

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



06 July 2007

Mr D Wilson
Headteacher
Faringdon Community College
Fernham Road
Faringdon
Oxfordshire
SN7 7LB

Dear Mr Wilson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27-28 June 2007 to look at business education in your college.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at business studies courses, 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. 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement on examination courses is good.

- In business studies, students make good progress. Standards at GCSE are in line with those nationally and have improved year-on-year since 2004. GCE results are well below national figures but meaningful comparisons are difficult to make as number are very small.
- At GCSE level, relatively few students succeed in fully mastering the key analytical and evaluative skills sufficiently to achieve the highest grades.
- At whole-college level, achievements in the extensive range of team building and problem solving activities are good. By the time they reach

the end of Key Stage 4, most students' economic and business understanding is satisfactory; among sixth formers, it is generally good.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are consistently well planned and many include a good variety of learning opportunities.
- The pace of lessons is good. Teachers' expectations of students are high and good support is provided to help weaker students. More able students respond well to being stretched.
- Teachers give strong emphasis to developing students' understanding and the use of technical vocabulary. However, there is insufficient focus on helping students master the analytical and evaluative skills needed to achieve the highest grades.
- Assessment practice is good; there is a strong emphasis on students' understanding the course grade criteria; the best marking provides both clear judgements and helpful comments to encourage students to improve.
- Students have good access to information technology and make effective use of the internet for research.
- Behaviour in lessons is good, as are relationships between staff and students.
- There is currently no specifically designated accommodation for business studies, precluding the use of classroom displays to promote high achievement, especially among GCSE students.

Quality of curriculum

The provision of business courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good.

- At Key Stage 4, over half of students take a business-related course.
- The Key Stage 4 design and technology programme provides excellent opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their enterprise, entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills. These opportunities are supplemented by other enterprise activities, for example through the sixth form Young Enterprise programme.
- The Year 10 course in retailing is helping students gain a good understanding of businesses from both provider and consumer perspectives.
- The extensive range of problem-solving activities developed with local businesses is helping to improve students' team and work-related skills.
- The citizenship and mathematics courses provide good opportunities for students to develop financial awareness; more vulnerable students have additional opportunities to develop personal finance capability on the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness programme.

- Year 10 work experience is effective in helping students develop a range of work-related skills and improve their career planning; however, logbooks do not give sufficient emphasis to recording learning outcomes.
- Subjects, such as geography, information technology, food technology, graphics and design technology are contributing positively to promoting economic and business understanding. Students on various college-link programmes and/or extended work placements have additional good opportunities to develop their work-related skills.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of business education are good.

- Effective planning and review mechanisms are in place in business studies; the current action plan has clear priorities.
- Business studies schemes of work are good; there is a strong focus on ensuring good quality teaching and learning and intended learning outcomes are generally made explicit.
- Business Studies teachers support each other well; however, there are insufficient opportunities for staff to network with colleagues in other schools. Present arrangements for team meetings are not formalised.
- At whole-college level, an outline audit of where subjects and other activities contribute to economic understanding and financial capability has been carried out. However, the particular skills and competences which students are expected to acquire as they move through the college are not currently specified and there is no system in place for tracking the outcomes achieved by individuals.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- Good support is provided for students experiencing difficulties in business studies through extra sessions and additional materials.
- Business studies courses are open to all students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities in business studies for students to develop their analytical and evaluative skills, thereby improving their capacity to achieve the highest examination grades
- putting in place procedures at whole-college level to map and track students' developing economic and business understanding and financial capability as they move through the college.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop business education in your college. 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

Vic Chivers
Her Majesty's Inspector