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Mr M Frogett
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Frogett

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: economics and business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 2 and 3 December 2010 to look at work in economics and 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 six lessons.

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

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- From their starting points, students make good progress in their learning. Attainment in GCSE Business Studies is high and at GCE AS and A level it is broadly in line with target grades. Completion rates for students in the sixth form are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their subject. Most can work independently and with others and all are highly motivated to achieve well.

- Students are developing economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability, which is preparing them well for their adult lives. This is supported by the fact that all students leave Year 11 to enter post-16 education, employment or training.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and regularly link their teaching to real world scenarios and examples. They focus exceptionally well on developing students' higher level skills so as to improve their performance in examinations.
- Teachers are very enthusiastic and strongly committed to raising attainment. Some teaching is outstanding and all teachers make use of a variety of teaching and learning activities that engage students' interest and ensure that they make good progress.
- The pace of learning in some lessons is hindered by students' lack of attentiveness and focus.
- Students get good support from their teachers, both in class and out of class. Marking of students' work and subsequent oral feedback are very good. Students know their targets, how well they are doing and how to improve. The assessment tracker document that students complete reinforces their understanding of how well they are doing and how they might improve.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- The curriculum meets students' needs and provides continuity and progression.
- The opportunity to study GCSE Business Studies in one year provides flexibility for all students and challenge for more able students who have the opportunity to begin GCE AS in Year 11.
- The opportunity to study GCE AS- and A-level Economics via a distance learning provision with in-school tutorials ensures that this challenging option is suitably supported.
- Enrichment opportunities are good and include a share valuation game which involves all students studying GCE AS- and A-level Business Studies. Young Enterprise and other business- and economics-related activities and school trips are available to a broader range of students. However, students on formally assessed economics and business courses have limited opportunities to engage with businesses.
- Whole-school provision for enterprise education is planned well and is evolving into a very successful programme. However, as yet the provision is stronger at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

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

- Leaders of formally assessed economics and business provision and of whole-school enterprise education are focused on ensuring good-quality support and provision for students in order to maximise their achievement.
- Rigorous and regular monitoring activities are in place which lead to early identification of underachievement and the prompt introduction of appropriate support.
- Accurate self-evaluation is informed well by students' views. Prompt action is taken to tackle weaknesses that might impact on achievement; for example, the additional support and change in teaching personnel that occurred following the unexpected dip in attainment in GCE AS- and A-level Economics in 2009/10.
- Professional development and training in relation to awarding body updating is good. However, it is limited in relation to exploring and sharing subject-specific pedagogy about teaching strategies; for example, in terms of opportunities to be involved in wider subject networks and in peer observation.
- Leadership and management of enterprise education are good and there is a clear vision for enterprise education at whole-school level. Learning outcomes and means of assessment are designed well and enable teachers to monitor students' development and understanding effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that teaching in all formally assessed economics and business lessons are as good as in the best by sharing good practice, in particular so that all lessons are tightly focused on learning outcomes and the pace of learning is accelerated
- improving the opportunities for students who are taking formally assessed economics and business education courses to engage with businesses
- developing the whole-school provision for enterprise education at Key Stage 4 so that it is as strong as that provided at Key Stage 3.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector