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Mr S Allen  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Allen

### **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 3 and 4 November 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, and with a number of the school's business partners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight 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 the past three years, the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE business studies has been similar to the national average, which represents good progress for these students.
- In the sixth form, students' achievements have been inconsistent. In 2010/11, most students made less than expected progress compared with their prior attainment. However, current students demonstrated levels of attainment and progress in lessons that were satisfactory and frequently good.

- 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 and a good rapport with their students. Their well-planned lessons include a wide range of relevant tasks and activities that successfully engage students' interest and involvement. However, lesson plans do not always make sufficient provision to challenge the higher-attaining students.
- In the lessons observed across the range of subjects, teachers provided good opportunities for students to develop and practise enterprise skills, known in the school as 'Skills for Success'.
- In the lessons observed, teachers did not always take up opportunities to check and extend students' learning through questioning. A consistent feature of the less successful lessons was that teachers did not do enough to ensure that all students' learning was consolidated before moving on to the next activity.

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

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

- The curriculum of formal business courses has evolved well to meet the students' needs and continues to do so, particularly in the sixth form. As part of the school's business and enterprise specialism, all students study business at Key Stage 3 in conjunction with information and communication technology. In addition, opportunities for students to gain accreditation in business at Key Stage 3 are in place and are effective. Depending on their prior attainment, students can take GCSE business studies at the end of Year 9 – an approach referred to in the school as 'stage not age'. The proportion of students choosing business at Key Stage 4 is well above the national average.
- The school makes outstanding provision for the development of students' economics and business understanding, enterprise and personal financial capability. 'Skills for Success' are at the core and provide a very effective means of coordinating the various elements of the provision into a highly coherent curriculum. Work-experience opportunities are very good and, in particular, benefit those students choosing a vocational pathway.
- Business and enterprise education forms a key part of the transition arrangements with primary schools. Well-managed joint planning enables teachers to introduce enterprise projects from Year 5 as part of the themed topics these pupils are studying, thus highlighting the relevance of this aspect of the curriculum to pupils' learning.

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

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

- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in business courses. Quality assurance arrangements have contributed effectively to improvements in the consistency of feedback to students on how to improve their work. In the jointly observed lessons, school leaders provided a reliable and accurate view of strengths and areas for improvement. Plans for further improvement of the provision are well-conceived and appropriate, but it is too soon to see the impact of these in raising achievements.
- The whole-school vision for developing students' economics and business understanding, financial and enterprise capability is very clear. Provision in this area has a very high profile in the school, demonstrating clearly the impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism. The contribution of business partners to the implementation of this whole-school vision is excellent and highly beneficial for students. The coordination and management of this work are excellent.
- Arrangements to assess and report on students' achievement in economics and business understanding, enterprise and personal financial capability through 'Skills for Success' in subjects are sound.

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

- raising achievement in business and economics courses, particularly in the sixth form
- improving planning to provide sufficient challenge for all students, including the most able
- ensuring that teachers' use of questioning to check and extend learning is of a consistently high standard and that they ensure students' learning is thoroughly consolidated at each stage of the lesson.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Russell Jordan**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**