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Mrs S Lawrence
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lawrence

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 and 4 November 2009 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of 14 to 19 developments 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons. As a result of the school's business and enterprise specialism, all students study business all the way through the school from Year 7 to Year 11 in conjunction with information and communication technology (ICT).

The overall effectiveness of business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and financial capability is outstanding.

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is outstanding.

- Results in business courses have been consistently high, with a very high proportion gaining top grades. Students make exceptional progress in relation to their prior attainment and have very positive attitudes towards learning about business. However, as the school recognises, boys' achievement is not yet as high as that of girls.

- In the lessons observed, students used ICT both confidently and very well to support their learning.
- Students consistently demonstrated a high level of attainment and independent learning skills in the lessons observed. Students' behaviour was very good and they were engaged thoroughly in stimulating and challenging tasks.
- Students talk about what they have learned confidently and with considerable insight; they are becoming informed consumers, developing strong personal financial capability and economic and business understanding.
- Students enjoy their business lessons a great deal and value the support they receive from teachers very highly. They enjoy learning independently and the relevance of their studies to the real world.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is outstanding.

- Business teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan lessons extremely well. In their planning, teachers focus very strongly on what students will be learning from a wide range of highly engaging tasks and activities. Lesson tasks and activities build well on students' previous knowledge and areas for development.
- In the lessons observed, teachers took good care to provide sufficient stretch and challenge for the higher-attaining students. They made very frequent checks on learning and students' progress; they carefully assessed students' understanding of key ideas and made good use of questioning to extend their learning.
- Teachers used ICT extremely well and in a highly engaging way in lesson activities to support students' learning.
- In the lessons seen, teachers paid good attention to encouraging students to use appropriate terminology and regularly used topical, real-life examples extremely well to support learning.
- Students receive highly constructive feedback on their work and know what they need to do to improve their performance. They highlight the value of being able to agree their personal targets with their teachers.

Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is outstanding.

- As a result of the school's business and enterprise specialism, all students study business throughout the school from Years 7 to 11 in conjunction with ICT. Examination courses at Key Stage 4 meet students' learning styles and prior attainment extremely well. The introduction of a vocational business programme has seen a further rise in the proportion of students achieving top grades.

- Opportunities for students to gain accreditation in business and communication studies at Key Stage 3 are in place; students can now gain a qualification through their enterprise and work-experience activities, to further enhance their value.
- There are very good opportunities to engage with local businesses and employers.
- Arrangements to support and develop gifted and talented students in business are good and are firmly embedded in the curriculum.
- Provision for economic and business understanding and personal financial capability is outstanding. Students enjoy their enterprise activities and the opportunity presented to both practise skills and learn new ones. The school has taken well-conceived steps to redesign the provision for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) and has clear plans in place to assess students' outcomes.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in business education is outstanding.

- There is an extremely clear vision for business education in which the wider provision for economic and business understanding and financial capability is fully integrated with business examination courses into a coherent programme, taking account of current curriculum development.
- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how this provision may be further improved. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and a highly developed team ethos, with leaders and managers placing students at the heart of what they do. Teachers are supported well, including very good professional development opportunities.
- There are very strong arrangements to assist local primary schools with the development of enterprise education to support a smooth transition for primary-school leavers into their studies at Kings' School, in which business education plays such an important role.

Subject issue: the impact of 14 to 19 developments in business education

The school already has excellent provision in place to meet the needs and interests of its students and has put in place opportunities for students to gain relevant accreditation from as early as Year 7. The school has taken the lead in the successful consortium bid for the development of the new business and finance diploma and has strong links with post-16 providers in the area.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising boys' achievement in line with that of girls.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector