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Mr J Cockburn  
Headteacher  
Longbenton Community College  
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Dear Mr Cockburn

### **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 22 and 23 March 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 six 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.

- In GCSE business studies, attainment is high and, given their broadly average prior attainment, students are making outstanding progress in their learning.
- Attainment in GCE A-level economics is broadly average and in GCE A-level applied business it is above average. In both subjects, the progress students are making, based on lesson observations, discussion with students and a review of their work, is good.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning, are able to work well in small groups and are developing very good collaborative learning skills. In

the sixth form, this is particularly impressive with students taking responsibility for their own learning. Sixth-form students demonstrate good communication skills and are able to articulate complex ideas and arguments.

- As a result of well-planned and extensive whole-school provision, students are developing good enterprise and financial capability and a basic understanding of business concepts. Students are developing a solid understanding of what they need in terms of skills and attributes in order to meet the needs of employers. They feel well prepared for their future lives as a result of the well-coordinated whole-school provision.

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

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

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to deliver confident economics and business lessons. They make helpful reference to real business and economic contexts in order to illustrate learning points.
- Lesson planning is detailed, lessons are well structured and well paced. Teachers' instructions are very clear. A good range of teaching and learning approaches is used to make lessons interesting and engage students. This, together with very good behaviour management, ensures that students are attentive and on task at all times. In the sixth form, teaching styles encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers take good account of students' individual needs and an appropriate level of challenge in lessons encourages all to make good progress.
- Assessment to support learning is good. The use of questioning to confirm understanding, and as a tool for assessment, is generally very good. However, the use of questioning to extend and deepen students' understanding is less well developed.
- Students know their target grades, have a clear understanding of assessment criteria and, as a result of very good oral and written feedback, understand how to improve their current work.
- Students are very well supported by teachers and by the whole-school mentor system.

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

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

- A good range of business courses meets the needs of students with different abilities and preferences at both Key Stage 4 and post-16.
- Provision for whole-school enterprise education includes a variety of delivery methods, including weekly lessons, suspended timetable themed days, cross-curricular subject coverage and a wide range of extra-curricular challenge activities. These form a well-coordinated and coherent

provision. In particular, students have good opportunities to develop enterprise and financial capability and to gain a broad understanding of basic business issues. However, coverage of basic economic issues in this whole-school provision is insufficient.

- Good links with businesses and employers enhance the curriculum and give a real-world context to students' learning.

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

Leadership and management in economics and business education are good.

- Good leadership and management of the subject area are having a positive impact on students' outcomes and can be seen in the well-developed schemes of work, well-planned lessons, good provision and in the popularity of economics and business courses.
- Self-evaluation is excellent. It is accurate and thoughtful, well-informed by student voice and analyses of students' outcomes. It identifies key priorities and the development plan indicates clear actions for improvement that are regularly reviewed.
- Leaders are committed, at both senior and middle level, to provide students with good-quality enterprise education and to develop their work-related skills. Detailed evaluation of events and challenges take place, for example, how well they went, whether students enjoyed them and what students thought they learnt. However, as yet, there is no broader monitoring, assessment or recording of students' progress in relation to identified learning outcomes for enterprise education as a whole.
- Staff development is good in relation to award board updating sessions, networking with other specialists and the dissemination of whole-school continuing professional development within the department, as well as plenty of collaborative work and sharing of good practice within the school and with its partner sixth forms.

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

- improving attainment at the highest grades in GCE AS- and A-level economics and applied business, by developing the use of teachers' higher-order questioning skills, so that questioning is used not only to confirm but also to extend and deepen knowledge and understanding
- ensuring that whole-school enterprise education includes a sufficient emphasis on developing all students' basic economic understanding
- considering how to monitor and assess the progress all students are making in whole-school enterprise education in relation to identified learning outcomes.

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**