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Mr A Clarke
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Dear Mr Clarke

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 June to look at work in business education. I greatly enjoyed meeting your students and would particularly like to thank those who gave up their time to talk to me.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as inspecting examination courses, the visit looked at the wider provision of enterprise education 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business and enterprise education was judged to be good with some outstanding features

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement is good.

- GCE business studies examination results are broadly in line with national averages. There was some underachievement in 2006 but there is strong evidence that students who have just completed the A2 course are on target to achieve well in relation to their prior

attainment. Completion rates are good and a substantial proportion of students go on to business-related courses at university.

- The evidence presented by the school indicates that the first cohort of students to take GCSE business studies should achieve well and attain results that are above national averages. Substantial numbers of Year 11 students intend taking GCE business studies in the sixth form.
- The department has identified the need to improve students' analytical and evaluative skills to help them achieve the highest grades and is making good progress in addressing this.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in the lessons observed and in discussion groups was exemplary.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

The quality of teaching and learning in business education is good with some outstanding features.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well qualified.
- The lessons observed were well planned and involved a good range of activities that engaged the students' interests. Classroom relationships were excellent.
- Students feel very well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written and oral comments. Additional help is provided outside of lessons, for example through revision sessions prior to examinations.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and enhance teaching and learning is severely restricted by the lack of computers and data projectors in the classrooms used for business studies.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- There is a good take-up of GCSE business studies, introduced in 2005, and this is leading to increasing numbers opting for the GCE business studies course in the sixth form. No other examination courses are currently provided in business but the school is seeking to introduce a GCSE travel and tourism in 2008.
- A major strength is the provision of industrial visits for all business students. These visits are greatly enjoyed by students who can identify ways in which it helps develop their understanding and makes their courses more relevant. Business students were also very positive about the extra-curricular project they had undertaken with Jaguar cars to raise money for a hospice.
- Across the school students have good opportunities to develop their enterprise skills. The enterprise day for all Year 10 students was very well received. The interview process and management training

programme for prospective Year 10 prefects is an example of excellent practice. Students are thoroughly prepared for the very well organised programme of work experience.

- Although individual aspects of enterprise education and work-related learning are evaluated, the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve by the age of 16 are not identified or assessed. Progress has been made in embedding enterprise education in a number of subjects and there are plans in place for extending this.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are good.

- The business course is well organised and supported by good quality programmes of study.
- There is an accurate departmental self-evaluation which identifies appropriate priorities for development. However, the longer term vision or strategy for developing business education, including its role in supporting enterprise education for all students, is not articulated.
- There is good tracking and monitoring of student progress and appropriate interventions are made when students appear to be under achieving or falling behind with their work.
- Teachers are involved in a good range of professional development activities and this has had an impact on raising achievement.
- The development of enterprise education is seen as an important part of the school's international dimension and plans are in place to extend this.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- The GCSE business course is open to all students and it attracts a wide range of abilities. There is no evidence of underachievement by any specific group of students.
- Enterprise education is provided for all students but their individual experiences are not recorded or evaluated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving access to ICT for teaching and learning in classrooms where business studies is taught
- articulating a longer term vision and strategy for the development of business education, including its contribution to enterprise education for all students
- identifying and assessing the learning outcomes students are expected to gain through the programme of enterprise education.

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 and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Butler
Her Majesty's Inspector