

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)



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Mr K Sorrell  
Headteacher  
Windsor High School and Sixth Form  
Richmond Street  
Halesowen  
West Midlands  
B63 4BB

Dear Mr Sorrell

### **Ofsted 2011–12 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 20 and 21 September 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; observation of six lessons; and attendance at one of the school's open evenings.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education is outstanding.

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

Achievement in economics and business education is outstanding.

- Attainment at Key Stage 4 demonstrates an improving trend over the past three years. It was high in both of the past two years with almost all students gaining A\* to C grades and exceeding challenging targets.
- Students' attainment at GCE AS level in 2010/11 was broadly average, and the school rightly recognises that raising achievement in the sixth form is a key area for improvement.
- Current students in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are on track to achieve challenging target grades. In the lessons observed, they

demonstrated above average and often excellent understanding and made good progress in their learning.

- Students not taking formally assessed economics and business courses are developing very 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, reflectively 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 a good rapport with their students. In the lessons observed, teachers planned well in relation to students' prior attainment. They were highly successful in engaging students' interest and involvement through a wide range of relevant and well-designed tasks and activities. They made excellent and frequent use of topical, real-life examples to help students learn.
- Teachers often made very good and highly imaginative use of a variety of resources; where appropriate, they made good use of information and communication technology to enhance learning.
- In the lessons observed, teachers often made excellent use of questioning; however, teachers' questioning did not always provide a sufficient check on all students' understanding and opportunities to extend their learning were sometimes missed.

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

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

- The curriculum of formally assessed economics and business courses is very successful in meeting the needs and interests of students. The introduction of GCSE business at Key Stage 4 has improved its balance, providing a clear progression path to A-level study in the sixth form. Plans to introduce A-level economics are well-considered.
- Business is a highly popular choice of subject. The proportion of students choosing business at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is well above the national average. Students talk very enthusiastically about how their experiences lower down the school in economics and business understanding, and enterprise capability, were instrumental in influencing them to study business at Key Stage 4.
- Leaders and managers make outstanding provision throughout the school for economics and business understanding, personal financial and enterprise capability. The provision is structured and coordinated very well into a broad, diverse and coherent programme.
- 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**

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

- Leaders and managers have a clear and precise understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision of formally assessed economics and business courses and how this provision may be improved further. They are focused sharply on raising students' achievements in the sixth form. Teachers are supported very well and have very good professional development opportunities.
- The leadership and management of the wider economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise provision for all students is outstanding. The whole-school vision for preparing students for the world of work is very clear. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and a highly-developed team ethos, with leaders and managers placing students at the heart of what they do.

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

- raising the level of students' achievement in formally assessed economics and business courses in the sixth form
- ensuring that teachers' use of questioning to check and extend learning is of a consistently high standard in all lessons.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics and business education in the school.

As 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.

Yours sincerely

**Russell Jordan**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**