

10 December 2008

Mr A Packer
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Packer

Ofsted survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03-04 December 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 eight lessons, two target-setting interviews at a parent subject consultation evening and a house assembly.

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be satisfactory with good capacity to make further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- GCSE business studies results have been below national averages for the past two years, reflecting the prior attainment of students taking the course. The attainment of students currently taking business is satisfactory.
- Students taking GCSE business make satisfactory progress towards stretching and challenging targets.

- In A-level business courses students' standards are broadly average, reflecting their wide range of prior attainment. Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points on entry to the course.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their business courses.
- Students not taking business courses are developing a good grounding in economic and business concepts, and personal financial understanding.

Quality of teaching and learning of business

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Business teachers have good subject knowledge and a good rapport with their students. They use stimulating, topical and relevant tasks to successfully engage students in learning.
- Students on business courses are regularly informed of their progress towards their target grades. However, they receive feedback on their work that is as yet insufficiently precise to enable them to know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers used information communications technology well to enhance learning in many of the lessons observed.
- In the lessons observed, there was often insufficient checking of students' understanding of key ideas and the use of questioning to extend their learning was under-developed.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The business curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet the full range of students' needs. However, the school has well-considered plans to address this through the introduction of a vocational business course in September 2009.
- Business courses are available to all students and are a popular choice at Key Stage 4. The numbers taking business courses in the sixth form have grown and there is currently a good take up of the GCE AS and A-level courses in business.
- There are well-conceived plans with other local schools and a further education college to develop the business curriculum by making provision for the new diploma in business, administration and finance, and additional vocational courses.
- Good provision is made for economic and business understanding and personal financial capability through the personal, social and health education programme, enterprise activities and project days. Students value this provision highly.

Leadership and management of business education

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The leadership and management of business studies examination courses are satisfactory. The school has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development in business courses. Appropriate strategies are in place to

bring about improvements but it is too soon to assess the full impact of these.

- Well-conceived strategies are in place to monitor students' progress on business courses and to intervene where there is under-achievement, but it is too soon to assess their effectiveness.
- Thorough auditing is giving the school a comprehensive overview of current provision for economic well-being and financial capability where this is taught through subjects.
- There is good co ordination of the wider economic and business provision for all students. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the further development of this provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards and achievement in business courses
- ensuring that students on business courses receive more precise feedback on how to improve the quality of their work
- developing questioning techniques to check students' understanding and develop their learning
- implementing plans to introduce a vocational business course at Key Stage 4.

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

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector