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Mr J Barker
Principal
Hugh Christie Technology College
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Dear Mr Barker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10-11 October to look at work in Business Education.

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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good with several outstanding features. There is very good capacity to make further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement are good overall and outstanding in examination courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16.

- Examination results at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 are well above average and students make excellent progress in relation to their prior attainment.
- Completion rates on post-16 courses over the past few years have been very high. The great majority of students continue to GCE A2, with substantial numbers going on to take business-related courses at university.

- Students do not always demonstrate analytical and evaluative skills sufficiently in their coursework assignments in Key Stage 4 and post-16 courses.
- Students in Key Stage 4 who are not taking business courses have a limited understanding of economic and business ideas and personal finance.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

Teaching and learning in business education examination courses are outstanding.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear explanations of business vocabulary and concepts in lessons.
- Lessons and assignments are well planned and carefully structured to ensure learning takes place at an appropriate pace.
- Teachers deploy a good range of teaching styles to engage and maintain the interests of learners.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and are very positive about their business courses. They feel that they are taught very well and given excellent support. They understand their targets and know what they need to do to reach them.
- Students are given very high quality feedback on their written work. Progress on assignments is monitored and assessed very regularly and students are given additional help when they are falling behind with their work or failing to reach their potential.
- A major strength in business courses is the linking of each unit of work to a visit to a business. This makes the work relevant and interesting and provides contexts that the students can relate to.
- Students and teachers are benefiting from the business department's recent move into new, high quality, accommodation with good access to information and communications technology (ICT).
- Students make good use of ICT for word processing and investigating topics for their assignments but its use to enhance teaching and learning is underdeveloped. This has been partly due to a lack of access to ICT until recently.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is satisfactory.

- Take-up of the National Certificate course at Key Stage 4 is good. The department has also introduced a business and communications course for a small number of students. Business courses attract a broad range of students with different levels of attainment. Students start their examination courses in Year 9 and most complete them by the end of Year 11. Provision is made in Year 11 for students who wish to improve

- their grades or who did not opt for a business course in Year 9. Students have the opportunity to start GCE courses in Year 11 if they have the appropriate level of attainment.
- The GCE applied business course is the most popular option course in the sixth form and attracts substantial numbers of students. The department does not currently offer Level 2 courses in the sixth form but is planning to introduce them when resources allow.
- Business students have very good opportunities to engage with employers and businesses at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Students not taking examination courses in business at Key Stage 4 have some opportunities to develop business understanding, financial capability and enterprise skills through work-related learning but these do not add up to a coherent programme. The learning outcomes all students are expected to gain are not identified.
- Students value the programme of work experience in Year 10 and all students take an applied course in Year 9.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education, including the provision of enterprise, economic and business understanding (EBU) and financial capability, are good.

- The outstanding leadership and management of the business department have been recognised by the college by giving the department responsibility for managing the whole of the sixth form.
- The business department has a detailed understanding of its strengths and areas for development through drawing on data, the views of students, observations of lessons and scrutiny of students' written work.
- Teachers in the business department work very effectively as a team through sharing ideas and supporting each other.
- There are excellent procedures in place to track and monitor students' progress on business courses and to intervene when they are falling behind with work or not reaching their potential.
- Schemes of work are thorough and there is a very useful department handbook which includes key policies, for example on assessment.
- There is a strong programme of professional development for business teachers and the department has good support from senior managers.
- The provision for enterprise, EBU and financial capability, as part of the statutory provision for work-related learning at Key Stage 4, lacks overall coordination. There is no policy covering these aspects of the curriculum and no statement of students' entitlement.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- All students in Key Stage 4 are able to opt for a business course. Students are given excellent individual support and there is no evidence of underachievement by any particular group of students.
- Students do not all have the opportunity to take part in enterprise activities or to develop their economic, business and personal financial understanding to an appropriate level.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in business courses, developing students' analytical and evaluative skills and make more use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning
- developing a more coherent programme of enterprise education, EBU and personal finance education for all students, as part of the statutory requirement for work-related learning at Key Stage 4.

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

David Butler
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject adviser for Business and Enterprise Education