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Mr C Tomlinson
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Dear Mr Tomlinson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19-20 May 2009 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at business examination courses, the visit also considered the provision being made to develop economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students.

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 outstanding.

Achievement and standards

In business education students' achievement is outstanding. The term 'business education' includes business studies, applied business, economics and financial capability.

- All students take at least one business education examination course and standards in these courses are consistently well above average. Students make outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment because of good teaching, high quality support and a curriculum that very effectively matches their needs .

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour in the lessons observed was exemplary. Students are well motivated, work hard and have very positive views about their business courses.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and deploy an appropriate range of teaching and learning styles. Relationships between students and between students and teachers in lessons are good and often excellent.
- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The most inspiring teaching made effective use of examples from the real world to bring learning alive.
- Students feel very well supported and are very aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.
- Students are set very challenging targets and their progress towards meeting them is closely monitored.
- Students commented very favourably on the range of learning activities and the relevance of the subject to the real world.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is outstanding.

- All students at the college follow at least one examination course in business education. The offer is already exceptional in meeting the needs and interests of different groups of students and further expansion of the provision is planned from September 2009.
- There is a strong emphasis on using the real world of business and economics in all courses.
- Provision for enterprise education and the wider aspects of economic and business understanding is excellent overall. Many aspects are assessed through the range of examination courses. Most students gain a qualification in personal finance. However, while outstanding, the curriculum is not perfect, for example, there is insufficient coverage of personal finance for those students not taking the examination course. There are many opportunities for students to develop their enterprise skills. The college is working to ensure that students' progress in developing enterprise skills and economic and business understanding are assessed more rigorously.
- The provision for work-related learning is outstanding. The 'internship' programme for Year 10 students is very well managed and does much to support the development of their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are outstanding.

- The business education department has an excellent track record of success in raising standards and achievement. Self-evaluation is strong and draws on a wide range of sources, including the views of students. There are several examples of teachers adjusting their approaches in response to feedback from students.
- Very good professional development leads to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The wider provision made to develop business and enterprise education for all students outside of examination courses is very well led.

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

- improving the consistency of teaching and learning so that all students benefit from best practice
- building on current work, ensure students' progress in developing economic well-being, particularly their financial capability, is rigorously monitored.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business education in the 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector