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Ms Jane Beaumont  
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Dear Ms Beaumont

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23-24 January 2007 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of parts of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

In the examination subjects provided in business education, students' achievement is good.

- Examination results are usually above national averages. Students generally reach and often exceed their expected grades.
- Students have extremely good attitudes to learning and were very well motivated in the lessons observed.

## Quality of teaching and learning of business education

The quality of teaching and learning in business education is good.

- Students benefit from teachers' expert knowledge and their use of relevant and interesting examples drawn from the real world. Teaching observed was consistently good. Students are very positive about the quality of teaching on their business and economics courses.
- Teachers deploy a wide range of teaching and learning styles, including teacher led discussion, group work and presentations. Computers are used effectively, both for web-based research and for student and group presentations.
- Students feel very well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback. Guidance for students is very good.
- A variety of competitions, visits and speakers connect the subjects to the real world.
- Lessons observed included a variety of learning activities but they did always take sufficient account of the varied needs and abilities of different learners.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Courses in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are popular and appropriately matched to the ability and interest of students.
- There is very good provision for enterprise with progression through each year. The monitoring of learning outcomes is at an early stage of development.

## Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are good.

- Courses are very well structured and the strengths of the well qualified staff complement each other. Resources are good. Many lessons are taught in accommodation outside the subject base, making it difficult to display work and access information technology.
- In the main school the management of the development of business and enterprise education for all students has been strengthened considerably by appointing the faculty head for business to a senior leadership role.
- The provision for business and enterprise education has been increased but the monitoring of the impact of this on students' learning is at an early stage of development.

Subject issue - Personal Finance Education

Provision is good.

Students have a good understanding of personal finance which is developed through a coherent programme within personal and social education but there is insufficient assessment of their progress.

Inclusion

- An increasing range of courses meets the needs of different groups of learners.
- A varied range of teaching and learning styles is deployed to meet the needs of different learners. However, further planning is needed to ensure that less able students make better progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that teaching matches the needs of different groups of learners
- develop greater coherence in the programme for business and enterprise education and identify the learning outcomes expected at each key stage.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business education in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
Her Majesty's Inspector