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Mrs C Fearria
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fearria

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: economics, business and enterprise

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 28 and 29 February 2012 to look at work in economics, business and enterprise.

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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of economics, business and enterprise is good.

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- In 2010–11, results in GCSE business and BTEC level 2 courses were well above national averages and almost all pupils achieved challenging targets. Results in GCE AS courses were below average and a significant number of pupils did not achieve their target grades. Results in GCE A2 and BTEC level 3 courses were generally above average and most pupils achieved their expected grades. Evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and the schools' data indicates that pupils are currently attaining well and making good progress at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. A substantial and growing number of pupils go on to take economics or business-related courses at university.

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and work well in groups and independently. Classroom relationships are excellent. Pupils respond very well to the tasks they are given but are often reluctant to ask questions, challenge and put forward their own ideas. Pupils are well aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils not taking formally assessed business courses are developing good enterprise skills and business understanding but their knowledge of personal finance and basic economics is less secure.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

The quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and able to draw on their own business experiences and other real business examples, to make lessons relevant and interesting.
- Teachers deploy a very good range of teaching strategies to engage pupils' interests but do not always provide sufficient opportunities in lessons for pupils to undertake research, pose their own questions and present their ideas. Effective use is made of information and communication technology to support teaching but most lessons do not take place in dedicated classrooms and this limits pupils' immediate access to computers and other resources.
- Teachers pose a good range of oral and written questions in lessons, including ones to encourage higher-order thinking. Frequent reference is made to examination assessment criteria with an appropriate emphasis on achieving top grades.
- Marking against formal assessment criteria is accurate and rigorous. Pupils feel they are very well supported in their learning and benefit from additional support, for example, through 'drop-in' sessions and extra revision classes.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

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

- An excellent provision of examination courses meets the wide range of needs in the school. Different pathways are offered and take-up of most courses is high.
- Most pupils benefit from at least some contact with local employers and other practical experiences, for example, through running events and enterprise activities, but potentially this can be extended further.
- Good opportunities are provided for all pupils to develop their business and enterprise skills, for example, through work experience, a 'work skills' week and the core curriculum. However, provision for economic understanding and financial capability is less well developed.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The business department is very well led and managed and strongly supported by senior managers who view it as one of the leading departments in the school in terms of innovation and good practice. Provision is informed by current thinking and a strong programme of professional development.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous, appropriate priorities are identified and strategies are put in place to raise achievement further, for example to improve transition from GCSE to GCE AS courses. This, together with a strong track record of raising achievement, indicates that the department has an excellent capacity to bring about further improvement.
- Teachers in the department share good practice and are encouraged to try out new ideas and approaches. Close monitoring of the quality of teaching and rigorous tracking of pupil performance is carried out. Effective intervention strategies are in place to support pupils who are underperforming.
- Enterprise education, which makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is regarded as important by the headteacher and senior leaders who coordinate provision. A useful enterprise policy is in place and an audit of provision has been carried out. However, precise learning outcomes are not identified or assessed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing strategies to encourage pupils to ask more questions, take greater responsibility for their learning and to present their own ideas
- developing pupils' economic understanding and financial capability through identifying precise learning outcomes and enhancing provision
- enabling better access to information and communication technology and other resources through the provision of more dedicated specialist classrooms.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics, business and enterprise 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

David Butler
Additional Inspector