

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Ms J Fortune
Headteacher
Central Foundation Boys' School
Cowper Street
London
EC2A 4SH

Dear Ms Fortune

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 February 2009 to look at work in business education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on economic and business understanding 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 without their consent.

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 parts of five lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- Standards in the 2008 GCSE examinations were above average overall and were very high in GCSE business studies. In the sixth form, value added information suggests that students make particularly good progress in the A level business and economics course. Lesson observations indicated that achievement is excellent overall.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent. They believe that they achieve really well in the subject because teachers are enthusiastic and very approachable. Teachers provide a great deal of extra support outside of lessons. Excellent support for students in and out of lessons leads to students' outstanding achievement.
- There is a very good provision of academic, vocational and applied courses which meet the needs and interests of a wide range of learners and the school is intending to introduce the new diploma in

business, administration and finance from September 2009. Students have good opportunities to take part in Young Enterprise, where they have won in a range of categories in the regional final, and were placed in the national final of the Young Consumer of the Year competition in 2008.

- The progress of students is monitored very carefully and frequently. Interventions take place whenever underachievement is identified. This is linked to very clear and explicit assessment criteria. Students are well aware of how to improve their work through helpful written comments and oral feedback.
- A wide range of teaching and learning approaches is employed. Students referred to a mixture of activities 'so it doesn't get boring'. They enjoy the subject because 'you understand the world.' They are highly engaged through teaching that consistently relates the subject to the real world. There is an extensive range of links with businesses and visits and visiting speakers do much to help bring the subject alive. Creative use of information and communication technology (ICT), such as well chosen video clips, helps to maintain the interest of students.
- There is good support for newly qualified and less experienced teachers in business education.
- The school is experimenting with ways to assess students' activity and development of economic well-being education, for example through a student 'passport'.
- The school has audited enterprise provision across the curriculum. In Key Stage 4, nearly all students do a business-related course. The school is aware that this does not cover all aspects of economic and business understanding for all students and has made extensive provision for this across the rest of the curriculum. Results in business have helped raise standards across the school.
- A deputy head is the former head of business and maintains a close strategic interest. The head of department has responsibility for both business and enterprise, ensuring coherence and the involvement of subject expertise in the provision for enterprise and financial capability across the school. Departmental self-evaluation is strong and there is good strategic planning to bring about further improvement.

Area for development, which we discussed:

- further develop the arrangements to monitor the experiences and progress of all students in economic well-being to ensure progression.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector