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Dear Mr Sutton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 and 18 September, 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 14–19 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 parts of five lessons.

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

Achievement in business education

In the examination subjects provided in business education students' achievement is outstanding.

- Standards in business education courses are very high.

- Students' progress in business education examination courses is outstanding, especially for those students beginning the course with low levels of prior attainment.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated.
- Classroom relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching and learning in business education is outstanding.

- The quality of classroom teaching in examination courses is consistently good or better.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and the most effective ways of teaching it.
- Students, especially those in the sixth form, find teaching stimulating and enjoyable and particularly value the wide variety of approaches used in the classroom.
- Innovative use of information technology, such as video interviews with local business owners, help to bring the subject alive.
- Trips and visits enhance students' enjoyment of the subject but are currently limited, partly by the need to avoid disruption to teaching in other subject.
- Students' outstanding progress is due to consistently effective teaching and excellent support and guidance. Students are set appropriately challenging targets and their progress towards meeting them is closely monitored. Students are made well aware of how to improve their work through high quality written and oral feedback. Students have access to a strong programme of additional support, including extra sessions held on Saturdays and during the school holidays.

Quality of curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Business courses at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are popular and attracting increasing numbers. The two examination courses at Key Stage 4 effectively meet the different needs and interests of students and appropriate plans are in place to extend provision in the sixth form.
- The department has rightly identified developing better links with the real world of business as a priority.

- Provision for enterprise education and the wider aspects of economic and business understanding is good. Collapsed timetable days are used well and students recall activities such as the Real Game with great enthusiasm. The programme of enterprise activities provides progression from Year 7 to the sixth form. Students have been very successful in enterprise competitions.
- Preparation for and follow up to work experience are very thorough. There is some assessment of economic and business understanding through the GCSE in citizenship. Students have limited opportunities to discuss current economic issues and their possible impact on their lives.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

The leadership and management of business education are outstanding.

- The business education department has an excellent track record of raising standards and achievement and then maintaining them at a high level.
- Courses are very well structured with the provision of excellent support to enable students to achieve their best.
- Self-evaluation is strong and curriculum provision has been developed on the basis of a careful analysis of the needs and interests of students.
- A strong programme of professional development, including good support for beginning teachers, plays an important role in keeping the department up to date with the world of business and new ideas for teaching the subject.
- The provision of economic well-being and financial capability for all students is very well led. Effective use is made of partnerships with external agencies to support this work, which is held up as an example of good practice in the local area. Activities are monitored and reviewed but the assessment of students' progress is still at an early stage of development.

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

The range of examination courses in business has expanded in recent years, reflecting a detailed analysis of the different needs and interests of students. The provision offers clear lines of progression. The department has a very good understanding of alternative business education courses and has concluded that the current provision is the most suitable for its students.

Areas for improvement in business education, which we discussed, included:

- providing more opportunities for students on examination courses to engage directly with businesses and for all students to be able to discuss the impact of economic issues on their lives
- strengthening the monitoring of students' experiences and the progress they are making in developing economic well-being and financial capability.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector