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Mr D O'Neill
Headteacher
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Dear Mr O'Neill

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 15 and 16 March 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five lessons and an after-school computer club.

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

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- Examination results in GCSE applied business are in line with national averages; this represents good progress in relation to students' starting points. Current Key Stage 4 students are making good progress and are predicted to attain well.
- Students taking GCSE business are well motivated and interested in their course which they see as being relevant to their futures. Many intend taking business-related post-16 courses.
- Students across the school are developing good enterprise skills, business understanding and financial awareness but their economic understanding

is less well developed. In discussions, students came across as being very confident and demonstrated excellent communication skills.

- In all the lessons observed, students demonstrated excellent attitudes to learning. They remained on task, worked well, both independently and in groups, and were prepared to contribute their own ideas when given the opportunity.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The business teacher observed has good subject knowledge and expertise. Classroom relationships in business lessons are excellent and students respond very well to the interesting range of tasks they are set. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Excellent use is made of real business examples to make the subject relevant and interesting. Students are enthused by the investigations they have carried out of local businesses as part of their coursework.
- The marking of work in business is accurate and helpful. Students feel very well supported in their learning. They are aware of their target grades and what they need to do to reach them. Some good questioning was observed in lessons but on occasions this needed to be more probing to check understanding fully and to challenge students to think more deeply. Students are set a good range of tasks but tend to be taught as a whole class, rather than enabling groups to proceed at different rates according to their level of understanding.
- The teaching observed in lessons outside of business, which had an enterprise education component to them was good. However the learning objectives for economic and business understanding were not always sufficiently explicit and opportunities were missed to explore these in greater depth.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The GCSE applied business course meets the needs of the majority of students and this is reflected in the good level of take-up by a cross-section of students. The course is enhanced by high-quality extra-curricular opportunities, such as Young Enterprise and the Young Persons' Project Board, which are also available to other students.
- A strong provision of enterprise education is in place throughout the school. This is delivered as part of the personal, social, health and economic education course, through suspended timetable days, a range of other subjects and through extra-curricular activities. Also, a strong programme of work-related learning is provided, including two weeks of work experience for all Year 10 students. The school's performing arts

specialism is a key factor in helping students develop effective oral communication and team-working skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The GCSE business course is well led and managed and this is reflected in its increasing popularity and in improving examination results. Self-evaluation of the course is accurate. Good tracking and monitoring of students' progress is in place and effective intervention is taken when underachievement is identified.
- The development of enterprise education across the school is strongly supported by senior leaders and yourself and this makes an important contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Individual aspects of the delivery are very well managed but the economic and business components do not yet form a coherent curriculum with precise learning outcomes which are assessed. Specialist economics and business teachers are not directly involved in the development of the provision for enterprise education across the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing questioning in GCSE business lessons to fully check students' understanding and to encourage them to think more deeply
- developing more effective strategies in GCSE business lessons to enable different groups of students to be taught and make progress according to their level of understanding
- drawing on existing subject expertise to develop a more coherent curriculum for enterprise education across the whole school, including the identification and assessment of precise learning outcomes.

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