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Ms K Cardus
Invicta Grammar School
Huntsman Lane
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ME14 5DR

Dear Ms Cardus

Ofsted aspect survey – Raising aspirations and achievement: the power of partnership

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 30 September 2009, to look at your partnership with business.

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 made included discussions with senior leaders, business partners, the chair of governors and students. I also observed enterprise activities and a lesson, and looked at documents including school data and the school development plan.

Features of good practice observed

- You, your senior leaders and the governors have a strong, concerted commitment to business links and enterprise education. Consequently, well-established, successful partnerships with business are central to the school's ethos and improvement planning process. Business partnerships and a specialism in business and enterprise have made a powerful impact on achievement and standards in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Students taking vocational and applied business, and information and communication technology (ICT) courses, make very good progress to achieve high standards.
- Business links and enterprise education make a highly beneficial contribution to students' personal development and enjoyment of school. There are excellent opportunities, especially for older students, to develop

communication and leadership skills through activities related to business and enterprise.

- The school uses its business links very effectively to secure students' future economic well-being and ensure they make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and the local community. Students make an important difference through fund raising for charities, working in primary schools and organising events for older people.
- Business partnerships and specialism give variety to the curriculum and allow students a sharp insight into the world of work. The wide variety of well-structured enrichment activities includes excellent opportunities for work-related learning. Students are engaged and excited by the purposeful, relevant choices available to them. They are empowered to challenge gender stereotypes and inspired to aim high. An impressive proportion of students go on to high-level employment in business, or to degrees related to business and financial management or economics. Business links also contribute well to the high quality of careers education.
- The school's policy of entering students early for examinations in Years 11 to 13 enables them to manage their work flow successfully and make the most of extension projects in the sixth form, many of which are related to real experiences in the business world. Students are organised in mixed Year 11 to 13 age groupings. This is encouraging ambition, some healthy competition and valued peer support.
- Business partnerships and enterprise activities are influential in extending teaching methods and expertise. Older students have excellent opportunities to learn independently and lead learning. ICT has been developed as a key tool for learning across the curriculum and is an important factor in raising the standard of students' work, particularly their presentation and design skills. The wide choice of courses and enrichment activities increases the flexibility to tailor provision to students' individual needs and ensures their aptitudes are fully developed.
- Business partners are clear that their links with your school are mutually beneficial. They value the quality of the relationships that have been established and the creativity that students offer.
- Business links have been used strategically to increase leadership capacity and promote the distribution of leadership responsibilities. Business models of leadership have been used well as a resource to test and refine leadership practices within the school.

Areas for development

- Continue to establish links between business and enterprise and the recently achieved second specialism in languages.
- Further develop cross-curricular enterprise skills in Key Stage 3 by sharing the good and excellent practice in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships in support of school improvement.

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

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector