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Mrs A Holland  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Holland

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21-22 January 2008 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at examination courses in business education, the visit also considered the development of economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students at Key Stage 4 as part of the statutory provision for work-related learning.

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. 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of three lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is outstanding.

- At Key Stage 4, achievement has been excellent for many years. In 2007, the progress made by students dipped slightly when compared to previous years, but still remained very good. Achievement in the sixth form is excellent.
- Standards in Key Stage 4 are in line with those nationally and are well above in the sixth form.

- The quality of students' note-taking to aid revision is very good. Students are confident in their understanding and able to draw on their own experiences to illustrate points.
- Completion rates for sixth form business courses are excellent.
- By the end of Key Stage 4, students' economic and business understanding, including those not taking business courses, is very good.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning on examination courses are outstanding.

- Teachers are well qualified, experienced and have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well-planned, proceed at a good pace and include a wide variety of learning opportunities. Teachers' expectations are high and students enjoy their courses and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is excellent, as are student-staff relationships.
- There is a strong focus on developing students' analytical and evaluative skills and the use of technical vocabulary. Interactive white boards are used effectively by teachers but students' access to ICT in lessons is quite limited. Good references are made to topical issues.
- Teachers are very effective in linking different course elements together and this is a major factor in reinforcing learning.
- Good use is made of local businesses to provide real examples but students' direct contact with employers during lessons is underdeveloped.
- Assessment practice is very good. Marking is thorough and provides students with helpful advice on how to improve.
- Students have good access to a wide range of additional learning opportunities, including business competitions. Access to daily newspapers, journals and lesson notes, also helps to support students' learning.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the business curriculum is outstanding.

- Business courses are increasingly popular at Key Stage 4 and take-up in the sixth form is very good.
- A wide range of enterprise activities provides excellent opportunities for all students to develop their team and problem-solving skills. Young Enterprise gives Year 12 students an excellent insight into business planning and collaborative working.
- Year 10 students are prepared very thoroughly for their work experience and there is effective follow up when they return from their placements to help students reflect on what they learned. Sixth form students also have the opportunity to undertake overseas placements.
- Personal, social and health education provides very good opportunities for students to develop financial awareness and some economic

understanding. These are supplemented by positive contributions from several other subjects and whole school or whole year group activities.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of business education are good.

- In the business studies department, planning is good and students' progress is monitored effectively. Self-evaluation is good.
- Schemes of work vary in quality and are being updated; the best make intended learning outcomes explicit and identify appropriate teaching and learning strategies.
- Teachers have good opportunities for professional development.
- At whole-school level, the co-ordination of enterprise education and work-related learning is very good and a useful audit has been conducted of how various activities contribute to these at Key Stage 4. Good attempts have also been made to assess the impact of activities. However, there is not yet an overall system for tracking students' developing economic and business understanding; this impedes the planning and differentiation of activities.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- Examination courses are open to all students. There is a strong emphasis on agreeing targets with students and those with specific learning needs are well supported. Students with English as an additional language make very good progress. Effective use is made of peer mentoring.
- The Key Stage 4 Life Skills course offers good additional opportunities for students to develop their financial literacy. The Level 2 business course in the sixth form encourages students to continue in learning. Outcomes on this course are very good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all schemes of work are updated to include intended learning outcomes and teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of all learners
- improving access to ICT within lessons
- at whole-school level, developing a unified system for tracking students' developing economic and business understanding.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Vic Chivers  
Her Majesty's Inspector