

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



08 January 2009

Mrs M Rannard
Headteacher
West Derby School
Quarry Wing
Quarry Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L13 7DB

Dear Mrs Rannard

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.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students join the school with attainment that is below average. They make good progress in their learning and attain standards in GCSE business studies that are in line with the national average. Examination results in GCSE business studies compare well with students' attainment in other subjects.

- From below average attainment on entry to the sixth form, students make good progress over the two years of their A level courses and achieve above their target grades.
- Data produced by the school indicate that students are making at least satisfactory progress in the recently introduced GCSE course in business and communications.
- Students made good progress in the lessons observed, including those in Key Stage 3 aimed at developing students' economic well-being and financial capability.
- Students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are developing a good awareness and understanding of economic and business issues, including those not taking an examination course in business.
- Students' behaviour in class is good and they have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons and find both business and economics interesting.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they consistently link their explanations to current economic and business examples and issues.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and, as a result, students respond well to the tasks they are set.
- Lessons move at a good pace and are well supported by teaching materials that are of good quality and appropriately matched to the needs of students.
- The most effective lessons encouraged students to become fully engaged in their learning through teachers asking them challenging questions and valuing their contributions. This was the case, for example, in the citizenship lessons which had a focus on developing students' economic and financial understanding. However, this is not consistent across all lessons and opportunities to encourage students' active participation in their learning were sometimes missed.
- Business links to enhance students' learning in business education examination courses are limited.
- Teacher assessment is accurate. Marking is regular but written comments do not always make it clear what students need to do to improve their work.
- Intervention strategies ensure that all students who are underperforming against their target grades receive appropriate and timely support. Students value this good support, which raises their confidence and expectations about what they can achieve.
- Lessons at Key Stage 3 that focus on economic well-being and financial capability are well planned. Teaching in the lessons observed was outstanding and ensured that students made good progress in developing their economic and business understanding.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Business education courses meet the needs of learners. In 2007, a GCSE in business and communications was introduced to meet the needs of Key Stage 4 and post-16 students who benefit from a more practical approach to learning.
- The take-up of business education courses at Key Stage 4 is good and the number of students studying GCE AS economics has increased substantially since 2007.
- All students have access to examination courses in business and good information and guidance is provided to ensure students join the most appropriate course for their particular aptitudes and interests.
- Good provision is made for all students at Key Stages 3 and 4 to develop their economic well-being and financial capability. This is done through discrete citizenship and personal, social, health and economic well-being lessons. A full audit of provision has been undertaken and detailed schemes of work have been developed in response to this, resulting in good coverage of all relevant areas.
- At whole school level, there is a range of extra-curricular business education competitions and activities that all students can access.

Quality of leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management are good.

- Leadership and management of the provision for economics and business education across the school are good and strongly focussed on raising achievement and standards.
- The business education department appropriately embraces whole school priorities in its action plans but is less effective at identifying its own priorities for improvement.
- Students' progress towards meeting challenging targets is monitored very effectively and ensures that students who are underachieving are identified promptly and supported effectively.
- The school has a coherent view of business education that incorporates the provision for economic well-being and financial capability for all students at Key Stages 3 and 4 as well as the provision of examination courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Learning outcomes for economic well-being and financial capability for all students at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been clearly identified, but these are not formally assessed.

Areas for development we discussed:

- improving the quality of written comments on students' work so they understand clearly what they need to do to improve

- providing more opportunities for students to become actively engaged in their learning
- developing business links to enhance teaching and learning
- developing appropriate methods for assessing learning outcomes in relation to economic well-being and financial capability.

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