

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



30 March 2011

Mrs L Dalkin  
Headteacher  
Southfield Technology College  
Moorclose Road  
Workington  
Cumbria  
CA14 5BH

Dear Mrs Dalkin

**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 17 and 18 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 eight lessons, a sixth-form tutorial and an assembly.

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

**Achievement in economics and business education**

Achievement in economics and business education is satisfactory.

- Attainment on GCSE and GCE AS- and A-level business courses is low. Given their low prior attainment, students are making satisfactory progress. This was confirmed in lesson observations, in discussion with students and in a review of their written work. Current data indicate that students' progress towards their target grades is improving compared with previous years.
- Sixth-form students are able to speak confidently about the work they are doing. Their interest in the subject is confirmed by the fact that most of the Year 13 students studying GCE applied business are applying for

business-related degree course at university or business-related apprenticeships.

- Students have good attitudes to learning, settle quickly to, and engage well with, the learning activities they are set.
- Students are making satisfactory progress in developing skills and awareness to prepare them for their future lives. Enterprise skills, such as collaborative group work and decision-making in particular, are developing well as a result of a range of well-planned provision. Less able and more vulnerable students embrace the opportunities they have to experience enterprise and work-related learning enthusiastically and in a really focused and mature manner.

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

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

- Specialist business studies teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate this in their teaching. They make constant reference to real business issues so that students can relate their learning to a real world context.
- Students are enthusiastic about their business courses and enjoy their lessons. They have very good relationships with their teachers and say they feel well supported.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Learning activities engage students' interest and lessons maintain good pace that ensures students remain engaged.
- Assessment to support learning is an area for development in formally assessed business courses. Although marking is accurate, it is not always sufficiently detailed to help students understand how to improve their work. Oral and written feedback on coursework do not always give students clear messages about the progress they are making.
- Questioning does not always challenge students to develop higher-level oral skills and they are rarely encouraged to articulate complex ideas. Students are not always given sufficient opportunities to practise answering examination-style questions that require the demonstration of higher-level skills.

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

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

- Business courses are popular option choices at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Good progression routes from Key Stage 4 ensure that the needs of students with different learning and assessment preferences are met.
- The whole-school provision for enterprise education is good. The weekly enterprise module, delivered by business specialists, which all Year 10

students follow, ensures that they gain a good foundation in economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability. In Year 11, this programme gives a sharper focus to careers education.

- In addition to this, suspended timetable themed days, the recently introduced Adventure Learning Fridays for Year 8, elements of personal, social, health and economic education in tutor periods and cross-subject provision ensure that Key Stage 3 students have good opportunities to experience aspects of enterprise education. However, the focus on personal financial capability and economic and business understanding in the provision at Key Stage 3 is insufficient.
- All students, including the less able or those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, have good opportunities to access enterprise and work-related learning, for example through the study of ASDAN awards, the wider key skills programme, college links that extend vocational provision, the learning support garden project and preparation for study residential.
- Sixth form enrichment involves a variety of enterprise and work-related opportunities. This includes Young Enterprise activities and work-placements and students studying business have recently been involved in a Bank of England challenge competition.
- Links with local businesses and employers are good. These promote the work-related awareness and skills of all students and enhance the quality of learning for students on business courses.

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

Leadership and management in economics and business education are satisfactory.

- The positive impact of leadership and management in the department can be seen in the broad curriculum provided, the popularity of the business options among students and the contribution that business specialist teachers make to the whole-school provision for enterprise education. However, the impact of leadership in the department is not yet evident in relation to students' outcomes in formally assessed business courses.
- The whole-school focus on developing self-evaluation at curriculum leader level is leading to a tightly structured and well-evidenced approach in the business studies department. This includes good student voice evidence that is informing strategy in the department, for example in relation to how staff are deployed across the various business courses. Action-planning is well focused on key priorities, but it is not yet clear what impact actions are having on students' outcomes in formally assessed business courses.
- Whole-school monitoring processes result in detailed data on students' progress and the regular reporting system ensures that underachievement can be identified quickly. However, there is less evidence that well-focused

intervention for underachieving business students is being implemented promptly and effectively enough.

- The strong focus on developing students' employability and enterprise skills and raising their aspirations indicates the senior leaders' commitment to preparing students for their future lives. However, there is little evidence of monitoring students' progress against identified learning outcomes, for example in relation to the discrete enterprise module that all students in Year 10 follow.
- Staff development opportunities ensure that business teachers are up to date in relation to award board requirements and have had opportunities to liaise with practitioners in other schools to share good practice.

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

- raising attainment on GCSE and GCE AS- and A-level business courses by improving the quality of assessment, developing students' higher-level oral and written skills and sharpening the quality of intervention following the identification of underachievement
- extending the enterprise education provision at Key Stage 3 to include more focus on financial capability and economic and business understanding
- identifying learning outcomes for enterprise education and considering how to monitor and assess students' progress in relation to these.

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

**Gwen Coates**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**