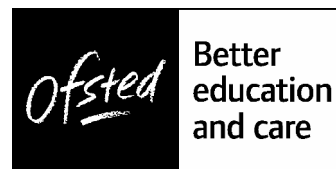


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Ms L French  
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Dear Ms French

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15-16 January 2007 to look at work in Business Education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on financial capability and personal finance 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of Business Education was judged to be satisfactory. There is good capacity for improvement, which is supported by the fact that the school is moving to a new site at Easter 2007 when significant changes to its structure and curriculum will be introduced.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in business education are satisfactory.

- Standards achieved have varied considerable over the last few years. After the significant drop in attainment at GCSE in 2004, a slowly improving trend in results is apparent, with predictions for 2007 supporting this upward trend.

- Students' work and their performance in class indicate often good knowledge and understanding and the ability to use specialist vocabulary and key terms.
- Personal development was good and most students were fully engaged and on task in all lessons observed.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in business education are satisfactory with many good features.

- Accommodation is poor, classrooms are depressing and access to ICT facilities is difficult. Despite this, teachers work hard to create a productive learning environment for students.
- There was a good emphasis on improving exam skills and good use was made of self and peer assessment to enhance students' awareness of the quality of application, analysis and evaluation in their answers.
- Most questioning is challenging and encourages students to think, although there is a tendency to focus on the more confident and vocal students.
- Students are well supported and encouraged by teachers who have good subject knowledge and good skills in managing behaviour.
- In general students enjoy their business education courses and post 16 students are very positive about their lessons. However, students at Key Stage 4 would welcome more active learning approaches in their lessons.
- The good business links developed in relation to work experience and whole school enterprise and other activities are not used as effectively as they might be to support and enhance teaching and learning in business education.
- Students' work is assessed accurately. Work is regularly marked and feedback is generally good and sometimes very good, informing students of how they might improve their work and linked, where appropriate, to assessment objectives. Students' files are well organised and detailed and therefore a good source of information for revision purposes.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum provision in business education is satisfactory.

- The choice of business education courses at GCSE enables students to select a programme of study that meets their particular learning needs.
- Special provision is made, where possible, to meet the individual needs of post-16 students who may wish to study a course at AS/A Level in business education.
- Further developments in relation to vocational pathways at Key Stage 4, progression routes and wider choice in the sixth form, all of which

are planned for the next academic year when the school will be at a new site and will have a new structure, are intended to enhance future provision.

- A wide range of enterprise and work-related learning activities are provided for all students.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management in business education are good.

- The head of department is very committed to recognising, rewarding and celebrating the learning and progress made by all students.
- She manages her very wide range of responsibilities well, identifying clearly and realistically the department's strengths and weaknesses and putting in place appropriate strategies for improvement.
- Rigorous monitoring of students' progress takes place and analysis of data about students' achievement and subsequent action planning are good. As a result, all business education students are aware of their predicted grades, know their current levels of performance and understand what they need to do to improve on this.
- Clear policies for work-related learning and enterprise education have been developed and, following the auditing of such provision across departments, work is in progress to establish ways of assessing and accrediting this provision.
- There are clear links between the school improvement plan and departmental actions with clear responsibilities, timescales and success criteria. In addition, regular and rigorous quality assurance procedures are in place.

## Financial capability

- The school provides a range of opportunities for students in all years to develop skills and understanding relevant to financial capability and personal finance education, but at present this lacks a coherent structure.

## Inclusion

- The monitoring and target setting system and the intervention strategies in place ensure that all students studying business education courses receive appropriate support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- develop questioning techniques based upon the expectation that all students will respond

- introduce more active learning approaches in GCSE lessons and make greater use of information and communications technology to enhance teaching and learning
- where possible, extend the use of business visits in order to enhance students' understanding and awareness
- develop the planned vocational pathways at Key Stage 4 and the broader provision in the sixth form
- identify ways of assessing students' enterprise capability and ensure that provision for financial capability and personal finance education is coherent across the curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop Business Education in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates  
Her Majesty's Inspector