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Mr J Hernandez
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Dear Mr Hernandez

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 3 February 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 three lessons.

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

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is satisfactory.

- In GCSE business studies, attainment was below the national average in summer 2010. The school's monitoring data indicate that attainment is expected to be around the national average in next summer's examination, returning to the position of summer 2009.
- Students' achievement in business studies varies over time and between classes. Given their starting points, their progress has ranged recently from good to inadequate. The school's monitoring data and inspectors' lesson observations indicate that currently most students are on track to reach stretching targets.

- As a result of well-planned provision, which has not yet had time to have an impact on all year groups, students are developing good employability skills and demonstrate satisfactory levels of enterprise and financial capability including economic understanding. Elements of economic and business understanding are assessed through the Preparation for Working Life course.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- The quality of learning on the GCSE business studies course is inconsistent. Some is very good and the rest is improving. Varied learning activities are provided to stimulate and engage students.
- Students are very positive about their lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are very strong and behaviour is good. Students like the varied use of information and communication technology, the opportunities to make presentations to the class and the different classroom activities including group work.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and understanding. They were observed giving very clear guidance on assessment requirements.
- Opportunities are provided for students to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation. More able students are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Students feel very well supported. Work is marked regularly, with helpful comments. Students receive additional support out of lessons including regular after-school sessions for Year 11. In lessons, questioning does not include everyone and sometimes focuses on arriving at the right answer rather than dealing with misunderstandings.
- In less successful lessons, teachers make use of good ideas but fail to adapt them to the different needs and abilities of students in the class.
- In the wider area of economic and business understanding, which is taught by non-specialists, the quality varies.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- One formally examined course is offered. Take-up depends on the option choices. It has been very popular with two classes in the current Year 11 but only one in the current Year 10. Although examples and case studies are used on the GCSE course, there is very little engagement with real business.
- A coherent programme for economic and business understanding, which includes personal finance, is well planned. It is delivered through citizenship in Key Stage 3 and the Preparation for Working Life qualification in Key Stage 4. Not all year groups have yet experienced the

full provision in this area. The emphasis on developing enterprise skills is not as strong.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

Leadership and management in economics and business education are good.

- Self-evaluation is playing an increasingly useful role in leading to departmental improvement. The department's leadership brings coherence to provision for economic and business understanding through its responsibility for both citizenship and business studies. The strengths and areas for improvement in both areas are known and understood.
- Leadership and management are now good because of the significant progress made since the start of the school improvement project in improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of data. The improvement has not yet had the opportunity to have a positive impact on external examination results.
- The school's senior leadership has a vision for economic and business education, including enterprise and recognises its importance in the curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that learning activities, and particularly teachers' questioning, for students on the formally assessed business course are challenging and stretching in all their lessons
- devising better strategies to check the understanding of all students in the class during lessons and adapting activities as a result
- improving links with business to enhance the quality of learning for all students and especially those on the GCSE business studies course
- ensuring that all students experience high-quality enterprise education.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector