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20 October 2011

Mr C Richardson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Richardson

**Ofsted 2011–12 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 11 and 12 October 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 or parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education is good.

**Achievement in economics and business education**

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- In 2010/11, most students following BTEC level 2 and 3 courses in business studies and in travel and tourism gained at least a pass grade. Students made good progress, with the large majority achieving above their challenging target grades. Progress data and evidence from lesson observations indicate that students are currently making good progress.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning, are willing to contribute, and work well independently and in groups. Students know their individual targets and what they must do to achieve these.
- As a result of very well-planned personal, social and religious education (PSRE) provision, students gain formal qualifications for their work-related

learning skills and their enterprise and financial capability. Students are positive about this provision and value what they learn.

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

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to plan interesting lessons that relate learning very well to real world business contexts. This engages students and secures good progress and learning.
- Very good resources, including information and communication technology, are used to inform and engage students. Teachers' planning is very good and they are skilled at structuring activities to secure students' good knowledge and understanding.
- The use of cooperative learning strategies is highly effective in promoting students' involvement in lessons, in encouraging their deeper thinking and greater contribution, and in developing their collaborative skills. As one Year 11 student noted, the approach 'keeps us focused'.
- While questioning is inclusive and an important part of all lessons, it does not always stretch students sufficiently, rarely requiring them to respond in a way that encourages their development of higher level skills or their use of the specific technical language of the subject.
- Marking against formal assessment criteria is rigorous and accurate. Students comment on the prompt and helpful feedback they receive that allows them to improve and revise their work to meet their targets.
- Teachers are very committed and provide extensive out-of-school support for those in danger of failing, those working below target and for anyone, including the most able, who feels the need for additional guidance. Where appropriate, good use is made of other adults to support students.

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

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

- The curriculum meets the needs of students following the BTEC courses very well and there are appropriate progression routes between Key Stage 4 and post-16. The school recognises that due to budget constraints, it does not currently offer a route for those students who might prefer a more academic approach to business studies.
- Whole-school PSRE provision involves discrete weekly lessons taught by a group of specialist staff. The provision is planned to ensure that students gain additional accreditation for all aspects of the course, including modules from the BTEC work skills and the AQA personal and social education awards. The provision is very strong in relation to enterprise and personal financial capability, including work-related learning, careers and work-experience. However, it is relatively weaker in relation to its coverage of economics and business understanding.

- Strong business links enhance the formally assessed provision and promote engagement, achievement and high aspirations.

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

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

- Self-evaluation is accurate in its identification of key strengths and weaknesses and the resulting development plan provides a good focus for improvement. Highly effective monitoring systems enable well-focused interventions for groups of students and for individual students.
- The whole-school provision is very well coordinated and includes clearly identified learning outcomes that are formally assessed and lead to external accreditation.
- The head of business is involved in a range of external examining roles. These roles contribute a great deal to the rigorous quality of assessment as well as ensuring that students benefit from a well-informed approach to their course provision and assessment. The school provides good opportunities for staff to undertake internal professional development to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. In this small department, there are effective opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning and assessment. However, there is less focus on accessing specific subject training and updating, such as that provided by the relevant subject association.

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

- developing the quality of teacher questioning so that it is used not only to confirm knowledge and understanding but as a tool to extend and deepen knowledge and understanding
- considering broadening the formally assessed provision so that it appeals to those students who prefer a more academic approach to their learning
- enhancing the whole-school provision by making sure that economics and business understanding is as strong an element of provision as other elements.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics and business education in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Gwen Coates**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**