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5 December 2008

Mr P Shaw
Downside Middle School,
Furrlongs,
Newport,
Isle of Wight

Dear Mr Shaw

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Moving through the system

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 November 2008 to look at work on developing the future economic well-being of students in your school and careers education. I also looked at how well arrangements are made to support students during their transition into secondary school.

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: meetings and discussions with senior leaders, teachers and other staff, discussions with groups of students, observation of part of four lessons.

Overall, your work in developing the future economic well-being of students in your school is satisfactory. Many elements are good. However, since the recent merger of two pre-existing middle schools the new school is going through a process of rapid change and curriculum development. Differences exist in the development of the two campuses.

Features of effective practice:

- The school works effectively to raise aspirations. A range of trips and activities help to broaden students' horizons. Very good provision for gifted and talented students focuses on raising aspirations. This includes work with universities in England and France.
- The innovative futures curriculum focuses on work-related skills. This themed approach relates subjects to the real world and brings learning alive. It is assessed well. There is some good involvement in the curriculum by local businesses such as students making presentations for local developers.
- Students have the opportunity to develop enterprise skills through activities such as social enterprise fund raising in the run up to Christmas. Other activities include running



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an allotment and re-investing the proceeds. However, students' experiences currently lack coherence. For example, there is no planned programme of careers education.

- The extended school provision is having a positive effect on re-engaging families and communities in education and, in turn, supporting students.
- The good links with the local further education college prepares students to think beyond their transfer to Key Stage 4. Some students have the opportunity to work towards vocational qualifications.
- Very good links exist with primary schools but liaison with high schools, to ensure a coherent Key Stage 3 experience, has been less successful.
- There is good leadership and management of this curriculum area through a wide range of enthusiastic and committed staff.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- The need for greater coherence in the Key Stage 3 curriculum through better liaison with high schools.
- There is no planned programme of careers education and guidance in Key Stage 3.
- In some aspects of economic well-being, students' experiences are not explicitly planned and their learning in these areas is not sufficiently monitored

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop economic well-being in the school.

As I explained, 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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

