

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr S Clark  
Headteacher  
Lytchett Minster School  
Lytchett Minster  
Poole  
Dorset  
BH16 6JD

Dear Mr Clark

### **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 on 12 October 2010 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability have been much affected by staff absence within the subject specialism and are judged to be satisfactory.

### **Achievement in economics and business education**

Achievement in economics and business education is satisfactory.

- In Key Stage 4 attainment has been well below school and national averages in recent years. At A level, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is below average.
- The record of students' progress is mixed. At GCSE the proportion of pupils reaching challenging targets has increased, but remains below what was expected. At A level and AS level, value-added analysis indicates

progress has increased, so that based on the most recent examinations, it is good.

- Classroom observations indicate that students in examination classes are currently making good progress. Due to a lack of stability in staffing, Year 11 students currently have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and confidence in the subject.
- The economic and business understanding and financial capability of students who do not take examination courses is patchy. Students develop a very good appreciation of employment. They are perceived as mature and highly employable so that there are very few students leaving school not in employment, education or training. By contrast, students' financial capability and knowledge of the economy are less well developed.

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

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

- In examination courses, teaching is knowledgeable and confident. Very good resources and schemes of work have been built over time, which have proved useful in helping students to make progress during a time of staffing turbulence. Relations between staff and students are very positive and students clearly enjoy learning. Teaching now links the subject to the real world at every opportunity using case studies and examples that are relevant to students' experience.
- Students feel very well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback. They particularly welcome the level of one-to-one support and coaching both in and out of lessons.
- Due to a lack of continuity in staffing, marking has been patchy. Marking is now helping students to make better progress.

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

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

- Examination courses offered at GCE advanced level and GCSE in business studies are popular, especially at GCSE. In the past there has been a wider range of courses and an even greater take-up of courses.
- The school recognises the need to make the examination subject more engaging and interesting through further direct contact with employers and the business world. Good plans are being actively pursued, but it is too soon to see their impact.
- Well planned work-related provision, including preparation and follow up to work experience, supports students' economic well-being. Businesses and other partners are used well to support work experience and school-based simulations preparing students for employment.

- Some useful activity takes place to develop students' basic economic understanding and enterprise skills, but too little of this work is underpinned by clearly identified learning objectives, assessment or monitoring. Opportunities for enterprise activities are now being addressed by the school.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education is good.

- The leadership and management of examination courses are good. The school has worked hard to ameliorate the impact of staffing problems in the subject. The impact has been that Year 13 students report that they do not feel disadvantaged and this is evidenced through their examination results at the end of Year 12. Year 11 students report a less positive experience. Good plans now exist to improve achievement in examination courses but it is too soon to see their impact.
- The management of economics and business understanding across the curriculum is only satisfactory. Work-related learning is managed well and there is a clear programme of study for personal, social, health and economics education (PHSE). The school has carried out an audit of the opportunities to develop students' economic and business understanding that exist across the curriculum and especially through the house period, but does not identify or track what individual students have learned. As a result, students' experience and understanding is variable and lacks coherence.

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

- ensuring that any gaps in the knowledge and understanding of Year 11 students taking GCSE business studies are filled
- implementing current plans to make the subject more engaging by providing more opportunities for students in examination classes to engage directly with local businesses
- identifying the learning outcomes students are expected to gain in economics, business and enterprise education across the school and developing better systems to monitor and evaluate their progress.

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**