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Dr A Cummings
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Cummings

**Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: economics,
business and enterprise**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 21 and 22 February 2012 to look at work in economics, business and enterprise.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of parts of eight lessons and one extra-curricular activity.

The overall effectiveness of economics, business and enterprise is good.

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- Attainment in business courses is generally above average and has been consistently so for most courses in recent years. Attainment at GCSE was high in 2009 and 2010 but fell significantly in 2011. The progress students make from their starting points is good overall. Although progress at GCSE in 2011 declined, current in-school monitoring shows that prompt and effective actions are ensuring that students are now making at least good progress. Lesson observations confirm that good progress is being made.
- Students work well, both independently and cooperatively, with their peers. They show a strong interest in their business studies courses and their behaviour and readiness for learning are exemplary.

- All students are developing good enterprise and employability skills as a result of well-planned whole-school provision. Their understanding of personal finance and their basic economic understanding is not as strong as other aspects of the provision for enterprise education.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

The quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this well to plan interesting lessons. They make regular use of real-world contexts that build on and challenge students' existing knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers promote good-quality learning by providing opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills, by using questioning well to establish and confirm understanding, and by using a variety of cooperative learning strategies to encourage participation.
- Very good relationships exist between teachers and students, and students value the support and encouragement they receive from staff.
- Assessment is a strong feature of the business studies department's work. Marking is accurate and the use of feedback sheets, including the requirement for students to actively reflect on teacher comments, is an example of good practice. Teachers focus well on developing higher-level skills in students' written work. However, students are not always encouraged to articulate well-developed, subject-relevant oral responses that would contribute to developing these higher-level skills.
- Parents' and students' views about the business studies courses offered are highly positive and reflect the subject's high profile in the school.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

The quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- The popular business studies provision, with a mix of GCSE, GCE and BTEC, is well designed to meet the needs of all students and includes appropriate progression routes from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5.
- Provision to develop all students' enterprise education is very strong at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Key Stage 4 provision is currently undergoing a review. Key Stage 3 students speak very positively about the provision. The sixth form graduation portfolio programme, with its emphasis on personal progression, cooperative skills and personal achievement provides exceptional opportunities for students to develop and celebrate enterprise and work-related skills. An excellent range of enterprise-related enrichment activities is available for all age groups.
- Engagement with business and local employers is a strong feature of whole-school enterprise provision. However, business links are not as prominent a feature of the formally assessed business courses.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

The effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise is good.

- New leadership of business studies is bringing about improvement. This is evident in the strong focus on improving the accuracy and transparency of ongoing assessment, the prompt tackling of any underachievement, the quality of feedback, and the focus on higher-level written skills.
- Good leadership of whole-school enterprise education is resulting in a coherent and well-coordinated programme that demonstrates clear progression and makes a significant contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This provision is well supported by you and your senior leaders and illustrates the strong emphasis you place on ensuring that students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Self-evaluation of both the business studies and enterprise provision is accurate and results in clearly identified priorities for improvement. A shared common purpose focused on a commitment to raising achievement is a key feature that indicates excellent capacity to improve further.
- Good opportunities to share best practice within the faculty are in place and relevant professional development is available as appropriate.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- encouraging business students to articulate well-developed subject-relevant oral responses in order to develop their higher-level skills and thus raise achievement further
- extending the very good business links the school has in order to enhance the formally assessed business curriculum further
- developing the Key Stage 4 whole-school enterprise education provision so that it is of a similar quality to that provided at other key stages.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics, business and enterprise in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector