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Ms J Moss  
The Head teacher  
Westhaven School  
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Weston-Super-Mare  
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Dear Ms Moss

#### Ofsted survey inspection programme – Moving through the system

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Friday 6 March 2009 to your Specialist Business and Enterprise College for pupils aged 7 to 16 with complex learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, and physical disabilities. I greatly enjoyed looking at work on developing the future economic well-being of pupils in your school and careers education. I also looked at how well arrangements are made to support pupils during their transition into further education colleges.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included:

- meeting with yourself and senior staff
- meeting with your Connexions personal adviser
- meeting with a parent
- meeting with your Business Consultant
- meeting with Head of Integrated Studies at Weston College
- meeting with Deputy Head of Wyvern School (Federation Partner School)
- meeting with Network 13 pupils
- meeting with Year 10 and Year 11 enterprise pupils
- meeting with school council
- observations of a Year 11 Enterprise lesson with Youth Enterprise (Pilot Project Programme) and a Key Stage 2 Maths/Shop lesson
- scrutiny of a wide range of documents and pupils work.

Overall, your work in developing the future economic well-being of pupils in your school is outstanding. Through an excellent Year 10 team enterprise project and the land-based studies programme, all pupils develop skills of working together collaboratively and constructively with hands on experience of setting up and managing a company. Pupils are



empowered to take initiative and gain in confidence as they hire and fire board members and learn the intricacies of corporation tax. They learn exceptionally well to be creative in their thinking, particularly in developing high quality products so that they will sell well and benefit the shareholders in their company. Because of contracts with companies to sell their plants, Year 11 pupils taking the land-based studies course, learn how to deal with and effectively manage change to meet the needs of their customers. On the Year 10 project, pupils' decision-making is very high quality and in designing a product, they take well-judged risks and learn through the mistakes they make. By Year 11, pupils have an outstanding understanding of their progression options and take up further education college courses, which are a pathway to successful careers. Through the development of outstanding work related skills in their business and enterprise projects at school, combined with an exciting and wide range of work experience opportunities in the community, pupils have an excellent understanding of what is required of them in the workplace.

#### Features of effective practice:

- Achievement is outstanding. In 2008, 83% of pupils achieved 5+ GCSE passes or equivalent, a figure very significantly better than similar schools. Passes in GCSE science and art demonstrate outstanding progress measured against pupils' attainment at the starting point on these courses. All pupils take a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 1 in horticulture, which enables them to develop important vocational and life skills. An innovative, creative and relevant curriculum provides a rich range of opportunities for pupils to develop excellent personal and social skills resulting in outstanding personal development. Pupils' successes are accredited through a wide range of external accreditation certificates which support their access to further education college courses. These support them in developing their employability and vocational skills. Over a significant number of years every pupil leaving the school has had an offer of a place at a college of further education. Many pupils lack confidence when they start at the school. They leave as confident and independent young people. They are able to read a bus timetable, travel independently catching the right bus, paying their fare and arriving at college to meet their friends and start their day confidently.
- The exciting curriculum for economic well-being successfully engages pupils as learners and motivates them to succeed and achieve well. It is exceptionally well planned and thorough and regular auditing prevents pupils' experiencing the same topics across different courses. It is fully inclusive, so all pupils in Year 10 have an opportunity to participate in the company project. Every year, all year groups have a mini-enterprise project. This year, each year group received £10 with a directive to make it grow. They decided collaboratively what to do with their £10 and had the choice about what to do with any growth made. They all gave their profit to charity. This reflects the impact of the focus on business ethics which pervades the culture of the school. Through an accredited course which the majority access, pupils learn how to live independently, budget for their household bills, plan and prepare a healthy meal on a tight budget and open a bank account. All pupils participate in real and relevant enterprise projects and have the opportunity to learn high order financial and critical thinking skills. Alongside this, they learn about the importance of getting to work on time and coping as independent citizens, capable of finding a flat to rent for themselves. The excellent

differentiation in the curriculum and outstanding teaching ensures all pupils develop these financial and life skills at the level appropriate to them.

- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for progression into the demands of an adult world. Planning for this progression is excellent and the progression route for each pupil is skilfully managed. The planning for transition starts in Year 9. Excellent links with a local college give pupils the opportunity to experience college courses in preparation for the choices they have to make when they leave. They are integrated with mainstream pupils on a wide range of increased flexibility courses leading to accreditation at level 1 in subjects such as electronics, computer animation, music technology, catering, beauty and hairdressing. In Year 11, pupils have an opportunity to do an introductory award in vocational practice. Flexibility and a tailor made individual approach to meeting needs means that individual pupils are given the opportunity to excel. For example, this year a gifted pupil is able to take an NVQ at level 2 in music technology. One ex-pupil is now on a foundation university course. Parents are delighted with the preparation their children receive for the next step. Another strand to supporting pupils in moving on is the excellent two-week work placements they experience, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11.
- Careers education is exceptionally well structured. It involves an excellent Connexions personal adviser. Work experience is integral to the success of this school with an amazing range of placements matched to pupils' interests and career aspirations. Skills developed as part of the process involve pupils in writing a letter of application for their work placements, attending a formal interview and tracking the targets they set for themselves during their placements. On completion of their work placements, they write a letter of thanks to their employers and share a written report about what they have learnt with their peers. As appropriate, extended work placements are planned for pupils who need them. The school's work experience coordinator has worked on an assessment scheme with the school and each pupil is assessed and graded with a pass, merit, distinction or distinction\* for their work placements. The personal adviser works ceaselessly with every pupil and their family to ensure every pupil is placed on a suitable and challenging college course on leaving school. High priority is given in placing looked after children. However, there is evidence from parents and the school's management that some pupils are not sufficiently mature at age 16 to leave school completely and start at college and there is a vision to provide a sixth form on site, continuing excellent links with local colleges.
- There is a range of clubs and activities which make an exceptional contribution to pupils' development of economic well-being and their understanding of ethical issues, such as Fair Trade. The Network 13 club meets at lunchtimes to prepare for presenting a bid for funding to make the school's environment even more creative than it already is. During the survey visit, this group was observed having a high quality debate about whether or not it is appropriate to put in their bid a strategy to approach companies for sponsorship at the time of the credit crunch.
- Leadership in this school is inspirational. There is a commitment to remove barriers for pupils and enable them to access jobs based on merit. A dedicated adult team are committed to ensuring that every pupil will reach their full potential. It is successful in realising this vision. All courses are carefully monitored and re-alignments are constantly

made to improve them to raise pupils' achievements. The senior leadership team is creative in its thinking and robust in its actions to ensure pupils develop the essential work-related skills required to enable them to become successful adults.

- Partnerships with schools, colleges and business companies are excellent. There is an effective link with the Education Business Partnership through the school's business consultant. Pupils from nearby secondary schools follow the horticulture NVQ at level 1, making use of the excellent accommodation and resources on the school site. This reverse integration has an additional benefit of changing the views of pupils from mainstream schools about a school for pupils with learning difficulties. They view this school as an excellent learning environment with a challenging curriculum and outstanding accommodation and resources.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- It would greatly benefit the school to be able to develop courses for their pupils, and those from other schools, within the 14 to 19 very strong partnership arrangements being developed in North Somerset.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop economic well-being in the school.

As I explained, 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

Jeffery Plumb

Additional inspector