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Mrs K Kerridge
The Appleton School
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Dear Mrs Kerridge

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 February to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on economic and business understanding for all students.

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: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of parts of six lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- Standards across the range of business education courses are very high. A very high proportion of students gain grades A*-C and grades A*-A. Students' achievement in business education courses is outstanding.
- The attitude and behaviour of students on business education courses is excellent. Students are well motivated and extremely good relationships were evident in all lessons observed, fostering hard work and excellent progress.
- Overall teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching observed was never less than good and sometimes outstanding, reflecting the school's own assessment and endorsed by the extremely positive views of students. Teachers are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and concerned for the progress of each individual student.

- Teachers deploy a wide range of teaching and learning styles, including teacher-led discussion, individual, paired and group work, student led role plays and presentations. They check students' knowledge and understanding frequently and inspire them with confidence.
- Students feel well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback. Teachers give willingly of their own time. Business specialist are available every day after school and at lunch times to provide revision and catch up sessions, which are well attended. The progress of students is monitored carefully and frequently and interventions take place whenever underachievement is identified. This is linked to very clear and explicit assessment criteria.
- The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and caters very effectively for the full range of interests and needs of students. There is a very good range of examination courses in business, including 'academic, applied and vocational options. Students not taking a specific business course follow one of a range of vocational courses, all of which have a business dimension.
- Students following applied courses in business have very good opportunities to engage with the 'real' world through direct contact with employers.
- There are exceptional and outstanding opportunities in the curriculum for students not following examination courses in business to develop their economic and business understanding and take part in a wide range of enterprise activities.
- Some students have been very successful in Young Enterprise, winning the regional competition.
- Departmental self-evaluation is strong. Key areas for improvement have been identified and appropriate action has been put in place to address them.
- Students are well guided in their option choices. Year 9 students and their parents have access to on-line resources, including video clips of lessons, to support their decisions.
- The headteacher and other managers have a strong commitment to the development of business and enterprise education across the school as a way of promoting students' economic well-being and raising achievement. Coherence is achieved through a frequent review of provision by the whole senior leadership team. Students' experience is monitored and their achievement assessed in a number of ways, including a very successful externally accredited qualification in preparation for working life.

Areas for development included:

- promoting the further development of the virtual learning environment.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector