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Mr S Capper  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Capper

### **Ofsted 2011–12 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 6 and 7 April 2011 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, governors, headteacher and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; three learning walks, tour of vocational facilities and observation of lessons.

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

### **Achievement in economics and business education**

Achievement in economics and business education is outstanding.

- Attainment in formally assessed Key Stage 4 business courses has been consistently at least above average and often very high. In the sixth form, attainment in GCE A-level applied business is broadly in line with results found nationally.
- Given their starting points, the progress that students make in their learning on formally assessed business courses is outstanding.
- Classroom relationships in formally assessed courses are excellent. Students are very positive about the subject and have very good attitudes

to learning. They work very well when engaged in independent and group-based learning activities.

- As a result of the well planned whole-school provision, students are very well-informed about and prepared for the world of work. Understanding of other aspects of economic and business understanding and personal financial issues is variable across different year groups. However, recently there has been good awareness-raising in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form through a money skills programme. Sixth form and Year 11 students are very well-informed about personal financial decisions regarding further study. Year 9 students are aware that bargains may not be as good as they seem.

### **Quality of teaching in economics and business education**

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

- Formally assessed courses in business studies are taught by just one specialist teacher. Students benefit from the teacher's expert knowledge. Teaching is enriched by frequently relating lesson content to real businesses that are familiar to students.
- A very useful range of visits enables students to apply their learning to real business organisations, link learning to other subjects and relate new learning to real-life contexts.
- All lessons are very well-planned. Lessons involve a good range of learning activities that engages and interests students and provides them with plenty of opportunities to learn independently and in small groups. Students say that they really enjoy their lessons, a typical comment being 'everything is ideal really'.
- While classroom teaching is consistently at least good, the overall impact of regular meetings with the teacher to discuss work, constructive feedback, a wide range of stimulating learning activities that, as a student put it, 'engage us so we enjoy the work', and teacher accessibility out of lessons, leads to outstanding learning.
- There is a very good focus on helping students to understand and meet assessment requirements.
- Marking is accurate and the quality of written feedback is good, highlighting where key assessment objectives are being met. Students value how this helps them to improve their work in order to meet or exceed the challenging targets they are set.
- In Key Stage 3 and Year 10, economic and business understanding is delivered by a specialist teacher of personal, social, health and economic/citizenship education. This engages students well.

### **Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education**

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

- As the size and number of year groups decrease, the range of formally assessed economics and business education courses has declined. Currently at Key Stage 4 students have a choice of BTEC first extended certificate in business and BTEC first diploma in business. A broad range of teaching and learning activities is included in this course in order to meet the needs of students with a wide range of abilities. In the small sixth form, GCE A-level applied business studies and BTEC first extended certificate in business are offered among a range of well-resourced vocational and applied courses. Business courses at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are popular options.
- The sixth-form tutorial programme prepares students well for adult and university life with a strong focus on financial capability. In the main school, the citizenship programme is increasing the attention given to personal finance. For example, all students in Years 8 and 9 have recently experienced a whole-day money skills course. This is complemented by lessons in Year 9 on consumer skills.
- Collaborative days give students excellent opportunities for team building and the development of other enterprise skills.
- Overall, while direct preparation for working life is given a very high priority, other aspects of enterprise education, including financial capability, are recent initiatives. Their impact on students is less well-established.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education**

Leadership and management in economics and business education are outstanding.

- Senior leaders and leaders of the formally assessed business provision are passionate about, and totally committed to, increasing students' life chances. They aim to do this by ensuring that all students achieve at the highest level, have good employability skills and thus are well prepared for their future economic lives.
- Accurate self-evaluation ensures that leaders know the strengths of the business department and have identified relevant areas for improvement. Student voice is used well. For example, it has led to improvements in the selection process in Year 9 and subsequent attainment at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Challenging targets are set for students and rigorous systems for monitoring their progress are in place. These ensure prompt identification of underachievement and appropriate intervention if students are not making good progress. The learning contract in the sixth form is innovative.
- The track record of success in the formally assessed economics and business courses and improvements in whole-school enterprise education underpin the capacity for sustained improvement in these areas.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- building on existing good practice to ensure that whole-school enterprise education includes sufficient emphasis on developing all students' basic economic understanding and financial capability
- considering how to monitor and assess the progress that all students are making in whole-school enterprise education in relation to identified learning outcomes.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Adrian Lyons**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**