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Mr D Burnett  
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Dear Mr Burnett

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 September to look at work 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 without their consent. 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement in GCSE business studies and in post-16 business courses are good.

- Unconfirmed data for 2007 show that GCSE business studies results are well above average and the proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C has improved substantially since 2006.
- A2 GCE results in business and economics are above average but below average for AS economics.
- Students make good progress in relation to prior attainment in GCSE business studies and in post-16 courses. Students achieve at least in line with their other subjects. Girls achieve better than boys but the gap is not significantly different from that found nationally.

- The great majority of students have good attitudes to learning and are well motivated. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good. A small number of Year 11 students have negative attitudes towards the subject.

### Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear explanations of business vocabulary and concepts in lessons.
- Lessons are well planned and carefully structured to ensure learning takes place at an appropriate pace.
- Teachers deploy a good range of teaching styles but activities do not always fully engage learners. The group of Key Stage 4 students interviewed were enthusiastic about their GCSE business studies course but felt some lessons would benefit from involving them more actively and the provision of more interesting stimulus material.
- The best lessons observed drew on students' own experiences, involved interesting activities and engaged students in group and whole class discussions.
- Students feel well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- GCSE business studies is the only examination course provided at Key stage 4 but there is a good take up and it attracts a broad range of students.
- There is very good provision of GCE and level 2 business courses in the sixth form. The GCE applied business course attracts very substantial numbers of students.
- Currently, there are relatively few opportunities within business courses for students to engage with the 'real' world through direct contact with employers.
- The provision of enterprise education as part of work-related learning at Key Stage 4 is good. It is taught through personal development lessons, suspended timetable days and through a range of subjects. The curriculum includes aspects of economic and business understanding and financial capability but the precise learning outcomes students are expected to achieve are not identified or assessed. The school is currently seeking ways of improving its provision of financial capability through working with the Personal Finance Education Group (PFEG).

## Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education and the provision of enterprise education as part of the personal development curriculum are good.

- Business courses are well organised. Schemes of work are thorough and there is a useful department handbook containing helpful guidance and policies.
- The department has undertaken a thorough self-evaluation using data and evidence from lesson observations but it does not take sufficient account of the views of students.
- The coordination of enterprise education as part of the broad personal development curriculum under the leadership of a senior manager is a strength. Professional development has been provided for all staff on enterprise education and a useful audit of current provision in this area has been carried out.
- Business teachers are well supported through the programme of professional development. Due to recent changes in examination courses, this has understandably focussed mainly on the training provided by awarding bodies. Teachers have relatively few opportunities to spend time with businesses to update their knowledge of current practice and develop classroom resources.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- GCSE business studies is available to nearly all students in Key Stage 4 and meets the majority of their needs. There is good provision of post-16 business courses. All students at Key Stage 4 have opportunities to develop their enterprise skills and understanding. Students of different abilities are set challenging targets and generally achieve well. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring students are more actively engaged in lessons
- providing more opportunities for students to engage directly with local businesses
- taking greater account of the views of students in the department's own self-evaluation
- identifying and assessing the precise learning outcomes students are expected to achieve in enterprise education, including economic and business understanding and financial capability.

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/Local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Butler  
Her Majesty's Inspector