

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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Dr S Burton
Headteacher
Rickmansworth School
Scots Hill
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 3AQ

Dear Dr Burton

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 19 and 20 January 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability is good.

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- Students' results in GCSE business were above average in 2009/10, with students making satisfactory progress; they did not do as well in business as they did in their other subjects.
- Current Year 11 students are making good progress against challenging target grades. In the lessons observed, they demonstrated a good level of attainment and made good progress in their learning.
- In the sixth form, students' achievements were good in A-level business and A-level economics in 2009/10. They made good progress compared to their prior attainment at GCSE and progress in these subjects shows an

improving trend over the past three years. However, in both subjects over the same period, progress at AS-level was satisfactory.

- Students enjoy their economics and business lessons a great deal and value very highly the support they receive from teachers. They particularly like the relevance of their studies to the real world and working together in pairs or in groups on set tasks.
- Students not taking formally assessed business and economics courses are developing strong economics and business understanding, enterprise skills, and personal financial capability. They enjoy this part of their studies, and talk about what they have learnt confidently and with considerable insight.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and have a good rapport with their students. In the lessons observed, they were very successful in engaging students' interest and involvement, and paid good attention to encourage students to use correct economics and business terminology.
- In the lessons observed, teachers had planned for a good balance of teacher exposition, relevant and interesting tasks, and opportunities to assess students' understanding of key ideas. Teachers made excellent use of questioning to check students' understanding of key points and extend their learning.
- In the lessons observed, teachers made good use of a variety of resources, to help students learn. They frequently made good use of topical, real-life examples to support learning. Where appropriate, teachers made good use of information and communication technology.
- The marking of students' work is accurate, but the quality of written feedback to students does not always provide them with sufficient guidance on how they may improve the quality of their work.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- The curriculum of formally assessed business and economics courses meets the needs and interests of students well. The proportion of students choosing business in 2009/10 at Key Stage 4 was well above the national average and is growing.
- Leaders and managers make good provision throughout the school for economics and business understanding, personal financial and enterprise capability through citizenship, and the work-related learning and enterprise provision. Students have excellent opportunities to engage with businesses and other business partners for work experience, enterprise and work-related learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

Leadership and management in economics and business education are good.

- The leadership and management of formally assessed economics and business courses are good. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision and how it may be improved further. They are focused sharply on raising the rate at which students make progress in Key Stage 4 and their achievement on AS-level courses.
- Students are working towards appropriately challenging targets. Arrangements for monitoring students' progress and for intervening where students are at risk of underachieving are sound, but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness fully.
- Leaders and managers have an extremely clear vision for the wider economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise provision for all students. The provision is structured and coordinated very well; coordination with the citizenship programme is particularly strong.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the level of students' achievement in formally assessed economics and business courses at AS-level and improving students' progress in GCSE business
- improving the quality of written feedback on students' work, so that it is of a consistently high standard in guiding students on how they may improve their work.

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

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector