

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Coláiste Eanna
Ballyroan, Dublin 16
Roll number: 60342R**

Date of inspection: 11 April 2014



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS SUBJECTS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	10 and 11 April
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Observation of teaching and learning during twelve class periods; two double and eight single lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with students• Review of relevant documents• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching observed was of a high standard overall.
- Student learning was very good in lessons where students were challenged, expertly guided and had shared ownership of learning.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers and students was exemplary in many lessons.
- There were varied practices in the type and quantity of homework assigned to students, and in its assessment.
- Business education has a good profile on the school's curriculum and a high percentage of students continue with business education from junior cycle to senior cycle.
- Planning practices are good but curricular plans are not sufficiently detailed to guide teaching and learning practices.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Where scope for development was identified, an increased use of higher-order targeted questioning, co-operative methodologies and practices that promote learner autonomy should be embedded.
- Business teachers should agree on best practice in the assigning and assessment of student work and aim for a consistent practice throughout the business department.
- Curricular plans can be further developed by aligning learning outcomes, resources, a range of assessment and teaching methodologies with each curriculum topic.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Eanna is a voluntary secondary school which provides Business Studies as a core subject in junior cycle. Business education is compulsory in the highly subscribed optional Transition Year (TY). At Leaving Certificate, students are offered Accounting, Business and Economics. The school has a current enrolment of 598 students, all male.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching observed was of a high standard overall. In a good number of lessons, exemplary teaching strategies were used, while, in a small number of lessons, some scope for further development existed.
- Student learning was of a high quality in lessons where teachers gave responsibility to students to lead their own learning. In these lessons, students also had very good opportunities to develop their higher-order and critical thinking skills.
- In the majority of lessons, students were given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups.
- In a small number of lessons, there was an over-reliance on instructional teaching and, in these lessons, students were not given sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
- The TY business module was delivered in a highly explorative manner in most of the lessons observed. In lessons where students were presenting the findings of their research project, a very high standard of student engagement was observed which reflected the depth and breadth of their learning. Students' key skills were further developed through the critical and supportive evaluation of their peers' presentations.
- In almost all lessons, ICT was used effectively. It gave a real-life and dynamic focus to business education as teachers accessed relevant resources. The high standard and content of many TY students' ICT projects were such that they could be used as topical resources in Leaving Certificate lessons.
- All lessons were very well planned. Learning outcomes that were differentiated to include higher-order thinking were shared with students in most lessons and they remained visible throughout in some lessons. As lessons concluded, learning outcomes were checked for understanding.
- Teachers generally used good questioning strategies to check student progression and to develop class discussions. Targeted questions were good, they were mainly higher-order and served to differentiate learning in the lesson. Student answering reflected good use of business terminology and knowledge.
- In some lessons, teachers emailed their notes and presentations to students. However, during a small number of lessons, students were transcribing notes that were accessible in textbooks and this was not the best use of lesson time. At senior cycle, should be encouraged to generate their own summary notes, which could be reviewed by teachers as part of assessment procedures.
- Strategies to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills were integrated into lessons. Key words were emphasised and were contextualised for the topic being taught. In many lessons, teachers wisely encouraged students to make arithmetic calculations without the aid of a calculator.

- Students are supported and encouraged by business teachers to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that deepen their understanding of business activities.
- The allocation of student homework is an area where there was inconsistent practice. The agreed strategy, as outlined in the business department's plan, was fully deployed for most class groups. However, some class groups were not receiving regular homework and this should be reviewed to ensure that all students experience a similar approach.
- Homework was generally monitored and, in some class groups, written evaluative and affirming comments of varying depth were noted on the sample of copies reviewed. To further support student learning, it is recommended that criteria for assessment be set for assignments and that more detailed formative feedback be given on lengthy assignments.
- Students are encouraged and supported to achieve to their highest potential. Business teachers operate an agreed protocol to contact parents if they have concerns related to academic progress. Uptake of business subjects at higher level is very good as are the subsequent outcomes in certificate examinations. Business teachers analyse examination outcomes and the comparison is presented in a clear graphic format.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business education has a high profile on the school's curriculum. A very high percentage of students continue with business education from Junior Certificate to Leaving Certificate.
- All business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their knowledge is current. Business teachers regularly attend subject association events and have availed of professional development courses. It is advisable to devise a formal means of sharing and recording information from in-service activities.
- The majority of classrooms where business education is delivered are located near each other and this facilitates the sharing of resources. There are some good examples of how classrooms have been used to display exhibits of students' work. The group configuration of desks in some classrooms students enabled co-operative methodologies to be used seamlessly during lessons.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well established. Business teachers work in a collaborative and supportive manner and are very committed to the continued development of the subjects.
- The six business teachers meet formally twice a year. In addition to discussions pertaining to the organising of department, business teachers discuss issues related to teaching and learning, school self-evaluation, numeracy and literacy.
- The business education plan is good in design and includes strategies and advice for dealing with specific learning needs. The inclusion of agreed practice for the mentoring of new teachers is good.
- All business teachers follow a commonly agreed programme of work in junior cycle that facilitates common assessment. Year three is heavily weighted towards book-keeping

topics and its sequencing should be re-considered. It is advisable to incorporate book-keeping elements throughout the cycle.

- The curricular plan for each business subject can be developed by aligning learning outcomes, resources, a range of assessment and teaching methodologies to each topic.
- Business teachers have devised an on-line resource of key terms and this good practice should be extended by sharing further electronic resources and information.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.