

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Business Subjects**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	St Patricks Cathedral Grammar School
<b>School address</b>	St Patricks Close Dublin 8
<b>Roll number</b>	606601

**Date of Inspection: 02-02-2017**



**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. Learning, teaching 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 DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date of inspection</b>	02-02-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School is a co-educational school serving an urban catchment area with a current enrolment of 173 students. Business Studies is an optional subject in junior cycle as is Business in Leaving Certificate. Business education is provided in the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons ranged from very good to good.
- Business teachers created a rich student-centred learning environment that supported an enjoyable, incremental and engaging learning experience for students.
- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is good.
- The organisational, planning and collaborative practices of the business subject department are satisfactory.
- Students and teachers are engaging well with the new Business Studies specification in lessons; there are deficits in planning for the delivery of the new specification.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should continue to develop and expand their repertoire of effective student learning methodologies, assessment for learning (AfL) strategies and use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a student learning tool.
- All business teachers should familiarise themselves with the new Business Studies specification and work collaboratively to prepare a teaching, learning and assessment plan based on the strands and learning outcomes of the new specification.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons ranged from very good to good. Business teachers created a rich student-centred learning environment that supported an enjoyable, incremental and engaging learning experience for students.
- A good blend of teaching methodologies that included pair work, learning games, group tasks, guest speakers and student-teacher discussion was observed throughout the evaluation. In a very small number of lessons there was scope to reconfigure the practice of student note taking of material that was readily available in textbooks.
- The student voice was a strong feature in most lessons. Students had opportunities to present their homework and outcomes of co-operative learning activities and also participate in discussions during lessons.
- First-year students engaged well with the new specification for Business Studies. Students were provided with opportunities to further develop their subject-specific and key skills through well-chosen learning activities such as a poster competition to demonstrate their financial lifecycle and through varied project work.
- It is praiseworthy that in many lessons there was evidence of students conducting research and familiarising themselves with topics in advance of lessons. In a lesson where students working in pairs created a fictional business, their thinking, understanding and application of knowledge was effectively stimulated through the lens of being the owner of that business.
- In all lessons, students had opportunities to engage in well-planned and high quality co-operative learning activities that included 'think-pair-share' tasks and differentiated team-based student group activities.
- In all lessons, learning intentions were shared with students. Best practice was observed in lessons where learning intentions were presented in the form of what students should be able to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson and as the lesson concluded, attainment of the learning intention was reviewed. Best practice should be adopted by all teachers.
- In most lessons, ICT was used as a tool to present lesson material. In a small number of lessons, the use of ICT to provide customised templates for book-keeping questions in order to enhance the presentation of answers should be considered by teachers. In addition, the use of ICT should be further developed in order to give a dynamic focus to business education by accessing relevant case studies, websites, extracts of television programmes and interactive resources, where appropriate.
- The TY business module is delivered in an explorative manner befitting the programme's ethos and aims. Learning activities such as project work, student presentations and participation in Junior Achiever and Mini-company seek to further develop students' entrepreneurial and key skills.
- Overall there was good rapport between teachers and students in lessons. In-class support for students was very good. In a small number of lessons, where some students had finished an assignment, they would have benefitted from an additional task to keep them engaged and challenged. This would have further supported differentiation.

- In all lessons, very good questioning strategies were used to make links with prior learning, assess student knowledge and facilitate differentiated learning.
- Homework was regularly assigned to students. It was praiseworthy that some class groups received varied modes of homework such as research of subject content and project work. This good practice should be expanded.
- Good practice was observed as some students' work was returned with affirming and formative comments. In a small number of lessons, students' corrected each other's work using set criteria. Commendably, in a lesson, students had to review their completed assessments, check their answers and make appropriate corrections. These good AfL practices should be expanded.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is good.
- The sampling of Business Studies by first-year students for half of first year provides all students with some financial literacy skills and facilitates the making of a well informed decision on subject choices. Student uptake of Business Studies and Business is currently very good in the context of the range of subjects being offered in a small school.
- In some teacher-based classrooms there were good examples of student-generated and visual learning resources on display. The potential to further develop and in some instances create a visual learning environment for business students should be further exploited.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. They have accessed continuing professional development relating to their subjects and are members of their professional subject association.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The organisational, planning and collaborative practices of the business subject department are satisfactory.
- The team of business teachers have not had the opportunity to meet formally as a business department during the year. Minutes of the annual business department planning meeting indicated that a range of relevant teaching and learning areas are discussed.
- A good over-arching plan for business education is in place. The business subjects plan should be extended to include an agreed business department strategy to progress the school's self-evaluation improvement targets in literacy, numeracy and AfL.
- The curriculum plan for Business Studies is a collection of teachers' individual plans for their year group and as a result the sequencing of topics for each year group is different for each plan. Collaborative planning should be progressed to allow for the collation of one succinct programme of work for each business subject.
- All business teachers should familiarise themselves with the new Business Studies specification and work collaboratively to prepare a teaching, learning and assessment plan based on the strands and learning outcomes of the new specification.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## 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 quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;