

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

Subject Inspection in Business Studies

REPORT

School name	Presentation College
School address	Putland Road Bray Co. Wicklow
Roll number	61800D

Date of Inspection: 23-03-2017



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 Studies 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.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	22 & 23 March 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Presentation College Bray, is a voluntary secondary school which provides Business Studies as a core subject in junior cycle. Business education is compulsory in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme. At senior cycle students are offered Accounting, Business and Economics. The school has a current enrolment of 653 students, all male. Business Studies is the focus of this report.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching was very good, there were exemplary elements in many lessons, while there were a few areas for improvement in a small number of lessons.
- Enthusiastic teachers provided a highly student-centred and enabling learning environment.
- Student achievement and uptake of higher level in certificate examinations are very good.
- In some lessons, the use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies had a positive impact on student learning; there is potential to further develop these strategies.
- Whole school support for business education is very good.
- The planning, organisational and collaborative practices of the business subjects department are of a very high quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool should be extended in lessons, where appropriate.
- AfL strategies, such as the setting of learning intentions with success criteria and the provision of written formative feedback for students should be further developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall teaching and learning was of a very good quality with exemplary elements in many lessons, while there were some areas for improvement in a small number of lessons.
- Students and teachers are engaging very well with the new Business Studies specification. Students were provided with opportunities to develop subject-specific skills through class and project work.
- In lessons where very good practice was observed, teachers provided a highly student-centred environment, student learning experiences were incremental, enabling and enjoyable. In these lessons, the very good range of learning activities included tasks that required higher-order thinking skills, highly effective co-operative learning and stimulating use of ICT.
- Almost all lessons had a good structure. However, in a very small number of lessons, the content should be reviewed to ensure learning is incremental and that teaching for understanding underpins the choice of methodologies used.
- Students had very good opportunities to work co-operatively in almost all lessons. Students had a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities when undertaking group activities. Teachers' planning of group tasks allowed for meaningful and productive student exchanges and the plenary session facilitated learning for all.
- In a small number of lessons, the use of well-sourced, student friendly and visually stimulating resources and video clips were very effective in enhancing students' learning. It is praiseworthy that some class groups occasionally avail of the school's computer room to access resources and prepare projects. These good uses of ICT as a learning tool should be extended in lessons, where appropriate.
- General learning intentions were clearly stated at the outset of lessons. In keeping with AfL principles, learning intentions should be outlined in the form of what students should be able to do, know and understand by the end of the lesson, and in addition, the use of success criteria and review procedures should be adopted by all teachers.
- The use of relevant and topical exemplars in many lessons afforded students opportunities to develop and embed their understanding of business knowledge.
- There was good rapport between teachers and students in lessons. Teachers circulated during lessons checking on students' progress and offered good one-to-one support where required.
- The development of students' literacy skills was well supported by clear explanations of unfamiliar terminology and keywords. Commendably, some teachers placed an emphasis on students' correction of their spelling. The development of mental arithmetic was particularly good in one lesson.
- Very good differentiated questioning strategies were used in most lessons. Notably, at the outset of a number of lessons, students were questioned and prompted to display their understanding and knowledge of the topic being taught.
- Business teachers regularly assign homework. Students' work was generally well presented and labelled in the sample of copybooks viewed in each lesson. In some lessons, the noting of evaluative comments on students' work enriched their learning. It is praiseworthy that students in one class group receive written feedback on the overall quality of units of work using the 'two stars and a wish' approach. These good AfL practices should be extended.

- Students of business subjects are challenged and encouraged to aim for high academic standards and, where possible, to take subjects at the highest possible level in the certificate examinations. Student uptake at higher level and subsequent outcomes are very good.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. Senior management encourages teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices. Whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) that is centred on student learning is provided for all teachers. It was evident in lessons that teachers have embedded outcomes from CPD in their classroom practice.
- Currently, Business Studies for all year groups is timetabled for three periods per week, while this is appropriate for the new specification, it is a relatively low level of provision for the outgoing syllabus. For the duration of the current syllabus, senior management should consider increasing provision.
- There is very effective communication between personnel in the special education department and the business department with regard to the educational needs of students.
- Business teachers are mainly classroom based. There were some good examples of how the rooms have been used to display student resources. The potential of creating visual learning environments in all classrooms should be further exploited as could group seating arrangement to facilitate co-operative learning activities.
- The updating of the business notice board in a school corridor to display topical news stories and information in graphical form supports the development of numeracy and business education and is a good development.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current, they are active members of their subject association and have availed of some subject-specific CPD.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well organised and of very good quality. Business teachers work in a reflective, collaborative and supportive manner. The business department willingly shares best practice and resources to ensure that business education of a high standard is consistently provided for students.
- The regular formal business department meetings include discussions that directly relate to student learning such as assessment practices and literacy and numeracy development. The use of a shared folder on the school server facilitates communication and collaboration within the business department.
- A very good overall plan for the delivery of business education is in place. It contains relevant student-related policies, agreed practices on the setting and correction of student homework and the business department's strategy to progress the school's self-evaluation improvement targets in literacy and numeracy.
- The curriculum plan for the new specification is in development with some very good learning activities for each topic already noted. Business teachers are encouraged to progress this good work collaboratively. The use of the curriculum plan as a working document, wherein reviews and comments are made on the success or otherwise of its implementation would be of benefit to the overall planning in the department.

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 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
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;