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Mr G Smith
Principal
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14 October 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 made included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 10 part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and financial capability was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is satisfactory.

- Attainment at Key Stage 4, as indicated by examinations results, is well above average in GCSE Business Studies and average in GCSE Business and Communication Systems and GCSE Economics. Although it is well below average in the sixth form, attainment showed some improvement in 2009.

- Most students make progress in line with expectations, but girls significantly outperform boys.
- Success rates for post-16 students are satisfactory.
- Most students have good attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons is mostly good. Many demonstrate the ability to work independently, but significant numbers rely too much on the teacher to drive their learning.
- Many students not taking business examination courses develop good basic economic and business understanding, financial capability and enterprise skills, but for a significant minority, these are underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is satisfactory.

- All teaching is at least satisfactory and this is reflected in the progress made by students.
- Some lessons are planned very well and incorporate differentiated learning objectives covering the full range of students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Collectively, they deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engage students; however, they do not do so consistently.
- Most students are engaged in learning and enjoy their work. Skilful questioning challenges students' thinking at times. However, opportunities to build on students' own experiences are sometimes missed or under-used. This contributes to, particularly, boys losing concentration in lessons.
- Some appropriate and effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning.
- Some good references are made to real-world examples.
- Students are given a reasonable level of support and there is generally adequate feedback on their work, so most know how to improve. However, the quality of marking lacks consistency.

Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Examination courses in business now meet the needs of the majority of students.
- Students, particularly those taking applied or vocational business courses and work experience, have some good opportunities to engage with local businesses and employers; overall, however, these are underdeveloped.
- Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE), careers education, citizenship, geography, ICT, the pastoral curriculum, work experience and the wide range of project, challenge and enrichment activities make significant contributions to the business-related curriculum.

- There are good opportunities for students to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

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

- There is evidence of the department bringing about improvements in students' achievement.
- Self-evaluation is in place but has a narrow focus on examination performance.
- Departmental planning is sound and schemes of work are in place.
- Staff performance is monitored and reasonable support is provided where necessary.
- There is satisfactory monitoring of students' progress and a range of support is provided where there is underachievement.
- The provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability is satisfactorily managed. The school has an overview of provision and has identified learning outcomes, expressed as skills, knowledge and understanding; however, there is currently no coherent arrangement for mapping these as students move through the collegiate.

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

- There are clear progression routes in business education 14 to 19 for students with different levels of attainment.
- The collegiate has recently expanded its pre-16 and sixth-form provision to meet the needs of a broader range of students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that teachers consistently deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engage students and give them greater responsibility for their own learning; in particular, ensure that greater use is made of the students' own experiences and skilful questioning to challenge their thinking
- extend the opportunities for students to engage with local businesses and employers
- introduce a system to track and monitor students' developing economic and business understanding and financial capability, as they move through the collegiate.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/local Learning and Skills Council 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