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Mr P Earnshaw  
Headteacher  
Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre  
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Dear Mr Earnshaw

**Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: economics and business education**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 7 and 8 December 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 is satisfactory.

**Achievement in economics and business education**

Achievement in economics and business education is satisfactory.

- In recent years, attainment at GCSE has been above average and, in 2010, it was high. Insufficient preparation of students for the new 'controlled assessment' resulted in a fall in attainment in 2011, when the overall pass rate was broadly average. Lesson observations indicate that GCSE students are now making good progress. At GCE A level, attainment is broadly average and students generally make expected progress, although too many students failed to gain a pass at AS in 2011. GCSE and GCE students enjoy the subject and have good attitudes to learning.
- As a result of whole-school provision, students are developing good employability skills. This is reflected in their improving confidence in relation to work-related skills and the low number of students who do not

enter education, employment or training at the end of Year 11. Students' enterprise skills are developing well but their basic economic and business understanding and personal financial capability are less developed.

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

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

- Lessons are well planned and include a good range of activities that engages and interests students. Teachers are good at using students' existing knowledge and understanding to introduce new concepts and ideas. They make good reference to real world contexts at all times. Information and communication technology is used well to enhance teaching and learning and the school's virtual learning site enables students to access additional learning materials.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with students and provide good support. Teacher questioning is inclusive and good at confirming students' understanding. It is less good at deepening their understanding because students are rarely asked to give responses that enable them to practice and develop higher-order oral skills.
- Marking is accurate and written comments are detailed and helpful. Students value these comments and understand how they link to the targets they are set and to relevant assessment criteria.

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

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

- At GCSE, business studies is a popular option that regularly attracts large numbers of students. At GCE AS and A level, business studies is a less popular option and attracts much smaller numbers.
- Only a small number of business links and enrichment activities support the formally assessed business studies provision. Students, who were very positive about their business studies courses, noted that more contact with businesses would enhance their understanding by providing them with more opportunities to apply their knowledge to real business scenarios.
- Good provision at both Key Stages 3 and 4 supports the development of students' work-related skills and career decisions. In addition many students have opportunities to follow extended work-placements that contribute hugely to developing their employability skills. Other whole-school provision provides opportunities for all students to develop a range of enterprise-related skills. However, the provision for economic and business understanding and personal financial capability is still developing.

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

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

- Due to the reorganisation of the school's middle leadership, the current leader of business studies is relatively new. However, in a short space of time, performance in the subject has been thoroughly evaluated, key strengths and weaknesses have been identified and clear priorities for improvement have been set, including the need to improve the tracking of performance in the sixth form. Although insufficient time has elapsed to see the impact of this on validated achievement results, more effective sharing of good practice is already leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and in turn to improvements in the progress that students are making – as observed in business studies lessons. As a result, there is good capacity to improve further.
- At whole-school level, there is a commitment to raise the aspirations of students and enhance their personal development. New leadership in relation to students' personal development is beginning to improve the coherence of the whole-school provision in this area, including in enterprise education.

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

- improving sixth form achievement in business studies by ensuring that the curriculum matches students' needs and by improving the tracking of students' progress and the timeliness and effectiveness of interventions
- ensuring that students are encouraged to practice and develop higher-level oral skills when responding to teachers' questions
- developing business links and enrichment activities to enhance provision in formally assessed business studies courses
- developing a more coherent whole-school enterprise education provision that provides opportunities for students to develop good outcomes in relation to this aspect of the curriculum.

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**