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Mr R Vasey
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Dear Mr Vasey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04-05 March 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good with some excellent features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement on business examination courses is excellent.

- Results have been consistently well-above average in the GNVQ and BTEC Level 2 courses taken in Key Stage 4, with all students attaining at least a pass grade for the past three years.

- Post-16 results are also well above average. In 2007, over 90% of students taking GCE applied business passed and one third attained an A or B grade.
- Students make excellent progress in relation to their prior attainment at Key Stage 4 and very good progress post-16. The great majority of students meet or exceed their challenging targets. Very few students fail to complete their GCE courses and substantial numbers go on to study business-related courses at university.
- Evidence gathered during the visit from lesson observations and a scrutiny of coursework assignments showed students making generally good progress but indicated some weaknesses in their skills of analysis and evaluation.
- Students have extremely positive attitudes towards learning. Behaviour in the lessons observed was excellent.
- Students interviewed in Year 11 who are not taking business examination courses are developing a satisfactory understanding of business and the economy and of personal finance.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some excellent features.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, carefully structured and include a good range of tasks to maintain the interest of students. Reference is made to examples of real businesses wherever possible.
- Students receive excellent support and are particularly complimentary about the high quality feedback they receive on their written work. Students are aware of their targets and know what to do to improve.
- In the lessons observed, students responded well to tasks but were rather passive and few of them asked questions or raised issues about the topics they were studying. Students were not always sufficiently challenged to develop their analytical and evaluative skills.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum, including the wider provision for developing economic and business understanding and financial capability, is good.

- Take-up of the BTEC Level 2 course provided in Key Stage 4 is around the national average and GCE applied business is a popular option in the sixth form.
- 'Taster' lessons in Year 9 help to inform students about the BTEC course option in Key Stage 4.
- There are good opportunities for GCE students to have direct contact with local businesses and employers but there are too few opportunities for students taking the BTEC course in Key Stage 4.
- There is good provision to develop students' enterprise skills through suspended timetable days, the Year 9 'taster' lessons, key skills,

charity work and a range of subjects. The provision for economic and business understanding and personal finance education is less well developed, although aspects are covered in GCSE citizenship, taken by all students in Year 9, and through tutor group sessions and a range of subjects.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education, including the wider provision for all students, are good.

- Business education courses are very well managed. Thorough schemes of work are in place and there is a helpful handbook containing key policy documents. Staff in the department feel well supported and there is appropriate provision made for professional development.
- There is a useful subject self-evaluation but it does not include a sufficiently rigorous analysis of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.
- The accommodation and resources for business education are very good but the rooms are not grouped together as a suite.
- Senior managers are very supportive of the development of enterprise education and the wider provision of business education and this is reflected in the school's priorities. A senior member of staff has responsibility for coordinating this aspect of the curriculum and a useful audit of provision has been carried out.
- The precise learning outcomes for enterprise education, economic and business understanding and personal finance education students are expected to achieve at various stages in their education have not been identified and are not assessed, apart from where they are included in examination courses.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is excellent.

- The BTEC course provided in Key Stage 4 is open to all students and attracts a wide cross-section.
- There is excellent support for individual students.
- All students take a GCSE citizenship course in Year 9 and a key skills course in working together in Key stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- giving greater emphasis in lessons and coursework tasks to the development of students' analytical and evaluative skills
- increasing the opportunities for Key Stage 4 business students to have direct contact with businesses and employers
- identifying and assess the learning outcomes all students are expected to achieve in enterprise education, economic and business

understanding and personal finance as they progress through the school.

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

David Butler
Her Majesty's Inspector