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Mr D Day  
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Dear Mr Day

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29-30 January 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 developing 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 in business is good.

- Standards and achievement in examinations taken in Year 11 in 2007 were excellent and there has been an improving trend over the past few years. The great majority of students met or exceeded challenging targets in 2007.
- Standards and achievement in the Level 2 course taken in the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards in GCE AS and A2 examinations in 2007 were well below average and there was considerable underachievement. A substantial proportion of students did not

complete their courses. Achievement in previous years has been satisfactory.

- Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students in Years 12 and 13 are making satisfactory progress towards achieving their target grades and the number of students dropping out of courses has greatly reduced.
- The great majority of students have good attitudes to learning and enjoy their business courses.

### Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to draw on their experiences of working in business.
- Lessons are well planned and include a good range of activities and teaching styles but do not always provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining students. There is insufficient emphasis given in some lessons and coursework assignments to developing students' analytical and evaluative skills.
- Satisfactory use is made of information technology to enhance teaching and learning. Some of the equipment has only been installed recently and teachers are still developing their expertise in using it.
- Students find teachers very approachable and supportive. Additional help is provided through lunchtime and after school sessions.
- Students receive very good feedback on their work and know what they need to do to improve.
- Classroom relationships are excellent. Students work well in groups and individually.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education, including the provision of enterprise education for all students, is satisfactory.

- Examination courses meet the needs and interests of students well at Key Stage 4 and post-16.
- Good use is made of real business examples but students have limited opportunities to engage directly with employers in their business courses. There are also few enrichment opportunities for business students, for example to take part in business competitions or meet local entrepreneurs.
- There is a strong programme of work-related learning. Work experience for all Year 10 students is well organised and there is good follow up when students return to school. A high proportion of students take vocational courses.
- The provision for enterprise education for all students at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. This is provided through 'focus' days, a range of subjects

and extra-curricular activities. However, the opportunities for students to develop economic and business understanding and personal financial education are relatively limited.

## Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are good.

- The business department has a good understanding of its strengths and areas requiring development and there is good capacity to bring about further improvement.
- Appropriate steps have been taken to tackle the underachievement that occurred on Level 3 courses in 2007.
- There is very good monitoring of students' progress and early interventions are made where there is evidence of underachievement.
- There is strong support from senior and middle managers for the development of enterprise education for all students. A useful audit of work-related learning across the curriculum has been undertaken. However, the specific learning objectives for enterprise education, including economic and business understanding and personal finance education, have not been identified and students' progress in achieving them is not monitored.

## Inclusion

The promotion of Inclusion in business education is good.

- Business courses are open to all students and there are opportunities for all students to develop their enterprise skills.
- There is very good support for individual students, including students with additional needs, on business courses.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise standards and achievement in the Level 3 course in business
- ensure higher attaining students are fully challenged and that there is sufficient emphasis on developing students' skills of analysis and evaluation
- provide more opportunities for business students to have direct contact with employers and develop more enrichment activities in business
- enhance the provision for developing all students' economic and business understanding and financial capability, identify the learning outcomes they are expected to achieve and monitor their progress.

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