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2 February 2010

Mr S Preston  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Preston

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 18 and 19 January 2010 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.

- The provisional 2009 examination results show attainment of students taking GCSE Business and Communication Systems to be above that nationally. Most either achieved or exceeded their target grades. Standards on current business studies courses are at least in line with national levels.

- Most business students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, with no significant underachievement. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily.
- Most business students have good attitudes to learning and many demonstrate an ability to learn independently; discussion skills are generally well developed. Behaviour in lessons is good.
- Students not taking business examination courses develop good, and in a few cases, very good economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capabilities.

### Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is good.

- Teaching in business studies is good and this is reflected in the progress made by most students. Teaching of enterprise lessons is more variable in quality, but good overall.
- Lessons are planned well and there is good differentiation of learning activities.
- Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching. They deploy a good range of styles that effectively engages students and meets their varied 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 case-study material covering real-world examples.
- Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Students are set challenging targets and progress towards these is monitored effectively. The students receive useful feedback on their work and helpful guidance on how to improve. Appropriate interventions are made where necessary and very good support is provided to help students revise and otherwise prepare for examinations.

### Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good, with some outstanding features.

- There is a strong focus on enterprise across the whole curriculum. Each student has a weekly timetabled lesson of enterprise learning throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Examination courses in business and enterprise meet the needs of most students. Gifted and talented students have excellent opportunities to develop their enterprise skills, including through studying for an enterprise qualification in Year 9.

- There are very good opportunities for students to engage directly with employers, although in business studies there is scope for developing these further.
- All students have very good opportunities to develop their economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capabilities. Enterprise and vocational programmes, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE), mathematics, citizenship, ICT, work-experience and the wide range of enrichment activities, including competitions and challenges, make significant contributions.
- Students learn about rights and responsibilities through citizenship, religious education, assemblies and the various enterprise activities, including regular fundraising events for charities and recycling projects.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

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

- Self-evaluation is good and this has helped to develop realistic strategies for securing improvement.
- Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are in place, supported by a very good range of teaching resources.
- There is effective monitoring of staff performance and good support is provided, including for non-specialist teachers.
- Students' developing economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capabilities are not assessed systematically as they move through the school. However, various mechanisms are in place to assess enterprise capability. Improved coordination of the various assessment regimes would enable them to be further developed and readily combined into a single comprehensive model.

#### 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 implement the Business and Finance Diploma in September 2010.
- The school is a key player in disseminating good practice in enterprise learning locally, including to primary schools and schools more generally, including in neighbouring boroughs.
- 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. Around 50% of the Year 11 cohort taking GCSE business in 2009 progressed to study a business qualification post-16.

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

- improving coordination of provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capability, including developing a unified system for tracking and monitoring students' progress 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