

13 May 2009

Dr J Reavley
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Dear Dr Reavley

Ofsted survey inspection programme: business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05-06 May 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.

The overall effectiveness of business education, including the support to develop students' economic well being was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in business education are good.

- Standards remain below national levels at GCSE but students make good progress, given their starting points. Students who speak English as an additional language and those who only joined the school in Years 10 or 11 make excellent progress. Sixth form students make very good progress.
- Students' ability to learn independently in business lessons is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and good in the sixth form.
- Students not taking business examination courses develop satisfactory economic and business understanding and financial capability overall, but there is substantial variation between students. Most students give thoughtful responses to questions posed about major ethical issues.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in business education is good.

- The good or better progress made by most students in business studies reflects the consistently good quality of the teaching and learning.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning.
- Business studies teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching. They deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engage students and meet most of their needs. Effective use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning.
- Appropriate emphasis is given in business studies to developing students' understanding of key terms. Lessons proceed at an appropriate pace and skilful questioning challenges students' thinking. At the end of lessons, teachers check students' learning and reinforce key points. There is good support for students experiencing any difficulties in developing their understanding. Students' files and workbooks effectively support revision for examinations and further work.
- Business studies students are able to express their ideas reasonably well in discussions. Most work co-operatively in teams and are supportive of each other. Students receive helpful feedback on their work and their progress is carefully monitored. Students' steadily gain in confidence as they move through years 10 and 11.
- Business studies students have limited opportunities to visit local businesses or engage directly with employers.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the business education curriculum is good.

- Examination courses in business meet the full range of students' needs and interests and there are clear progression routes for students with different levels of prior attainment. Recent changes to the examination courses offered have meant that provision is now much better suited to students' preferred learning styles.
- The business studies curriculum is highly inclusive and the school focuses strongly on developing students' self-esteem.
- All students have access to a wide range of enterprise activities and these make an effective contribution to developing students' enterprise capability. Art, graphics, science and various extra-curricular activities make particularly significant contributions. There is potential for extending the extra-curricular provision to a wider range of students.
- Opportunities for students not taking business studies to develop their broader economic and business understanding and financial capability are still being developed and plans are in place to extend these during 2009. However, many assignments and projects do involve students in developing their ideas to meet the needs of potential customers.
- Learning outcomes at a whole school level have not yet been systematically identified.
- Work experience in Year 11 helps students improve their understanding of the world of work. There is a strong focus on students developing new work-

related skills during their placements and effective follow-up enables this learning to be consolidated.

- The sixth form tutorial and enrichment programmes effectively promote enterprise and financial capability.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of business education are good.

- The business studies department has a good recent record of success in promoting students' achievement. The quality of self-evaluation is good and there are realistic strategies for improvement. Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are in place, with clearly identified learning outcomes. There is effective monitoring of staff performance and effective support is provided where necessary. Staff development needs are identified and followed up.
- Coordination of the provision to develop students' enterprise capability is good. However, provision to promote wider economic and business understanding and financial capability across the school is less well developed. There is no overall system in place for assessing all aspects of economic and business understanding and financial capability. The characteristics of being enterprising have been identified but these are not used systematically to promote students' learning.
- The school has many links with local businesses which support, for example, enterprise days and Year 11 work placements. However, limited use is made of contacts with employers and businesses to support students' project and assignment work in business studies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the range of extra-curricular activities which promote enterprise capability, with a view to making these available to a wider range of students
- building on current practice, strengthen the tracking and monitoring of students' progress in developing economic and business understanding and financial capability as they move through the school
- extending the links with employers in business studies to support students' project and assignment work.

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