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Miss C Savage  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Savage

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 March 2009 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 and the introduction of the new programme of study for economic well-being and financial capability at Key Stage 3.

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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good with outstanding capacity to make further improvements.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good

- Students' results in GCSE business are in line with the national average. This represents good progress in relation to students' prior attainment. Students' performance in business is comparable to their performance in other subjects.
- Students' results in A-level business and economics courses are broadly average and most make good progress relative to their starting points. Progress and attainment are better in economics than they are in business.

- Students have very positive attitudes to their business courses. In the lessons observed they were thoroughly engaged in learning and they consistently demonstrated good attainment and independent learning skills.
- Students not taking business courses are developing a good grounding in economic and business concepts, and personal financial understanding.

### Quality of teaching and learning of business

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Business teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The marking of students' work is detailed and thorough. Students receive good feedback on their written work and their progress towards achieving their target grades.
- In the business lessons observed, teachers carefully checked students' understanding of key ideas and made effective use of questioning to develop learning.
- Teachers employed a good range of activities in the lessons observed, successfully engaging students and maintaining their interest. Students appreciate the focus on learning through completing tasks, sharing ideas and using real-world examples.
- Students enjoy their business lessons and value highly the good level of support they receive from teachers.
- Lessons were well planned to meet the needs of all learners.
- Teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) well to enhance learning in the lessons observed.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A good range of business courses is available to all students and they are a popular choice at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- There are well-conceived plans to develop the curriculum further with other local schools and the further education college, by making provision for the new diploma in business, administration and finance.
- There are good opportunities to engage with local businesses and employers. Work experience is exceptionally well managed and highly valued by students.
- Provision for economic and business understanding and personal financial capability is good both in the main school and in the sixth form and is highly valued by students. School leaders and managers are implementing well conceived and appropriate plans to further develop this provision.
- There are good opportunities for students to study aspects of economics and business in subject areas such as performing arts, ICT and geography.

## Leadership and management of business education

Leadership and management are good.

- The business department has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development; there is a very strong culture of continuous improvement, placing the learner at the heart of what they do.
- There is good monitoring of students' progress in relation to challenging target grades; appropriate interventions are made and support provided where there is under-achievement.
- There is good planning and co-ordination of the wider provision for business education within the programmes for citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education. Students' achievement is assessed against identified learning outcomes but there is not as yet an overall evaluation of their progress in developing economic and business understanding and financial capability.
- Leaders and managers of the wider economic and business provision for all students have a comprehensive overview of current provision and where it is taught. There are very good examples of basic economic and business concepts being developed through subjects.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- maintaining the focus on raising students' progress and attainment in business courses
- implementing fully the plans to further strengthen the development of business and financial education for all students by using the new programme of study for economic well-being and financial capability and building on existing assessment practice.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the provision for business education in your 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

Russell Jordan  
Her Majesty's Inspector