

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

Subject Inspection in Business and Accounting

REPORT

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| School name | Saint Dominic's College |
| School address | Cabra Dublin 7 |
| Roll number | 60731F |

Date of Inspection: 21-02-2018



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 and Accounting 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.

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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION.

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

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| Date of inspection | 21-02-2018 |
| 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, two deputy principals and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. |

School context

Saint Dominic's College is a voluntary secondary school for girls operating under Le Chéile Schools Trust. The current year enrolment is 858 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) as an optional programme, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good; in a very small number of instances, however, the teaching and learning was found to be fair.
- Learning intentions were shared with students and displayed clearly in all lessons; this strategy supported a highly effective learner experience and brought a clear focus to what students should be able to do at the end of the lesson.
- Some highly effective constructive feedback was provided on students' written work; its use was not consistent across the department however.
- There was evidence of a learner-centred environment, to varying degrees, in the majority of lessons; the positive impact on learning was most evident where this practice was assured.
- Junior and senior-cycle uptake is below the national norms over the past number of years for Business Studies and Business while above norms in relation to attainment; however uptake and attainment levels for Accounting are both below national norms and require an action plan to improve the profile of the subject.
- The quality of planning in the business department was good and collaboration among teachers is well established; rotating the role of subject co-ordinator ensures maximum input from all staff.

Recommendations

- There is scope for further collaboration across the subject department with a view to moving the experience of learning in the classroom from a passive teacher-led model to a facilitated learner-centred one.
- Modelling of students' work should be developed further; this strategy would allow students to view a piece of work and engage in active feedback.
- Constructive feedback should be further developed across the business department to the benefit of reinforcing learning.
- Scope for development exists through the introduction of a rotating TY module of Business, Accounting and Economics with the long term vision of adding a third business subject offering at senior cycle within the school.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good. In a very small number of instances, however, the teaching and learning was found to be fair.
- There was evidence of a learner-centred environment, to varying degrees, in the majority of lessons; the positive impact on learning was most evident where this practice was assured. There is scope for further collaboration across the subject department with a view to moving the experience of learning in the classroom from a passive teacher-led model to a facilitated learner-centred one.
- Teachers shared learning intentions with students and displayed them clearly in all lessons. This strategy supports effective learner experiences due to a clear focus on what students should be able to do by the end of the lesson. In highly successful lessons, learning intentions were revisited to assess and consolidate learning. In these instances, teachers demonstrated an awareness of how these outcomes could be used to inform planning for future lessons.
- The pace and structure of most lessons were good with smooth transitions from one stage to the next and students engaged well with the learning activities. Teachers made meaningful connections to real-life situations.
- Students' self-management skills were very well supported through the use of purposeful and engaging pair and group tasks. In some lessons, there was an overemphasis on note-taking with little evidence of note-making. By developing students' skills to note-make and phrase key points in their own words teachers would gain a better insight into how the students are learning and where additional support is needed.
- Teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) resources in most lessons. Media clips and presentations enhanced the quality of teaching and learning. Further scope for development exists in facilitating student use of ICT.
- Modelling of students' work should be developed further; this strategy would allow students to view a piece of work and engage in active constructive feedback. Some very good practice was observed in a small number of lessons where students took the lead in the learning. Identifying and affirming students' work that is of good quality is key to preparing them for self-assessment. Where possible, teachers should use visualisers to provide opportunities for students to view exemplars of their peers' work and engage in constructive feedback and peer assessment. Teachers are advised to share success criteria with the students so as to help develop this strategy.
- Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers in almost all lessons. They circulated well among the students and this was observed to encourage good student participation. Teachers were alert to providing one-to-one support to students of all ability levels where needed. In the majority of cases teachers provided challenging tasks for the more able students.
- Effective questioning strategies were used in the majority of lessons. Best practice was observed when teachers provided adequate wait time for students to answer.
- Some highly effective constructive feedback was noted on students' written work. This practice should be further developed across the business department. The reflection sheet which was used by learners in some lessons following summative assessments is a commendable initiative and should be extended; information gathered should be used to inform teacher planning.
- Interactions between students and teachers were respectful in all lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for business subjects is very good.
- Prior to starting first year, students are offered Business Studies on a line with Science and Home Economics from which they choose two subjects. Students have an option to study two senior-cycle Business subjects, Accounting and Business. In TY, mini-company is offered to add a Business element to the programme.
- Junior and senior-cycle uptake is below the national norms over the past number of years for Business Studies and Business while above norms in relation to attainment; however uptake and attainment levels for Accounting are both below national norms and require an action plan to improve the profile of the subject.
- Time allocation for the subjects at junior cycle, TY and senior cycle is very good. There is a very good level of teacher engagement with continuing professional development (CPD), strongly supported by school management.
- Scope for development exists through the introduction of a rotating TY module of Business, Accounting and Economics with the long term vision of adding a third business subject offering at senior cycle within the school.
- The business team organises a very good range of co-curricular activities; these include enterprise fairs, company visits, work experience and visiting speakers. These activities enable students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom as well as creating a positive profile for Business in the school community.
- Teachers benefit from being active members of the subject association, the Business Studies Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI).

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning in the business department is good. Subject planning is well established, and co-ordinated in an informed manner. The subject co-ordinator role is shared which helps to ensure maximum input from all staff.
- The development of an action plan for business subjects would further enhance subject planning; linking the planning to the school self-evaluation (SSE) work underway would be worthwhile.
- Whole-school priorities for literacy and numeracy are integrated into business lessons. This good practice could be developed further; for example by providing regular opportunities for students to summarise and rephrase their learning in their own words or by completing a business financial literacy journal.
- Good subject and programme plans have been developed. These should be improved by providing an enhanced, cross-strand approach to student learning in line with the new junior-cycle specification for Business Studies.
- The plan for business education should be considered a live reference document accessible to all staff; sharing created digital resources would help to ensure better consistency of practice.
- School management ensures that professional time is provided to every business teacher in the school in line with best practice.
- Following attendance at in-service, the business department should agree a strategy for trialling the new methodologies in classes. It would be very beneficial for the teachers to do this through peer mentoring.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, two deputy principals and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 <i>very good</i> 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; |