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Mr I MacNaughton
Principal
Colchester Sixth Form College
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Dear Mr MacNaughton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 March 2009 to look at work in business education. As agreed, my visit focussed on GCE Advanced level courses in economics and applied business.

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: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of three lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- Achievement in advanced level economics is consistently strong. Students also achieve well on the more recently introduced applied business course. The success of these courses is due to consistently effective teaching and high quality support.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent. They believe that they achieve well because their teachers are enthusiastic, and highly supportive and approachable. Students taking applied business feel the course is made both relevant and enjoyable through links with real businesses and those taking economics find the course helps develop their understanding of financial events currently dominating the world news.
- Students benefit from the expert knowledge of their teachers, including a wealth of experience as examiners. Learning is further enhanced through a very well structured programme of support. Students have a secure knowledge of the progress they are making through clear target setting and a good understanding of where they are in the programme.

- Students' progress is monitored carefully and frequently and interventions take place rapidly whenever underachievement is identified. This is linked to very clear and explicit assessment criteria. Students are well aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.
- A range of teaching and learning approaches is used. Students and teachers referred to a mixture of activities, including teacher led discussion, paired work, video clips and student presentations.
- A wide range of courses meets the different needs and interests of students. This includes an accelerated GCE advanced level course in business studies for economists and one year courses in accounts, business studies, economics and world development. These courses both broaden the provision and add to students' motivation and interest.

Area for development, which we discussed:

- further develop the range of teaching and learning approaches to ensure that all students are fully engaged in their learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business education in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to the learning and skills council (LSC) 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