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Mr D Fitzsimmons  
Principal  
Holsworthy Community College  
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Dear Mr Fitzsimmons

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 8 and 9 December 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.

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 part-lessons.

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 the provisional 2009 examination results, was well below that nationally. However, standards on current courses are much higher and in line with national levels.
- Most students are making good progress, with no significant underachievement. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and demonstrate a good ability to learn independently; discussion skills are developed well. Behaviour in lessons is excellent.
- Students not taking business examination courses develop good, and in a few cases very good, economic and business understanding and financial capability.

### Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is good.

- The great majority of teaching is good and this is reflected in the progress made by students.
- Lessons are planned well and there is good differentiation of tasks.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching. They deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engages students and meets their range of needs. There is a good focus on reinforcing knowledge and understanding of key business vocabulary. Skilful questioning challenges students' thinking.
- Teaching makes effective use of enterprise activities and case-study material covering real-world examples.
- Effective use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Students' progress is monitored closely. They receive useful feedback on their work and helpful guidance on how to improve. Appropriate interventions are made where necessary.

### Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Examination courses in business meet the needs of the majority of students.
- There are some good opportunities for business students to engage directly with employers. There is scope for developing these further.
- All students have good opportunities to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability. Design and food technology, geography, the Key Stage 3 life-skills programme, Year 10 work experience, college assemblies 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.

- The current temporary leadership arrangements have contributed significantly to raising students' achievement in business studies.
- Self-evaluation is good and has helped to develop realistic strategies for securing improvement.
- Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are now in place. Staff performance is monitored effectively and good support is provided where necessary. Excellent links with a local Higher Education partner have supported recent curriculum developments.
- There is effective coordination of the provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability. Some attempt is made to assess students' progress. However, learning outcomes are not assessed systematically.

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

- Current provision in business education is good. The school is working with partners to further improve learning opportunities.
- There are clear progression routes for students with different levels of attainment. Level 2 and 3 programmes are widely available post-16 throughout the local area.

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 more systematic arrangements for monitoring students' economic and business understanding and financial capability, as they move through the college.

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