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23 May 2012

Mrs C Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: economics, business and enterprise

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 May 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, students, representatives of business partners and Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five lessons, an assembly and mentoring opportunities.

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 the formally assessed course, students in the current Year 11 are making satisfactory progress. Their progress in Year 10 was adversely affected by staffing problems but they are now catching up and making expected progress given their starting points. Progress in the current Year 10 is better because students have experienced more stable staffing. Last year all students passed the BTEC business course.
- Throughout the school there is a strong emphasis on raising students' aspirations. Students are aware of the challenges of the current economic climate and the resulting need to excel academically. They develop very

strong employability skills and financial capability. For example, Year 9 students were able to talk about the risks of debt accumulation through different forms of credit. This resulted from a combination of direct teaching by banks and coverage in citizenship/personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The proportion of students leaving school and not entering employment, education or training is extremely low.

- The Financial Education and Employability Programme requires students to complete a portfolio demonstrating their progress in these areas. Year 10 students are all following a GCSE citizenship course offering formal assessment in some areas of economic and business understanding. This course ensures students are aware of the moral and social implications of enterprise. Early assessments show Year 10 students reaching the national average for attainment in this subject. Overall, achievement in enterprise, including financial capability and economic understanding is good.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

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

- Teaching on formally assessed courses varies between Years 10 and 11. In Year 11, a relatively narrow range of teaching and learning strategies are used in order to enable students to cover the subject matter and meet course requirements in the time available. This is to ensure that, despite the previous underachievement of this group in Year 10, they have every opportunity to gain at least a pass in their BTEC course. In Year 10 a much wider range of teaching strategies is used. Here students enthusiastically engage with relevant and interesting tasks, for example preparing and delivering a Dragon's Den-type pitch for a school-based business.
- Good relationships are formed between teachers and students. Students are very well supported and acknowledge, as a real strength, the personalised help they are given by staff to achieve their target grades, including extra classes on Saturdays for selected students.
- The economics and business elements of PSHE are delivered by a specialist team whose teaching is well supported with good-quality resources. Teaching is enhanced by enthusiastic and knowledgeable delivery in this area. It is supported by direct input from business partners. Assessment is used very well and in different forms.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

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

- At Key Stage 4, just one formally assessed course is offered. Although excellent opportunities exist for students across the school to engage with employers and the real world of business, there are not yet any subject specific links.
- The programme for this element of the PSHE curriculum is very well planned. It provides comprehensive coverage of economic and enterprise

elements and there is an effective and strong emphasis on employability and financial capability. The school recognises that it could do more to address the religious and cultural implications of some aspects of finance. There are many opportunities for all students to develop enterprise skills through extra-curricula activities and some students engage in extra activities such as Young Enterprise.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

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

- In formally assessed courses, the improving achievement at Key Stage 4 provides evidence of the capacity to improve further. Effective processes are now in place to monitor the progress of students and initiate interventions as necessary.
- You and your senior leaders are passionate about increasing students' life chances and raising aspirations. A wide variety of visits and school-based activities helps. Several staff have been enterprising in extending support for students, for example recruiting business professionals to act as mentors, supplementing those already provided through formal links. Enterprise education is very well planned. Partnership work, with City and Canary Warf based businesses, together with the Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership, to support employability skills and enterprise education is exceptional.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- maintaining the focus on improving the proportion of students attaining at the highest grades on formally assessed courses by ensuring that learning activities always provide sufficient challenge for the most able students
- supporting the relatively small department through developing links with networks of teachers of economics, business and enterprise
- developing opportunities for direct contact with businesses for students on formally assessed courses
- giving further consideration to the religious and cultural contexts of financial capability.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector