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Mr C J Trees
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Dear Mr Trees

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 21 and 22 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 nine part-lessons and a Year 10 assembly.

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

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is good with outstanding features.

- The unvalidated 2009 examination results show attainment of students taking GCSE business courses to be well above that nationally. Most students make good, and some excellent, progress in relation to their prior attainment and their targets. Evidence from lessons and discussions with students supports this finding. Students achieve better than in many other

subjects and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons is excellent. They develop very good independent learning skills, show confidence in lessons and are prepared to ask searching questions.
- Students not taking business examination courses develop good, and in some 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, with outstanding features.

- The great majority of teaching is good and none is inadequate; this is reflected in the good or better progress made by most students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching.
- Lessons are well planned and employ an appropriate range of approaches to engage students and meet their different needs.
- Teachers have high expectations and excellent use is made of questioning to challenge students and encourage them to think about topics in depth. There is a strong focus on reinforcing knowledge and understanding of key business vocabulary; excellent use is made of some plenary sessions. Effective use is made of case-study material covering real-world examples.
- Extensive and effective use is made of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning where appropriate.
- All students are set challenging targets and progress towards these is monitored effectively. The students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well supported in their learning. Teaching assistants make effective contributions to this.

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 students well. However, there is scope for improving opportunities for the students to visit local businesses and meet employers.
- Students enjoy a wide range of challenging enterprise activities and learning, including through enterprise days and competitions.
- Special opportunities for gifted and talented students help them apply their problem-solving and team skills in work-based contexts.
- There are many good opportunities for all students to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability. All Year 11 students follow the key and work skills programme. A range of subjects,

work experience, and the wide range of enrichment activities, make further significant contributions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

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

- Subject and senior leaders and managers set high expectations about securing improvement in the subject.
- The business studies department has a good recent track record of raising attainment and achievement.
- Self-evaluation is good and this has helped to develop realistic strategies for securing improvement. Students are set challenging targets. Their progress towards achieving them is closely monitored and interventions are made when there are signs of underachievement.
- Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are either in place and/or being updated.
- There is effective monitoring of staff performance and good support for professional development.
- Students' developing economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capabilities are not assessed systematically as they move through the school. Although some mechanisms are in place to assess enterprise capabilities and key skills demonstrated during work experience, they are not yet well coordinated.

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

- Current provision in business education is good. The school has recently introduced new courses and is working in partnership with other institutions to improve provision further. Most students have access to an appropriate range of business courses.
- There are clear progression routes for students with different levels of attainment. Post-16, level 1 to 3 programmes are available in the local area. Of the 2009 Year 11 cohort taking GCSE business courses, around 20% of students progressed to study a business qualification post-16.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- enabling business studies students taking examination courses to have regular engagement with local businesses and employers within their programmes
- improving coordination of provision to develop a unified system for tracking and monitoring students' economic and business understanding and financial/enterprise capabilities 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