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Mr M Sibley
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Dear Mr Sibley

Ofsted 2012–13 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 17 and 18 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 and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons and two tutor group meetings.

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

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise is satisfactory.

- Attainment at GCSE was below average in 2011 but is now improving and current school data indicate attainment in line with the national average for 2012. Attainment in level 2 BTEC courses is average. Key Stage 4 students are now making satisfactory progress. Attainment in the sixth form is broadly average and students make satisfactory progress overall.
- Very well-planned provision for whole-school enterprise education ensures that students develop a strong understanding of basic business and financial issues and skills that prepare them well for their futures.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

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

- Teachers of formally assessed business courses have good subject knowledge and make good reference to real-world contexts. They have good relationships with students and provide very good support.
- In some business lessons, a lack of pace and challenge means that progress is only just satisfactory. In contrast, in enterprise education and life skills, lessons are very challenging, very well-paced and thoroughly engaging. As a result students make very good progress. A good focus on promoting literacy was a key component in the good teaching observed
- Behaviour in all lessons observed was at least satisfactory and much was good or better. Students have good attitudes to learning and demonstrate good collaborative skills, and respect for their teachers and their peers.
- The identification of areas for improvement is a strong feature of written feedback. Good practice in the use of self- and peer-assessment exists, for example in travel and tourism. Teachers use a range of techniques to assess learning, but decisions about their use are not always sufficiently discerning and as a result they sometimes slow the pace of learning.
- The quality of questioning is variable. In a Year 7 life skills lesson and in Years 9 and 10 enterprise education lessons, questioning was used exceptionally well to extend and deepen thinking and to promote students' higher order oral skills. In other lessons observed, questioning was used only to confirm understanding of relatively simple keywords and concepts.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The range of formally assessed business courses meets the needs of students well and provides appropriate progression routes between Key Stages 4 and 5. Very good links with businesses enhance the formally assessed curriculum and enrich students' experience of the subject.
- Provision for enterprise education is outstanding and reflects a very coherent programme. In addition to the life skills programme and the enterprise element of personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education, a wide range of enterprise activities and work-experience opportunities meets the needs of students of all abilities, ages and interests. These include well-focused activities for students in danger of not progressing to further education, employment or training, appropriate opportunities for the most able students and a very successful Young Enterprise programme. This provision, together with mixed-age vertical tutor group activities, enables students to develop a range of important skills and contributes well to aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The leadership and management of formally assessed business provision have been very well supported by senior leaders, whose support in developing leadership potential within the department is increasing its capacity to improve. However, at present there is a need for more: coordination and consistency in planning schemes of work and assignments; challenge in lessons; rigour in monitoring and tracking students' performance across year groups; and critical evaluation of the impact of teaching on learning and how to bring about improvement.
- Business teachers have good access to generic professional development and examining board training, but have few opportunities to network or access professional development about subject-specific delivery.
- Leadership and management of whole-school enterprise education are outstanding and are characterised by a very strong commitment to, and a clear vision about, preparing students for their future lives. The provision reflects excellent coordination and planning. It involves suitable evaluation, including the views of students. Self- and peer-assessment are used to measure the impact of provision on student outcomes and leaders are currently considering how to establish a more formal approach.

Areas for improvement in relation to the formally assessed business courses, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the pace of learning and raising the level of challenge in teaching and learning activities to enable students to make good progress
- developing teachers' questioning so that it extends and deepens students' thinking and develops their ability to articulate higher order oral responses
- improving leadership and management so that planning, tracking, monitoring and quality assurance are more rigorous and self-evaluation reflects on how students' progress is influenced by the quality of teaching
- providing opportunities for subject-specific professional development and networking to remove the potential for isolation in this small department.

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

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector