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17 February 2009

Mrs S Cowans  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Cowans

Ofsted survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10-11 February 2009 to look at work in business education.

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

Achievement in examination courses in business is good.

- GCSE business studies examination results at Key Stage 4 have been improving in recent years and are now above average. Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and against challenging targets in Key Stage 4.
- Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form and achieve in line with expectations.
- Students are generally very positive about the subject, especially in Key Stage 4. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Classroom relationships are good.

## Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Students benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and their professional experiences of working in businesses.
- Teachers deploy a wide range of teaching and learning styles, including teacher-led discussion, group work and presentations. Good use is made of relevant examples to enliven and add interest to lessons.
- Information technology is used effectively, both for research and for student presentations.
- Students feel well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and good oral feedback, particularly in relation to their coursework.
- Students find teachers approachable and the combination of extra revision classes and individual support helps them achieve well.
- The less effective lessons observed sometimes failed to fully engage learners and on occasions proceeded at too slow a pace, either because students were not set tight enough deadlines or because they were not sufficiently clear about the tasks to be undertaken.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is satisfactory.

- The current provision of one examination course in business at Key Stage 4 and one in the sixth form does not meet the full range of learners' needs but plans are in place to extend this provision.
- Despite the limited provision, business studies is a popular option at Key Stage 4.
- The involvement of all GCSE business studies students in running 'mini enterprises' provides excellent opportunities for them to apply their business knowledge and understanding and contributes to very high quality coursework.
- There are relatively few opportunities within the business studies courses for students to engage directly with employers.

## Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are good.

- Courses are very well planned and effective use is made of teachers' different types of expertise in teaching them.
- The rigorous monitoring of students' progress, together with appropriate interventions, helps students to achieve well and has led to improving examination results in recent years.

- There is a good programme of professional development for staff which has appropriately focussed on the introduction of the new diploma.
- Resources are good and meet the needs of the range of learners.

The quality of provision of economic and business understanding and enterprise education for all students

The quality of provision for economic and business understanding and enterprise education for all students in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good.

- The provision for economic and business understanding, enterprise education and financial capability is well-managed and is given strong support by senior and middle leaders.
- Many students benefit from the good opportunities to engage in extra-curricular enterprise activities, for example, through organising events to raise funds for charities and taking part in a competition to build an electric car.
- The monitoring and assessing of student's achievement in enterprise has begun but is still at an early stage of implementation.
- There is good engagement with the real world in many subjects and a strong programme of work experience in Year 10.
- Provision for students to develop financial capability and economic and business understanding is very good in Years 7 to 9 but is less well developed in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Areas for improvement in business education, which we discussed, included:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form to raise standards and reflect best practice in the main school
- strengthening the consistency of provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form
- implementing plans for monitoring students' economic well-being and enterprise experiences and assessing the progress they are making so that those who are less well engaged can be more consistently identified and supported.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business education science 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