

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 Wilkin
Headteacher
St Bede's Inter-Church School
Birdwood Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB1 3TD

Dear Mr Wilkin

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: economics, business and enterprise

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 22 and 23 March 2012 to look at work in economics, business and enterprise.

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 seven lessons, including a tutor group session, and attendance at an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of economics, business and enterprise is satisfactory.

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise

Achievement in economics, business and enterprise is satisfactory.

- Examination results in the GCSE applied business course are in line with national figures. This represents satisfactory progress but students attain lower grades in business than in their other subjects. Current Key Stage 4 students are making satisfactory progress and the school predicts an improvement in examination results, partly due to a greater familiarity with the requirements of the course, which was introduced in 2009.
- Students in all the lessons observed, including those outside of GCSE business, demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They respond very positively to tasks set, show enthusiasm in lessons and are able to work well both independently and cooperatively.

- Students across the school are developing excellent enterprise and employability skills. In 2011, all Year 11 students went on to further education, employment or training. A substantial number of students take business-related courses in post-16 education. However, students' economic and business understanding and personal financial awareness is less securely developed, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise

The quality of teaching in economics, business and enterprise is satisfactory.

- Classroom relationships in the applied business course are excellent and students feel that they are well supported in their learning. Assessment is accurate and students are made aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
- A good range of teaching strategies is deployed to make lessons interesting. However, in applied business lessons, insufficient challenge for higher-attaining students and too little differentiation in the tasks set mean that students are unable to proceed at a pace appropriate to their level of understanding and prior knowledge. This limits the progress they make.
- The overall quality of teaching was good in lessons observed outside of GCSE business but learning objectives in relation to the development of students' economic and business understanding were not always made sufficiently explicit.

Quality of the curriculum in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The GCSE applied business course meets the needs of the great majority of students and is currently taken by around one in five students. Lower-attaining students have the option of a Level 1 vocational diploma course.
- Excellent opportunities are available for students to develop their enterprise skills through the core curriculum, suspended timetable days, work experience and a very good range of enrichment activities. A very strong emphasis is placed on social enterprise, for example through running fair trade activities and organising events to raise funds for charities.
- Good opportunities are provided for all students to develop economic and business understanding and personal financial capability but these are not currently developed coherently and progressively through each year group. Greater coherence exists in Key Stage 3 where dedicated lessons have been introduced through personal, social, health and economic education and plans are in place to extend this practice to Key Stage 4 from September 2012.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in economics, business and enterprise

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

- The GCSE applied business course is well managed through the vocational education faculty. A brief but accurate self-evaluation takes account of a range of data and other information and identifies appropriate priorities for development. The progress of students is closely monitored and intervention strategies are in place to tackle any underachievement identified.
- You and your senior colleagues give strong support to the development of enterprise education, particularly social enterprise, which is rightly seen as making an important contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reflects the school's Christian ethos.
- Individual components of enterprise education are well managed but learning objectives for economic and business understanding are not defined sufficiently precisely and students' overall progress is not assessed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that higher attaining students taking the GCSE applied business course are sufficiently challenged
- developing greater differentiation in the GCSE applied business course to enable students to proceed at a pace appropriate to their level of understanding
- developing greater coherence in the provision for enterprise education across all year groups, ensuring that learning outcomes are precise and progressive.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop economics, business and enterprise 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

David Butler
Additional Inspector