

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 R Boothroyd
Headteacher
Yarborough School
Riseholme Road
Lincoln
Lincolnshire
LN1 3SP

Dear Mr Boothroyd

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 15 and 16 February 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 parts of 11 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 across all formally assessed business courses is in line with or above average. This includes Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Given their starting points, the progress students make in their learning on formally assessed business courses is exceptional, including on the BTEC First Certificate in business, which is taken by all students in Key Stage 4 and in which all students gained at least a pass grade.
- The enterprising ethos in the school has had a positive impact on raising the quality of provision across the school. Students' success in business

qualifications has helped to raise their aspirations and improve attitudes to learning across the school leading to greatly improved overall attainment in the school in recent years.

- As a result of the school's excellent planned provision, students at all key stages are developing exceptionally strong enterprise skills together with very good personal finance skills and economic and business understanding. Students are able to talk knowledgeably about what they have learnt and why it is important to their future lives.
- Students have excellent 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.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- All teachers are subject specialists who demonstrate excellent levels of subject knowledge. They enrich their teaching by drawing on their varied business backgrounds and frequently relating lesson content to real businesses that are familiar to students.
- All lessons are very well planned. They involve a range of learning activities that engages and interests students, providing them with plenty of opportunities to learn independently and in small groups. Students say that they really enjoy their lessons. Some thought is given to choosing resources that challenge gender stereotypes but opportunities are missed to represent the range of communities and cultures in modern Britain.
- The focus on helping students to understand and meet assessment requirements is very good. Where appropriate, learning is broken down into small steps to ensure that all students are able to successfully develop their knowledge and understanding.
- The support offered by teachers is excellent and all students comment on how teachers are always available to provide additional help and guidance.
- Marking is accurate and the quality of written feedback is excellent, highlighting where key assessment objectives are being met. Students value how this helps them to improve their work in order to meet or exceed the challenging targets they are set.
- Information and communication technology is used well. However, limited access and reliability reduce teachers' willingness to use it.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- Formally assessed economics and business education provision includes an extensive range of courses to meet the needs of all students. It is broad and balanced, includes vocational and academic courses and clear

progression routes for students of all abilities. Despite the already extensive provision, there are still further opportunities to provide greater levels of challenge in the range of qualifications offered at Key Stage 4.

- Courses seek to make learning more realistic by frequent references to, and drawing on teachers' experience of, the real world of business. The school recognises that students benefit from direct contact with real business, but the cost of organising trips to businesses limits their frequency.
- The school's specialist status supports positive and productive partnership work in local primary schools. One result is the raising of considerable funds for a clean water project in Malawi, which is helping, along with the weekly 'fair trade' stall, to raise students' awareness of important economic differences between life in England and in developing countries.
- Whole-school provision for enterprise education is outstanding. It includes a programme of assemblies, tutor periods, and extra-curricular activities. An extensive range of business and other external links supports this programme. Sophisticated cross-curricular mapping, which identifies where elements of enterprise education are delivered within subjects across the curriculum, enables the school to plan additional provision effectively. However, assessment of enterprise learning beyond the BTEC First Certificate in business, which is taken by all students, is recognised by the school as an area for development.
- Students have been very successful in a range of enterprise competitions. The provision extends into the sixth form as part of the 'core' programme, which includes either GCE citizenship, in which aspects of economic and business understanding are included or a BTEC level 3 qualification in enterprise.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

Leadership and management in economics and business education are outstanding.

- Senior leaders and leaders of the formally assessed business provision, which includes whole-school enterprise education provision, are passionate about, and totally committed to, increasing students' life chances. They aim to do this by ensuring that all students achieve at the highest level, have good employability skills and thus are well prepared for their future economic lives.
- There are exceptionally well-planned and coordinated approaches to whole-school enterprise education provision, which are supported by clearly identified learning outcomes and developing assessment processes.
- Self-evaluation is of the highest quality and is informed by regular monitoring of provision, which includes feedback from students. As a result, leaders know the strengths and the priorities for development. This is evident in the way the curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it provides appropriate and challenging opportunities for all students.

- Very challenging targets are set for students and rigorous systems for monitoring their progress are in place. These ensure prompt identification of underachievement and appropriate intervention through the 'rescue and reward plan'.
- Rigorous and supportive systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are in place. These systems reveal a consistently high quality of delivery across the large department.
- The outstanding quality of the school's leadership and management in both formally assessed economics and business courses and whole-school enterprise education underpins the capacity for sustained improvement in these areas. You and other leaders are heavily involved in the development of regional and national initiatives in enterprise through the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and through developing work on assessment in enterprise with the University of Warwick's Centre for Innovation and Enterprise.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing and extending current systems for assessing students' learning in relation to enterprise education
- considering how the business and enterprise curriculum could contribute even further to raising awareness of life in modern multi-cultural Britain
- extending the opportunities for students to engage with real businesses.

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