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Mr Stuart Ballantyne  
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Dear Mr Ballantyne

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06-07 December 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 five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in examination courses is good.

- Although GCSE business studies results in 2007 were very low, in previous years they have normally been close to the national average.
- Overall, students make at least satisfactory and often good progress in relation to their prior attainment on the traditional business courses and often outstanding progress on the vocational course.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated.

- Classroom relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.

### 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 the use of relevant and interesting examples drawn from the real world. There are good opportunities for students to engage directly with businesses on the vocational course but these are not sufficiently developed in other courses.
- Teachers deploy a wide range of teaching and learning styles, including whole class discussions, individual, paired and group work and debates and presentations led by students. Information technology is used effectively by teachers and students, both for research and for presentations.
- Students feel well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.
- There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching. In less successful lessons teaching fails to engage the full range of students.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Examination courses meet the needs and interests of students well. The courses offered are popular and students view them very positively.
- There are good opportunities in the curriculum for students not following examination courses in business to develop their economic and business understanding and take part in a wide range of enterprise activities. Aspects of personal finance and economic education are included in the GCSE citizenship course, taken by all students. Discussions with students not taking examination courses in business revealed a good grasp of the relationship between taxation and public expenditure and issues such as fair trade.
- Well structured programmes of careers education and work experience help students develop a good understanding of how business operates.

### Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are satisfactory.

- Courses are very well structured and the strengths of the well qualified staff complement each other.
- The wider provision for economic and business understanding, careers and citizenship education is managed well. The co-ordination of

enterprise education has recently been improved by making it the responsibility of the business studies department.

- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning and hold the department to account but the department does not undertake a sufficiently rigorous analysis of its strengths and weaknesses to identify areas for improvement.

### Inclusion

- Only one examination course in business is provided at Key Stage 4 but there are good opportunities for all students to gain financial capability and economic and business understanding across the curriculum.
- In the sixth form, two advanced level courses in business cater effectively for the different needs of students. The general studies course provides further economic and financial understanding for all students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more opportunities for students to engage directly with local businesses
- increasing the rigour of departmental self-evaluation
- developing a more structured approach to individual discussion with students, to gain feedback on the quality of provision.

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