

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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Dr S Wilson  
Headteacher  
Marling School  
Cainscross Road  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 4HE

Dear Dr Wilson

### **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 28 and 29 November 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.

The overall effectiveness of economics and business education is outstanding.

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

Achievement in economics and business education is outstanding.

- Students' attainment and progress in GCSE business show an improving trend over the past three years. The proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades has been consistently very high, and last year all students' results were between A\* and C. These students make good progress.
- Students' attainment in GCE AS and A level economics courses in the sixth form is well above national averages. Their progress is good and improving. However, in the equivalent courses in business, as the school recognises, students have not reached the same level of attainment and their progress has been inconsistent.

- Students not taking formally assessed economics and business courses are developing very strong economics and business understanding, enterprise skills, and personal financial capability. They talk about what they have learnt confidently and constructively.

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

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

- Teachers have a good rapport with their students who value highly the support they provide both in and out of lessons. Teachers' economics, business, and enterprise subject knowledge was excellent across the range of lessons and subjects observed.
- In the lessons observed, teachers made exemplary use of questioning to check and extend students' learning, and to challenge and develop their thinking.
- In the lessons observed, teachers planned a range of highly engaging tasks that focused well on what students should learn. Lessons provided excellent opportunities for students to develop and practise higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation, reflecting very strong progress in a key area for improvement in the department's self-evaluation.

### **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 students' needs well. Business is a popular choice in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The curriculum in the sixth form is well-balanced with a choice of business or economics at AS and A level.
- Leaders and managers make good provision throughout the school for economics and business understanding, enterprise and personal financial capability. The provision is structured and coordinated well into a coherent programme with 'life skills' and careers education, information, advice and guidance at the core.

### **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 very good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in the provision. They are highly successful in promoting a culture of continuous improvement with students' achievements at the centre of their work. In the lessons observed jointly with the inspector, school leaders provided a reliable and accurate view of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning.

- The lessons observed show very clear evidence of the progress made in implementing action planning for improvement from the department's self-evaluation.
- The leadership and management of the wider economics and business understanding, personal financial capability and enterprise provision for all students is outstanding and makes very good use of students' views. The whole-school vision for preparing students for the world of work is very clear. Plans to improve the provision are well-considered.

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

- raising progress and attainment in GCE AS and A-level business courses in the sixth form to match the levels seen in the rest of the provision
- implementing fully plans to enhance further the provision for all students of economics and business understanding, enterprise and personal financial capability.

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**