

03 October 2008

Mr K Hollins
Executive Headteacher
Cheadle High School
Station Road
Cheadle
Stoke on Trent
Staffordshire
ST10 1LH

Dear Mr Hollins

Ofsted survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29-30 September 2008 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at examination courses in business education, the visit also considered the development of economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students at Key Stage 4 and the introduction of the new programme of study for economic well-being and financial capability at Key Stage 3.

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.

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 two lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- School data indicates that attainment in business education in 2008 was well below average. However, lesson observations and meetings with students indicate that the attainment of students currently on the BTEC first certificate in business course is good.
- Students demonstrate good understanding of business concepts and are able to apply their knowledge to practical and real world issues effectively.

- Students are generally making good progress. However, at this early stage in the course, their formal written skills are less well developed than their oral skills.
- Students' personal development is good, they demonstrate good attitudes to learning, behave maturely and work well as a group and independently.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In the small sample of lessons seen students made good progress because of good teaching.
- Lessons had a good pace and involved a stimulating range of activities. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT).
- The quality of formative feedback is good and regular opportunities are provided to consolidate students' learning.
- Students have a good understanding of the standard of work required to meet the assessment criteria.
- Students speak highly of their relationship with the teacher and the support provided.
- The small size of the group taking the BTEC first course in business limits the range of teaching and learning styles that can be deployed.
- On occasions, the technical accuracy of answers demanded from students is not high enough.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Improvements made to the curriculum in September 2008 have resulted in it being better matched to the needs of students. Students of all abilities now have access to a business course in Year 10. However, the number of students taking business is small because provision is limited to those students who are prepared to take business as a double option and who prefer coursework to examinations.
- There are currently no clear progression routes for students taking the BTEC first course in business in the local partner sixth form college but this will be remedied when the college introduces the new specialist diploma in business, administration and finance in September 2009.
- Suitable links exist with local businesses and the introduction of extra curricular activities, such as a company share competition, helps support and broaden students' experiences and develop their economic and business understanding.

Leadership and management of business education

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Departmental leadership is well supported by senior management in developing effective systems for monitoring and evaluating students' performance and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Self-evaluation at departmental level recognises the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and identifies appropriate priorities but at present there is limited evidence of impact on improving examination results.
- External and internal training have been used effectively to promote confidence in the development and delivery of the new BTEC first certificate in business and there are many opportunities to share good practice with staff in the local sixth form college and with another secondary school.
- Good use is made of feedback from students to inform teachers' self-evaluation.

Provision for economic well-being and financial capability

The provision for economic well-being and financial capability is satisfactory.

- The provision for economic well-being and financial capability is effectively organised through an integrated programme of weekly tutorials, specialist subject lessons and enrichment activities.
- A good range of activities engages students' interest and promotes their learning and confidence in this area, particularly in relation to enterprise skills.
- The school has a clear understanding of the new curriculum requirements for economic well-being and financial capability at Key Stage 3. It has carried out a detailed audit of provision to identify coverage and has used this effectively to create a comprehensive scheme of work throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Students enjoy this area of the curriculum, they say that it is well planned and well taught and they understand its relevance to their lives.
- Students in all year groups are developing their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate confidence in discussing relevant issues and key concepts. This is particularly the case in relation to financial capability but less so in terms of their economic and business understanding.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision in this area of the curriculum are not yet established and the school does not formally identify and assess learning outcomes in relation to economic well-being and financial capability.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing strategies to improve students' written skills in business education at Key Stage 4 to ensure they continue to make good progress in the subject
- broadening the curriculum provision in business education at Key Stage 4
- monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision in relation to economic well-being and financial capability and identifying and assessing learning outcomes.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the provision for business education in your 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector