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Mr T Ryan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ryan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business and enterprise education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 7 November to inspect work in business and enterprise 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: discussions with staff and students, a scrutiny of documentation and observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of business and enterprise education was judged to be good and there is capacity to make further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement are good.

- Examination results in GCSE business studies in 2007 were above national averages. Results have shown a substantial improvement over the past two years and now meet the specialist school target.
- Achievement in business studies in relation to students' prior attainment is satisfactory. In 2007, just over half of students met or exceeded their challenging targets.

- Students are developing good enterprise skills and demonstrate these through their increased self-confidence and willingness to take on new challenges. Discussions with Year 11 students who were not taking GCSE business studies revealed that they had a good understanding of the skills required to be enterprising. Their understanding of aspects of personal finance, economics and business was more variable.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their business and enterprise education. They are well prepared for future employment.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- It was only possible to observe one lesson in business studies but the examination results and other evidence indicates they are well taught and receive good feedback on their progress.
- Students found the enterprise days and lessons that sought to develop enterprise skills enjoyable and valuable.
- The business and enterprise specialism is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching across subjects by helping to make lessons more relevant and engaging students more actively in learning.
- Students record the skills, knowledge and attributes they feel they have gained from their enterprise experiences but these are not assessed systematically.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for business and enterprise education is good.

- GCSE business studies is the only examination course available to students. The take-up of this course in Year 11 is good with slightly over half the students opting for it. This is in line with the school's specialist target in the subject. Staffing difficulties resulted in a lower take-up in Year 10.
- Good provision for enterprise education is made through suspended timetable days and through a range of subjects. A coherent programme of personal finance education is being developed through mathematics. Students also have good opportunities to develop their enterprise skills through extra-curricular activities, for example by organising fund raising events for charities and taking part in a range of competitions.
- There is a strong programme of work-related learning which is well supported by local employers and other external agencies.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business and enterprise education are good.

- Business and enterprise education is seen as being central to the work of the school and has made an important contribution to raising standards and achievement across subjects.
- There is a shared understanding of the nature of enterprise education amongst staff that has been promoted through professional development and a helpful written statement.
- Senior managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in enterprise education.
- The leadership and management of GCSE business studies are satisfactory but have suffered from several staffing changes in recent years. This has inhibited the longer-term strategic development of the subject and the promotion of examination courses in related areas.

Inclusion

- Students wishing to take an examination course in business are limited to GCSE business studies but this is open to all students.
- All students have good opportunities to develop their enterprise skills through the curriculum, including extra-curriculum activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the monitoring and assessment of students' enterprise skills and understanding
- strengthening the management and leadership of examination courses in business.

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

Subject adviser for Business and Enterprise Education