

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



29 October 2009

Mr A Bloxham
Principal
Preston School
Monks Dale
Yeovil
Somerset
BA21 3JD

Dear Mr Bloxham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – business education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 October 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 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils'/students' work and observation of five part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business education, including the development of students' economic and business understanding and financial capability was judged to be good.

Achievement in business education

Achievement in business education is satisfactory overall.

- Although attainment, as indicated by examination results, is below average at Key Stage 4, it is improving strongly and overall learning and progress are good.

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons is excellent. They develop very good independent learning skills and good ability to work together in teams. Their written work is often very well presented. They show confidence in lessons and often make good and insightful contributions to class discussions.
- Students not taking business examination courses are developing a good understanding of basic economic and business concepts and sound personal financial capability.

Quality of teaching in business education

The quality of teaching in business education is good.

- Most teaching is good and none is inadequate; this is reflected in the good progress made by most students.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching.
- Lessons are planned well and incorporate differentiated learning objectives covering the full range of students.
- Teachers deploy an appropriate range of styles that effectively engage students and meet their range of needs.
- Skilful questioning challenges students' thinking.
- Effective use is made of IT to support teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Teaching is often linked to real-world examples.
- Students are supported well in their learning and receive good feedback on their work so they know what progress they are making and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in business education

The quality of the curriculum in business education is good overall, with some outstanding features.

- Examination courses in business now fully meet the range of students' needs and interests.
- Students have some excellent opportunities to engage with local businesses and employers. However, those taking GCSE Business Studies have relatively few opportunities and would benefit from more.

- There are some good opportunities for all students to develop their economic and business understanding and financial capability. The school has a good overview of provision and has identified appropriate learning outcomes but these are not currently assessed systematically.
- Personal social health and economic education (PSHEE), citizenship, work experience and the extensive range of projects, challenge and enrichment activities help enhance the students' entrepreneurial skills.
- Some excellent international links help students understand the nature of the global economy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in business education

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

- The department has a good recent track record in raising standards and improving students' achievement.
- Self-evaluation is good and informs realistic strategies for bringing about improvement.
- Departmental planning is good and appropriate schemes of work are in place.
- There is effective monitoring of staff performance and good support is provided where necessary.
- Students' progress towards meeting challenging targets is monitored effectively and appropriate interventions are made when there is underachievement.
- There is effective coordination of provision to develop students' economic and business understanding and financial capability. Learning outcomes linked to enterprise capability have been identified and a start has been made on assessing students' progress in achieving them.

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

- There are clear post-16 progression routes in business education available locally for students with different levels of attainment.
- The school has recently refined its Key Stage 4 provision to better meet the needs of a broader range of students and raise achievement, for example, through the introduction of vocational and enterprise programmes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- enabling all business studies students taking examination courses to have frequent engagement with local businesses and employers within their programmes
- building on current plans to support students in developing their enterprise capability, by putting in place a system to track and monitor students' economic and business understanding and financial capability as they move through the school.

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/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