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Mrs S Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 and 18 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 eight lessons and a fundraising event.

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

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is good.

- Attainment, as indicated by examination results, is in line with that nationally. However, the great majority of students make at least good progress, and many make outstanding progress, in relation to their prior attainment and their targets. Many students achieve very favourably on business courses compared with other subjects.

- Success rates for post-16 students are very good.
- Most students have good attitudes to learning and demonstrate an increasing ability to learn independently. Behaviour in lessons is good.
- By the end of Year 11, most students not taking business examination courses develop good economic and business understanding and financial capability.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is good.

- Most teaching is good, some is outstanding and none is inadequate. Lessons are planned well. Teachers use an appropriate range of activities to engage students effectively and meet their different needs. The pace of lessons is good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching. They are clear and easy to understand. Overall, they are highly effective in inspiring students and ensuring that they gain confidence and learn well.
- Skilful questioning challenges students' thinking and uses their contributions effectively. Wherever possible, teaching is related to real-world examples and information and communication technology is used to assist teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Students are supported very well in their learning and receive high-quality feedback on their work to help them improve.
- A high priority is given to helping students present their knowledge and understanding effectively in examinations. High-quality case-study material and worksheets help students build a useful bank of material to aid revision.

Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Examination courses in business meet the full range of students' needs and interests.
- There are some good opportunities for business students to engage directly with employers. However, there is scope for developing these further.
- Participation in competitions helps business students develop their knowledge of the stock market and the global economy.
- There are many good opportunities for all students across the school to develop their economic and business understanding, financial capability and enterprise skills. Design technology, geography, religious education, tutor periods, skills courses, Year 10 work experience and the wide range of enrichment activities make significant contributions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in business education is good overall.

- Leadership of the business studies team is outstanding. Self-evaluation is strong, drawing on a range of evidence, including the views of students.
- The department has a good track record of raising standards and achievement.
- Students are set challenging targets, their progress towards achieving them is monitored closely and interventions are made when there are signs of underachievement.
- Departmental planning, including the development of appropriate policy, is strong. Effective plans are in place to bring about further improvement. Schemes of work are currently being updated to reflect the needs of recently introduced courses and differentiation.
- There is good monitoring of staff performance and strong support for them, including many good opportunities for professional development.
- The provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability across the school is managed satisfactorily. An audit of provision has been carried out and intended learning outcomes have been identified. However, learning outcomes are not currently recorded or assessed systematically.

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

- There are clear 14 to 19 progression routes for business students with different levels of attainment.
- The school has recently introduced new courses and is working in partnership with other institutions to improve provision further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- enabling business studies students taking examination courses to have more frequent engagement with local businesses and employers within their programmes
- developing a coherent system to track and monitor students' economic and business understanding and financial capability, as they move through the school.

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

Vic Chivers
Her Majesty's Inspector