

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr D Jones
Headteacher
Toynbee School
Bodycoats Road
Chandler's Ford
Eastleigh
SO53 2PL

Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Business and enterprise education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05-06 February to look at work in business education. As the school does not offer examination courses in business, this visit focussed on the provision made for enterprise education, including the development of financial capability and economic and business understanding.

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. 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 parts of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in enterprise education is good.

- Students are developing good enterprise skills and this is reflected in their growing self-confidence and enthusiasm for taking on new challenges.
- Students are developing a good understanding of personal finance. Some year groups are still to benefit from the recently enhanced programme of personal finance education, so levels of financial capability vary.

- The good range of business enterprise activities helps most students develop a reasonable understanding of basic business concepts. The extra-curricular enterprise activities and competitions have helped some students gain an excellent understanding of entrepreneurial activities.
- Students' economic understanding is underdeveloped. The learning outcomes students are expected to achieve are not as clearly identified as they are for enterprise skills and financial capability.
- The great majority of students have good attitudes to learning. Many speak with great enthusiasm about the enterprise activities they have undertaken and are keen to have more. A team of Year 11 students who reached the national finals of an enterprise competition had clearly gained a great deal in terms of their personal development, as well as developing their business skills and understanding.

Quality of teaching and learning of business education

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

- Evaluations of the personal development learning days involving enterprise education indicate that they are well organised and generally very well received by students. Interviews with students confirmed that they valued these experiences. They could also point to lessons in a range of subjects where enterprise education had made learning more stimulating and interesting.
- Vocational and applied examination courses have recently been introduced in several subjects. These are well taught and make appropriate references to business but students have limited opportunities to engage directly with local employers and to tackle 'real' issues as part of their courses. Some of the tasks they are set do not sufficiently challenge potentially higher attaining students.
- The work experience programme for all Year 10 students is well organised and there is good follow-up when students return from their placements.
- Some assessment of enterprise education takes place through subjects and through the evaluation of specific events but there is no overall assessment of students' progress in developing enterprise understanding, skills and attributes.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for enterprise education is good with some outstanding features.

- Much has been done to enhance the provision for enterprise education as part of work-related learning for all students in the last two years and there is now a strong and coherent programme for all year groups.

- Enterprise education is developed through personal learning days, where the normal timetable is suspended for a whole year group, through charity work and through a range of subjects.
- There are excellent extra-curricular opportunities for students to gain further experience of enterprise by taking part in local and national competitions and undertaking challenges organised by local businesses.
- All students in Year 10 undertake two weeks of work experience and the evaluations of this indicate that it is very well received. Approximately thirty students in each of Years 10 and 11 take part in college based vocational courses with extended work experience programmes. All Year 10 students have 'mock' employment interviews with employers and other personnel from outside of the school.
- Good support is provided by the local Education Business Partnership (EBP) to develop links with local businesses and involve employers in enterprise activities. Opportunities are also provided for teachers to undertake short-term placements with local employers to develop curriculum materials.

Leadership and management of business education

The leadership and management of enterprise education are good.

- You and your senior managers have a strong commitment to developing enterprise education as part of work-related learning for all students and very good progress has been made since the school was inspected in 2006. There is good capacity to bring about further improvement in this area.
- Enterprise education is effectively coordinated across the school and there is good cooperation with external agencies such as the local EBP.
- A useful audit of work-related learning, including enterprise education, has been carried out and the school keeps a detailed log of enterprise activities. Some monitoring of students' experiences of enterprise education takes place by tutors but this is not yet consistent and comprehensive.

Inclusion

The promotion of inclusion in enterprise education is good.

- There is a comprehensive programme of enterprise education for all students and additional extra-curricular activities are available to all students.
- Enterprise education is used effectively to give additional opportunities for gifted and talented students and to provide support for students with additional needs or who are disaffected.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- enhancing the provision to develop students' economic understanding
- developing the procedures for monitoring and assessing students' progress in enterprise education
- extending the opportunities in applied and vocational courses for students to engage directly with local employers and to tackle 'real' issues.

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

David Butler
Her Majesty's Inspector