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Mr Michael Sheehan
Principal
Runshaw College
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Dear Mr Sheehan

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on Monday 18 September 2006. I am particularly grateful to managers and the teaching staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to learners who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business and administration. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements focussed on learners aged 16-18 and included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of eight lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- Outstanding success rates have been maintained in business courses. Retention and pass rates are significantly above national averages. Value added data indicates that learners make very good progress and places the college in the top 10% nationally.
- Teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons include a good range of activities that motivate students and make learning fun. Teachers use highly effective questioning techniques to develop students' depth of

understanding. Students are encouraged to use business terminology correctly and develop their examination skills from the start of their course.

- Teachers have high expectations of their students. Learners' progress is very closely monitored through regular assessments. Extra support is available for all learners and any student not performing to their target grade is directed to attend additional lessons. Teachers' feedback on learners' written work is very supportive in helping them improve the quality of their answers.
- Resources are of a very high standard and carefully structured to support learning. They include relevant and interesting examples from the business world, links to useful web sites, extension activities and directed study tasks. All learners have access to the resources on the college's intranet site.
- An excellent range of enrichment activities is available to students. Teachers have developed an innovative "Business Academy" which is available to any business student. Students are very positive about the fortnightly sessions that include visiting speakers, trips, a residential visit and various team building and leadership activities. Participants of the academy achieve the level 2 Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) team leadership award.
- Teachers work together well as a team, are supportive of each other and continuously share ideas and resources. All staff have a strong commitment to maintaining and further raising standards. Learners said that teachers regularly ask them their opinions about the courses and respond to their comments.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- to consider when planning advanced level lessons how best to integrate learners who have/have not previously studied business studies
- to develop more precise guidance to support some learners when completing specific internet research tasks
- to ensure sufficient time is given at the end of each lesson to summarise the key learning that has taken place.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of the half-term following the inspection. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Bev Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools