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Mr R Sheriff
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sheriff

Ofsted subject survey: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 March 2008 to look at work in the International Baccalaureate (IB).

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.

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 seven lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- The small group of students studying the IB benefit from the broad curriculum in their sixth form studies. Delivery in the school has been well considered and students particularly enjoy the flexibility and choices available to them. In negotiation with their teachers, students set and achieve very challenging targets.
- The students on the IB programme are confident and articulate young people. In lessons they presented well thought out ideas on a wide range of topics based around extensive independent research. Students ask and respond very well to challenging questions.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, well qualified and committed to developing students' independence and thirst for learning.
- Students are very well supported in relatively small classes. Teachers provide detailed feedback that supports them in improving the quality of their work. The standard of written work, particularly the extended essays is exceptionally high.

- Students participate in a very broad range of exciting extra-curricular activities as part of the creativity, action and service module. They develop a wide range of additional personal skills that will benefit them in their future careers.
- The vast majority of students taking the IB in Year 13 have received good offers from universities.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reconsidering the timing and meeting of deadlines, particularly in the extended essays and internally assessed presentations, so as not to place too much burden on students at key times in Year 13
- enabling all teachers involved in the IB opportunities to meet together to discuss issues and share good practice in delivering the programme
- encouraging greater numbers of students to take the IB programme so that group sizes become more viable.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the IB programme in the school.

As I explained previously, 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

Bev Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector