

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



20 October 2011

Mr A Cunningham
Headteacher
Oxclose Community School
Dilston Close
Oxclose Village
Washington
NE38 0LN

Dear Mr Cunningham

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 13 and 14 October 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 six lessons or parts of lessons and parts of two tutor periods.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education is good.

Achievement in economics and business education

Achievement in economics and business education is good.

- Current Year 11 students taking the BTEC First in business are making good progress. All are working at or beyond their challenging targets. Students are ambitious and aspire to do well. They have good attitudes to learning and are developing good independent learning skills. Their written work is of a good quality and the quality of its presentation is excellent.
- As a result of good provision for whole-school enterprise education, students' enterprise-related skills and basic business understanding are developing well. They work well in teams, communicate effectively, use their initiative, are creative, engage in problem solving, and some are

developing very good leadership skills. However, the development of their personal financial capability and economic understanding is not as strong.

Quality of teaching in economics and business education

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

- Business lessons involve active and collaborative learning activities. This and the excellent use of real world business contexts stimulate students' interest, raise their aspirations and reinforce their understanding.
- Good resources and the excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) contribute significantly to students' learning and the quality of their work.
- As a result of clear and frequent reference to assessment criteria, all students know their target grades and what they need to do to achieve these. Good marking supports this by providing helpful feedback about how to improve work to meet relevant criteria.
- Questioning is inclusive but not always sufficiently challenging. It does not encourage students to demonstrate higher levels skills in their responses.
- Relationships between the business teacher and her students are very good. Business students feel extremely well supported and comment on the extensive out-of-class support they are given.

Quality of the curriculum in economics and business education

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

- The formally assessed business provision consists of a BTEC First course. Year 11 students following this course, and who represent a wide range of abilities, suggest that it meets their needs well. Appropriate progression opportunities are available in local colleges.
- Extensive provision for whole-school enterprise education is available at both Key Stages 3 and 4. It includes: the personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision; the ICT provision; enterprise days organised by the local education business partner; the Year 7 Discovery provision and alternative provision such as the Prince's Trust modules. Such wide-ranging provision ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in exciting and challenging activities and projects that encourage the development of enterprise skills and an understanding of business issues.
- Excellent links with businesses exist, which significantly enhance provision in the BTEC business course, by providing valuable contexts for students' learning. Equally strong links support whole-school enterprise provision.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics and business education

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

- Senior leaders ensure a clear focus on developing enterprising teaching and learning throughout the school, with an emphasis on preparing students for their future lives.
- Very good monitoring of students' progress on the BTEC business course is in place. The quality of formally assessed business and whole-school enterprise education provision is monitored regularly to ensure a continual process of improvement. The quality and impact of enterprise and PSHE days are evaluated by staff, students and employer contributors. However, no systems are in place to assess students' progress and achievement in relation to enterprise education by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The thorough cross-curricular audit of enterprise education and provision in PSHE and ICT ensure a good coverage of enterprise education at whole-school level. However, although well planned, it is not yet sufficiently coherent to ensure that all elements of enterprise education are as well developed as enterprise capability and basic business understanding.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the quality of teachers' questioning to ensure that it challenges all students to think deeply, to develop higher levels skills and to demonstrate these in their responses
- ensuring that whole-school provision for enterprise education is more coherent so that all elements, including personal financial capability and basic economics understanding are as well developed as that for enterprise capability and basic business understanding
- considering how to assess students' progress in relation to enterprise education and the skills and attributes it seeks to develop.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector