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Mr David Heaton
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Dear Mr Heaton

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 23 and 24 January 2007. I am particularly grateful to your staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and giving up a great deal of their time during my 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 included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of five lessons together with a Young Enterprise session and short visits to two further 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

- High quality provision being maintained in the business area.
- Students' achievements are very good and generally compare favourably with national averages.

- Students benefit from and appreciate high quality teaching. They experience good pace and a variety of approaches in lessons; a good mix of teacher input, student activity and directed study, all enriched by current business examples to illustrate the theory taught. Teachers use highly effective questioning techniques to develop students' depth of understanding.
- Students' progress is regularly and closely monitored. Assignments and assessments are very carefully marked and students get detailed and informative feedback that helps them to improve the quality of their answers.
- ILT is used well to enhance learning. The intranet site is well developed. Students value the use of an on-line text book and the opportunities to test their knowledge using interactive questions. The 'ask the teacher' section enables students to get immediate feedback on aspects of a topic they are struggling with and provides very good opportunities for extended work. The interactive whiteboards are often used to good effect but some staff have yet to utilise them to their full potential.
- The distinction between applied A level and A level business studies is clear. The former has a practical dimension where students are required to relate the theory taught at each stage to practical applications. The A level business is taught much more as a classroom based academic subject.
- Staff are well qualified and have high expectations of their students. Students recognise teachers' very strong commitment to their success. Quality and high standards are woven into the business ethos of how the department operates. This is reflected in, for example, expectations of punctuality, attendance, quality of learning materials provided to students and, reciprocally, the quality of work students are expected to produce.
- There is excellent leadership of the business team and very good team work. Data and student feedback are used very well in the self assessment of the department. Staff are empowered to take ownership of their work within a context of management arrangements to monitor performance and share good practice. There is some scope to take this further by staff becoming even better aware of the different strengths which each displays in classroom delivery.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- ensure sufficient time is given at the end of each lesson to summarise the key learning that has taken place
- development of students' individual learning plans to integrate regular assessments in a more systematic way
- some employer involvement is evident, although as the self assessment recognises there is scope for further engagement, especially for A level business students.

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