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5 January 2011

Mr K Quine
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Quine

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 23 and 24 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 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 nine 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.

- Students' results in GCSE business show a significant trend of improvement. Their results were well above average in 2009/10, and most students met or exceeded challenging target grades.
- In the sixth form, students' achievements have been consistently weak. In 2009/10, most students made unsatisfactory progress compared to their prior attainment at GCSE. However, current students demonstrated levels of attainment in lessons that were satisfactory and frequently good.

- In the lessons observed, students demonstrated a good level of attainment and independent learning skills. Their behaviour was good and they were enthusiastically engaged in tasks and activities.
- Students not taking formally assessed business and economics courses develop good economics and business understanding, enterprise skills, and personal financial capability.

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. However, lesson plans do not always focus sufficiently sharply on what students will learn by completing the activities, and they do not always make sufficient provision to challenge the higher-attaining students.
- 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 often 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 both detailed and thorough, with good attention to the correct use of economic and business terminology. Students receive highly constructive feedback on their performance that is helpful in enabling them to improve the quality of their work. Feedback pays good attention to ensuring that students know the extent to which they are making progress towards meeting their target grades.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- The curriculum of formally assessed economics and business courses is broad, and its balance is improving. The school has introduced a vocational alternative in business in Key Stage 4 and plans to launch a vocational course in the sixth form to provide a clear progression route for these students. The proportion of students choosing a business course in Key Stage 4 is high and well above the national average.
- Students not taking formally assessed economics and business courses have good opportunities to engage with local businesses; however, as the school recognises, similar opportunities for students taking formally assessed business courses 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 personal, social, health and economics education programme, enterprise days, and specific enterprise lessons at Key Stage 3.
- Students have good opportunities to develop their economics and business understanding, enterprise skills, and personal financial capability in subjects such as geography, mathematics and English.

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 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 are showing clear impact.
- The culture of continuous improvement is strong. Targets for improvement are appropriately challenging. The monitoring of performance is thorough. Teachers are supported well and have good professional development opportunities.
- 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. Plans to embed enterprise skills throughout the provision alongside personal learning and thinking skills, and to allow progression through levels of attainment are conceived very 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 business and economics courses in the sixth form
- implementing fully plans to launch a vocational alternative to A-level study in the sixth form
- implementing fully plans for students taking business and economics courses to engage 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