

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	C.B.S. Westland Row
Seoladh na scoile / School address	South Cumberland St Dublin 2
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60490J

Date of Inspection: 21-11-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Business under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	21-11-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during one double and two single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

CBS Westland Row is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school offers Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school serves an urban catchment area in Dublin city centre and is involved in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. The school offers Business Studies in Junior Cycle, and Accounting and Business as optional subjects in senior cycle. Business education is compulsory in the school's optional TY programme

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- A very high standard of teaching was observed throughout the evaluation; teachers gave a real-life focus to business education and taught for understanding which successfully advanced student learning.
- Assessment practices were adequate, there were some possibilities for improvement in the provision of written formative feedback on students' work.
- The quality of student learning was very good overall; students' enjoyment and engagement in learning was evident and was often linked to a sense of making progress and of achievement.
- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good.
- The organisational, planning and collaborative practices of the business subject department are very good; planning for TY requires further development.

Recommendations

- Additional detailed written formative feedback that gives direction as to how students could improve their work should be provided on assessments and assignments.
- Revisions to the TY plan should specify the experiential learning outcomes and appropriate teaching methodologies required to encourage the further development of students' applied business skills.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- A very high standard of teaching was observed throughout the evaluation; teachers gave a real-life focus to business education and taught for understanding which successfully advanced student learning.
- All lessons were well prepared with distinct introduction, developmental and review phases. At the outset of lessons, learning intentions were shared with students and as the lesson concluded, they were reviewed. Very good practice was noted in a lesson where students were required to reflect on their learning experience and articulate if any change in their learning or teacher's practice was required.
- Teachers selected and used a variety of teaching methodologies to match the learning intentions of the lesson to meet the learning needs of students and to open up further relevant learning opportunities.
- In all lessons, the positive and respectful interactions among students and between students and teachers were conducive to a sense of student well-being in the productive learning environment.
- Business classrooms are well maintained. Teachers have developed a very good print-rich environment and in some classrooms have arranged seating so that it is conducive to pair and group work.
- In all lessons, there was a good focus on the development of students' literacy skills. Students and teachers worked in partnership to explore and decipher unfamiliar words and subject-specific terminology.
- Teachers gave very good one-to-one support and guidance to students where required. In some lessons, worksheets and homework tasks were differentiated to best support students' understanding of concepts. Reinforcement of learning through a variety of activities, while maintaining high expectations of students, was a positive feature of many lessons.
- The quality of student learning was very good overall; students' enjoyment and engagement in learning was evident and was often linked to a sense of making progress and of achievement.
- In all lessons, students had good opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. Students had a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities when undertaking group activities.
- Information and communications technology was effectively used to display informative and colourful video and visual resources which aided the embedding of subject material during lessons. The good practice by some teachers of uploading resources to students' electronic mail accounts is worthy of expansion.
- It is praiseworthy that students are encouraged and supported to participate in enterprise activities which are beneficial to their understanding of business theory and to the development of key skills. The school's established business partnership link provides valuable learning opportunities for students through classroom and out-of-school visits.
- Effective questioning strategies were used in lessons to assess student knowledge and to encourage interaction and engagement. A range of higher-order and lower-order targeted questions was used effectively to differentiate between ability levels and to challenge students.

- Overall, assessment practices were adequate. Teachers regularly correct students' homework and use affirming comments. To further support student learning, more detailed written formative feedback that gives direction as to how students could improve on their work should be provided on assignments.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole school support for business education and of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities by management is very good, this helps to foster a culture in which learning in business education flourishes.
- There is very good provision of business subjects in the context of a small school.
- To enable first-year students to make an informed subject choice, they are offered a short sampling programme of all optional subjects. While the current first-year uptake of Business Studies is relatively low, there is very good uptake of Business Studies in second and third year and of Accounting and Business in senior cycle.
- The business department is aware of the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. There is very good communication between the school's special education department and the business department in this regard.
- Senior management encourages teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices. Whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) has been provided. This included input on strategies to aid students with additional needs and teaching methodologies. Teachers in the subject department have partaken of subject-related CPD.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The organisational, planning and collaborative practices of the business subject department are very good. The cohesive business team is well organised and has worked collaboratively over a number of years. The very good working relationship between business teachers was reflected in the quality of their interactions during the inspection visit.
- The regular business department meetings include discussions that directly relate to student learning. These include teaching strategies and the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. It is evident from minutes of meetings and planning documentation that teachers use formal meeting and planning time to reflect on and evaluate their work in the school. Reflection by one teacher on what worked well in lessons was noted in planning documentation.
- A good overall plan for the delivery of business education is in place. It contains relevant student-related policies, comprehensive details of the best teaching and learning strategies for students with special educational needs, DEIS planning targets, strategies to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills and agreed practices on the setting of student homework.
- High quality curriculum plans for each business subject are generated in terms of the teaching and learning needs of the student cohort. The layout and detail of curriculum plans for most year groups are very good. It is evident from planning documentation that teachers are successful in linking theoretical knowledge to real life case studies; this is commendable. One area that should be further developed is TY planning. Revisions to the TY plan should specify the experiential learning outcomes and appropriate teaching methodologies required to encourage the further development of students' applied business skills.

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.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;