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9 February 2011

Mrs S Parker  
Headteacher  
Denbigh School  
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Milton Keynes  
MK5 6EX

Dear Mrs Parker

### **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 26 and 27 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 10 lessons.

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.

- Results in GCSE business were below average in 2009/10, with students making satisfactory progress; they did not do as well in business as they did in their other subjects. In the two previous years, students' results were better than the national average, and they made satisfactory progress. In the vocational business course at Key Stage 4 in 2009/10 students exceeded challenging targets, making good progress.
- In the sixth form, students' results in economics at A level show an improving trend against national averages over the past three years and in 2009/10 they made good progress compared to their prior attainment at

GCSE. However, in business, A-level students' achievements show a declining trend and in 2009/10 were below average.

- Current students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are making good progress against very challenging target grades. In the lessons observed, they demonstrated a good level of attainment and made good progress in their learning.
- Students enjoy their economics and business lessons and value highly the support they receive from teachers. They particularly like the relevance of their studies to the real world and working together in pairs or in groups on set tasks.
- Students not taking formally assessed business and economics courses are developing strong economics and business understanding, enterprise skills and personal financial capability. They enjoy this part of their studies, and talk about what they have learnt reflectively, confidently and with considerable insight.

### **Quality of teaching in economics and business education**

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good rapport with their students. In the lessons observed, teachers planned exceptionally well for the range of students' prior attainment. They were highly successful in engaging students' interests and involvement by using a wide range of relevant and well-designed tasks and activities. They made good and frequent use of topical, real-life examples to help students learn.
- In the lessons observed, very well-planned tasks enabled appropriate, precise and frequent assessment of students' understanding of key ideas and provided good opportunities for students to apply their learning. Teachers made very good use of questioning to both check students' understanding of key points and extend their learning. Teachers made frequent reference to students' demonstration of higher-level learning skills as a means of improving their grades and gave students opportunities and encouragement to develop and practise these.
- In the lessons observed, teachers made very good and imaginative use of a variety of resources, and, where appropriate, made extremely good use of information and communication technology to enhance learning.
- The marking of students' work is detailed and thorough. Feedback provides a clear view of the progress students are making towards their target grades and gives clear guidance on the skills required to improve their grades.

### **Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education**

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

- The curriculum of formally assessed business and economics courses is very successful in meeting the needs and interests of students, and the

introduction of a vocational alternative to business and economics GCE A level in the sixth form has improved its balance. The proportion of students choosing business in 2009/10 at Key Stage 4 was well above the national average.

- The extent to which leaders and managers make provision throughout the school for economics and business understanding, personal financial and enterprise capability is outstanding. The provision is structured and coordinated exceptionally well into a broad, diverse and coherent programme. Arrangements to assess students' achievements in the provision at Key Stage 3 where it is taught through 'Denbigh Brain Training' are very well conceived.
- Students have excellent opportunities to engage with businesses and other business partners for work experience, enterprise and work-related learning.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education**

Leadership and management in economics and business education are good.

- The leadership and management of formally assessed economics and business courses are good. Leaders and managers have a clear and precise understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision and how it may be improved further. They are focused sharply on raising students' achievements at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers are supported well, including very good professional development opportunities.
- Students are working towards appropriately challenging targets. Arrangements for monitoring students' progress and for intervening where students are at risk of underachieving are timely, precise and rigorous, but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness fully.
- The leadership and management of the wider economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise provision for all students is outstanding. The whole-school vision for preparing students for the world of work is very clear. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and a highly developed team ethos, with leaders and managers placing students at the heart of what they do. Leaders and managers have a very precise view of where the provision is taught through subjects and monitor the quality of this work regularly.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising the level of students' achievement in formally assessed economics and business courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

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**