

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr Graham Ridley
Headteacher
Selly Oak Trust School
Oak Tree Lane
Selly Oak
Birmingham
B29 6HZ

Dear Mr Ridley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 and 24 September 2009 to look at work in business education.

As this special school does not provide examination courses in business education, the visit focused on the development of economic and business understanding and financial capability for all students at Key Stage 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of 14–19 developments in business education.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and financial capability is good.

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is good.

- Students receive a good grounding in economic and business concepts and personal financial understanding. They are building a

good range of skills, such as communication and team-working skills, that make a valuable contribution to their economic well-being,.

- Students have very positive attitudes to the activities designed to develop their economic well-being. In the lessons observed, their behaviour was exemplary and they were fully and enthusiastically engaged in the tasks they were set.
- Students consistently demonstrated a good level of attainment and independent learning skills. They worked well together in groups and particularly enjoyed this method of learning.
- Students used information communications technology (ICT) confidently and well to support their learning.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and an excellent rapport with their students. Lessons were planned well, with clear objectives that were clearly communicated to students. Non-teaching assistants worked well to support the teacher and the students. Teachers made good use of ICT to enhance learning.
- In the lessons seen, the teachers provided a good range of learning activities and succeeded in maintaining students' interest by setting relevant and stimulating tasks. Lesson activities built well on students' previous knowledge and areas for development. The teachers took care to check students' understanding of key ideas and made good use of questioning to extend their learning. They also provided appropriate challenges for the higher-attaining students.
- The teachers encouraged students to use appropriate terminology. and regularly used real-life examples to support learning.
- The marking of students' work is detailed and thorough. Students receive highly-constructive feedback on their written work.

Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good.

- There are good opportunities for students to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability, including well-organised enterprise activities which they value highly.

- Work experience is well established in the sixth form and is developing elsewhere in the school. Preparation for placements is thorough and there are appropriate arrangements for students to evaluate what they have learnt from these experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in business education is good.

- Thorough auditing of the curriculum has given the school a comprehensive overview of the current provision for economic well-being and financial capability.
- The school works well with its trust partner, and a range of businesses and other organisations, to support students' business education.
- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how to improve this provision further. They have well-conceived plans to strengthen the coordination of the existing provision for economic well-being, and to integrate the evaluation of work experience and enterprise activities into an overall assessment programme. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement.

Subject issue: the impact of 14–19 developments in business education

The school places a strong focus on students' future employability. It is working well with a range of partners to extend the vocational curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 and to enable them to gain appropriate qualifications.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- maintaining the focus on strengthening the coordination of the provision for economic well-being and financial capability for all students
- implementing plans for an overall programme to assess students' economic well-being.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Russell Jordan
Her Majesty's Inspector