers to support learning extremely well.
- Teachers provided a good range of learning activities in the lessons observed, successfully engaging students and maintaining their interest throughout as a result of setting highly relevant and stimulating tasks. Lesson activities built very well on students' previous knowledge and areas for development. Teachers know their students very well and in the lessons observed took extremely good care to challenge students according to their prior attainment, in order to extend their learning.
- Assessment is very precise as a result of clear individual targets that students understand and that are tailored to the needs of each student; the recording and review of progress towards achieving these targets in IEPs are very thorough.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- Students have excellent opportunities to develop their economics and business understanding and financial capability, which include a rich programme of very well-organised enterprise activities and community skills.
- Work-related learning opportunities are very extensive and of high quality; however the school has recognised the need to expand the number of workplace-related opportunities with employers, where these experiences may be tailored to the attainment and support needs of individual students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

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

- Very thorough planning of the curriculum and excellent communication between staff have given the school an extremely clear and detailed overview of the current provision for economic well-being and personal financial capability and where it is taught.
- The school has an exceptionally strong and successfully shared culture of continuous improvement. Leaders and managers monitor and evaluate performance relentlessly. As a result, the school has a very clear understanding of how the provision may be improved further.
- The school works well with other schools, colleges, employers and other organisations in support of the development of students' economics and business education. The school has well-conceived and sharply focused plans in place to strengthen the provision through further development of partnership working, resulting from the school's Physical and Sensory Specialist School status.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing in full plans to increase work-related opportunities for students through the further development of partnerships.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector