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Mrs C Buchanan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Buchanan

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 21 and 22 September 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 six lessons.

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

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- Students' results in business show a trend of improvement and their broadly average attainment represents good progress for these students relative to their prior attainment. However, achievement in economics is satisfactory.
- In the lessons observed, students demonstrated good levels of attainment and independent learning skills. They enjoyed the good variety of activities in lessons, which included working in groups.

- Students not taking formally assessed business and economics courses develop good economics and business understanding and personal financial capability. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of economic and global issues, such as poverty and fair trade, and a good awareness of the moral issues surrounding global economic concepts.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons well with a wide range of relevant tasks and activities. These are successful in engaging students' interest and involvement, and plans show that teachers have a sharp focus on what students will learn by completing these tasks. Lesson activities build well on students' previous knowledge.
- In the lessons observed, well-planned tasks enabled appropriate and frequent assessment of students' understanding of key ideas and provided good opportunities for students to apply their learning. Teachers made good use of questioning to check students' understanding of key points and extend their learning.
- In the lessons observed, teachers made good use of a variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to help students learn. They frequently made good use of topical, real-life examples to support learning.
- The marking of students' work is detailed and thorough, with good attention to the correct use of economic and business terminology. Students receive highly constructive feedback on their performance and know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- The curriculum for formally assessed business and economics courses is broad and balanced, and includes vocational alternatives in business at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The proportion of students choosing a business course at Key Stage 4 is growing and is now above the national average.
- As the school recognises, opportunities for students to engage with a range of local businesses are as yet underdeveloped. Leaders and managers are taking appropriate steps to rectify this.
- Leaders and managers make good provision throughout the school for economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise, through the citizenship, careers and personal development programme, and through 'creative curriculum' whole-school days.

- There are good opportunities for students to develop their economics and business understanding in subject areas such as geography, history and design and technology.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

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

- The leadership and management of formally assessed economics and business courses are good. The culture of continuous improvement is strong. Teachers are supported well and have good professional development opportunities.
- The school has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development in this provision. Well-conceived strategies are in place to bring about improvements and these are showing clear evidence of impact.
- Improved and rigorous monitoring of students' progress on business and economics courses and more timely intervention, where there is underachievement, are bringing about improvement in students' performance.
- Leaders and managers have an extremely clear vision for the wider economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise provision for all students. This provision is structured and coordinated well. Arrangements to assess and report on students' achievement in this area of work are sound.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement in economics courses in the sixth form
- implementing fully plans to develop links with a wider range of 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

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector