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Mrs J Payne  
Headteacher  
Highsted Grammar School  
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Kent  
ME10 4PT

Dear Mrs Payne

**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 with Joan Hewitt HMI on 9 and 10 March 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 and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three 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 GCSE business studies has risen over the last three years and is very high. In GCE A-level business studies, results have improved and attainment is well above average, with all students in 2010 gaining grades A to C.
- Given their starting points, the progress that students make in their learning on formally assessed business courses is good. The school's monitoring information shows that students now exceed predictions at GCSE. Commercial value-added measures show a steady increase in students' progress at GCE A level so that the progress they make in this course is very good.

- Classroom relationships are good. Students are very positive about the subject and have good attitudes to learning. They work very well when engaged in independent and group-based learning activities. They are articulate and thoughtful and feel confident to ask, and to answer, questions.
- As a result of the well-planned whole-school provision, students are very well informed about the world of work, have good awareness of personal financial issues, such as the importance of budgeting and how taxation will impact on them, and have developed excellent enterprise-related skills. Their economic and business understanding is not as well developed.

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

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

- Formally assessed courses in business studies are taught by just one specialist teacher. Students benefit from the teacher's expert knowledge and the use of relevant and interesting examples drawn from her own experiences.
- All lessons are very well planned. In the sixth form, lessons involve a range of learning activities that engages and interests students, providing them with opportunities to learn independently and in small groups. At Key Stage 4 this was less evident. Questioning in lessons focuses on recapping knowledge rather than on extending thinking. Information and communication technology is used to enrich lessons, for example, with well-chosen video clips.
- The focus on helping students to understand and meet assessment requirements is very good. A framework for ensuring that answers are aimed at the examination criteria is used but sometimes this framework constrains the teacher's marking and discourages students from being creative in constructing their answers.
- The support offered by teachers is valued by students who comment positively about how teachers are always available to provide additional help and guidance.

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

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

- One formally examined course is offered at Key Stage 4 and one in the sixth form. Both of these have grown in popularity over the last three years and are now popular options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In the sixth form, students also have the option of following courses in partner schools. For example, one student is taking the Institute of Financial Services certificate in financial studies.
- Currently, although there are many opportunities within the school to meet people involved in business, students have relatively few

opportunities within the formally assessed business studies courses to engage with the 'real' world through direct contact with employers.

- There are exceptional opportunities for students' enterprise learning and the promotion of their future economic well-being permeates the curriculum. The student council plays an important role in promoting students' contribution to the wider community. For example, during the inspection, students were involved in promoting and selling fair trade food to raise money for Action Aid's work to send girls to school in developing countries.
- The basic entitlement for all students' personal, social, health and economics education (PSHEE) is delivered through focus days. This is seen by teachers and students as an improvement on previous approaches to delivery. The provision is well planned, culminating in an enterprise week in Year 10 and progressing to further days dealing with aspects of enterprise and personal finance in the sixth form. Students are clear about the skills for employment that are being developed, but the school has further work to do in assessing and recording students' progress in this area of provision.
- In addition to the core programme of PSHEE days, assemblies and work-experience, many students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular enterprise activities. The school has recently been very successful in a range of competitions including 'Dragons' Den' style contests, stock exchange challenges and Young Enterprise businesses. The annual opportunity for sixth-form students to partake in three weeks of work experience in a variety of non-governmental organisations in Brussels is highly innovative and effective.

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

Leadership and management in economics and business education are outstanding.

- Senior leaders are passionate about, and totally committed to, increasing students' life chances. They have a vision for economic and business education, including enterprise and recognise its importance in the curriculum.
- The subject teacher has a good level of subject expertise and knowledge of course structure and assessment requirements, which are used to design courses that enable students to achieve well.
- The improving achievement at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, together with current assessment information, provides strong evidence of continuing improvement in formally assessed business courses.

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

- reviewing and extending current systems for assessing students' learning in relation to enterprise education
- ensuring that learning activities, and particularly teachers' questioning, are challenging and stretching in all lessons

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**