

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr K Binks
Acting Headteacher
Edlington School
Tait Avenue
Edlington
Doncaster
DN12 1HH

Dear Mr Binks

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11-12 June 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 economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students.

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. 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 parts of ten lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in examination courses is good.

- Standards across the range of courses are broadly average.
- Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment in Key Stage 4 and post-16 courses, particularly in applied courses.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated.
- Classroom relationships are very good and students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Students benefit from teachers' expert knowledge and the use of relevant and interesting examples drawn from the real world.
- Teachers deploy a wide range of teaching and learning styles, including teacher-led discussion, individual and paired work and presentations. Information and communication technology is used effectively by teachers and students, both for research and for presentations.
- Students feel well supported and are made aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.
- Some teaching is outstanding, but the extent to which students are engaged and supported is inconsistent.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- Examination courses meet the needs and interests of students well. The courses offered are popular and students are very positive about them.
- Currently, there are relatively few opportunities within the traditional business studies courses for students to engage with the 'real' world through direct contact with employers. This situation, highlighted in the last inspection, is now improving in applied courses.
- There are good opportunities in the curriculum for students not following examination courses in business to develop their economic and business understanding and take part in a wide range of enterprise activities.
- Aspects of personal financial education are covered through mathematics. Discussions with students not taking examination courses in business revealed a reasonable understanding of interest rates and a good grasp of the relationship between taxation and public expenditure.
- The school does not monitor or assess students' general understanding of personal finance, business and economics outside of examination courses.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of business education are good.

- Courses are very well structured and the strengths of the well qualified staff complement each other.
- The recently created role of faculty leader for business and enterprise is proving effective in developing a more coherent approach to planning and monitoring the provision.

- A clear and useful whole school policy for business and enterprise education is in place. The school is working with partners to develop assessment. This work is at an early stage of development and it is too soon to see its full impact.
- Departmental self-evaluation is strong. Key areas for improvement have been identified and appropriate plans have been put in place to address them.

Inclusion

- There is a wide range of business related and vocational courses available to meet the needs of students of all abilities.
- Whilst there are many enterprise and work-related activities available to students, their take up and impact is not sufficiently monitored or assessed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teaching consistently engages and supports students
- providing more opportunities for students to engage directly with local businesses
- implementing the plans that are in place for enterprise and other areas of business and economic understanding, ensuring that the experience of students is monitored and assessed.

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 and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector