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Dr R Wilkinson  
Principal  
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Dear Dr Wilkinson

Ofsted Subject and Survey Inspection Programme 2006-07

Sector Subject Area 15: Business, Administration and Law

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 2-3 October 2006. I am particularly grateful to managers and teaching staff for all their hard work in preparing the programme and background documentation and for giving up their time during the visit. Please pass on my thanks to the students who gave up their time to talk to me.

The visit provided much useful evidence for the good practice survey in business and administration. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the college first.

The evidence used to inform judgements included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of learners' work and observation of lessons.

I agreed to provide a summary of my observations of good practice seen in business and to suggest some areas for development.

Good practice observed

- Results in A level economics, business studies and accounts are outstanding. Retention rates on all courses are significantly above national averages. Value added data indicate that students make very good progress.
- Teaching and learning are of consistently high quality. Teachers are very knowledgeable and experienced. They are self-critical, keen to try out new ideas and have high expectations of their students. Teaching is imaginative and lessons include a good range of activities that engage students and make learning enjoyable. Very effective

questioning techniques are used to develop students' depth of understanding and skills of analysis and evaluation.

- Students benefit from excellent individual support. Teachers are very accessible. Additional support is provided during lunchtimes through a programme of taught sessions on specific topics and through 'drop in' sessions. The economics and business studies department pioneered a very effective system of peer mentoring that is now being adopted by other departments in the college. Students receive good feedback on their written work and find the module study guides particularly helpful.
- Students' progress is monitored closely through regular assessments and there is early intervention to support students who are experiencing difficulties or not fulfilling their potential.
- There is a good range of enrichment activities. Students have the opportunity to take part in Young Enterprise, business competitions, an exchange visit to Sweden and other visits. There is a thriving economics and business studies society and a good programme of visiting speakers. The department contributes to the promotion of students' economic well-being across the college, for example through providing lesson plans and materials on personal finance education for use within the tutorial programme.
- Leadership and management are strong. Members of the department work well together to share resources and teaching ideas. Good use is made of resources, including the flexible use of an additional responsibility allowance to develop business links and the department's enrichment programme. There is rigorous departmental self-evaluation which places considerable emphasis on the views of students gathered through questionnaires, focus groups and individual reviews.
- The department has high quality accommodation which includes dedicated classrooms and good access to computer facilities.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- the further development of information technology to support learning, for example through the department intranet and more extensive use of interactive whiteboard technology
- to build on advice already given to students, for example at induction, to ensure greater consistency in the quality of students' organisation of their work to support their learning and revision for examinations.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business courses in the college.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LLSC and will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of the half-term following the inspection. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Butler  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools