

09 February 2009

Mrs M Tunnicliffe
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Dear Mrs Tunnicliffe

Ofsted survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28-29 January 2009 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 schools/colleges will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons and two extra-curricular activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students performed well in the 2008 public examinations.
- Most students make good progress at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory progress in the sixth form.
- Students generally demonstrate good ability to learn independently over time. However, a minority of current Year 10 and 11 students lack confidence, relying too much on the teacher to stimulate their learning.
- Success rates for post-16 students are good.

- Students not taking business examination courses develop satisfactory economic and business understanding and financial capability overall, but there is substantial variation between students.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The quality of teaching in lessons observed was good and this was reflected in the good progress made by most students. Students' behaviour in lessons was good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching.
- Teachers deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engage students and meet most of their needs.
- Appropriate emphasis is given to developing students' understanding of key terms and technical vocabulary.
- Lessons proceed at an appropriate pace and good and skilful questioning challenges students' thinking.
- In a minority of lessons, students are given too little responsibility for their own learning and this reduces their motivation.
- Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT). The department's excellent website helps to support students' learning.
- Teaching makes good and effective use of real world examples in lessons, although there are limited opportunities for students to visit businesses and engage directly with employers.
- Students are well supported and generally receive effective feedback on their work, although there is variation in the quality of this at Key Stage 4.
- Students' workbooks are often poorly presented and do not support learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The business-related curriculum is good.

- The range of examination courses meets the needs of most students well.
- There are clear progression routes for most students and plans are in place to extend these through the introduction of a new Level 2 course in the sixth form from September 2009.
- There are satisfactory opportunities for students to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability in Years 9 to 11 and plans are in place to extend these during 2009. Food technology and geography were identified as making effective contributions to developing students' economic well-being.
- International enterprise days and extra-curricular activities provide good opportunities for students to develop their team working and problem solving skills.

Leadership and management of business education

Leadership and management of business education are good overall.

- The business studies department has a good record of success in raising standards.
- The quality of self-evaluation is very good and there are realistic strategies for improvement.
- Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are in place.
- There is generally effective monitoring of staff performance. Staff development needs are identified systematically and followed up.
- Students' progress is monitored effectively and appropriate interventions are made to tackle underachievement.
- There is satisfactory coordination of the provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability. Broad learning outcomes are identified but these are not assessed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing ways to improve the self-confidence of students in Years 10 and 11 who find it difficult to work independently
- ensuring that students consistently receive good quality feedback on their work and suggestions for improvement are followed up
- developing better ways of tracking and monitoring the progress students make in developing economic and business understanding and financial capability as they move through the school.

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/local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Vic Chivers
Her Majesty's Inspector