

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Joseph's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Nun's Island Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	62960H

Date of Inspection: 16-05-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	15 & 16 May 2019
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Joseph's College, Galway City is an all-boys voluntary secondary school which operates under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Schools Trust. It has a current enrolment of 770 students. As well as the Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate, the school has an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good.
- Effective practice was observed when teachers shared the intended learning with students; this provided students with a clear focus on what they would be able to do at the end of the lesson.
- Some written feedback for improvement was evident in student copies, this effective practice is a key strategy for developing student learning.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good.
- There is very good uptake of business subjects with Accounting, Business and Economics offered at senior cycle.
- Subject planning is very good; regular teacher reflections are part of the schemes of work for all years and programmes.

Recommendations

- Teachers need to adopt a common approach to the use of learning intentions in all lessons across the business department.
- Teachers should develop and embed a departmental approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work.
- Further development of subject planning should be progressed by using the collective teacher reflections to support the development of an action plan with short, medium and long-term goals for the business department.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good; this included very good practice in some lessons. Teachers' and students' subject knowledge was of a high quality.
- Effective pair work was observed in most lessons; students worked successfully in a collaborative manner which facilitated a positive learning experience. In one lesson, highly effective practice was observed when students worked in pairs for a role-play activity and provided peer feedback to each other on their performance.
- Active methodologies allow students to take ownership of their learning and facilitate opportunities for students to affirm good quality work. This highly effective practice was noted when students worked in groups and provided oral feedback to the class on the completed task. However, there were opportunities in other lessons for students to be involved more actively. These opportunities should be developed to ensure lessons become less teacher centred.
- Learning was supported by lessons that were well planned and well prepared. Good use of every day real-life examples engaged students and allowed them to make meaningful links between school and the business world.
- Teacher questioning was good in all lessons observed. There was a mix of oral and written questions, with oral questions well dispersed in all lessons. The use of higher-order and lower-order questioning was employed appropriately for differentiation to occur in the mixed-ability lessons. In a few lessons, effective questioning was used to highlight links with learning from other subjects.
- Teachers shared the learning intentions with students in most of the lessons observed. However, teachers did not always refer to them specifically as learning intentions during the lessons. It is recommended that all teachers in the business department establish a common approach to the use of learning intentions. In one highly effective lesson, the teacher revisited the learning intentions at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding. Strategies to assess the achievement of planned learning intentions need to be progressed and embedded in all lessons.
- Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers. Good circulation by teachers supported students' participation. In all lessons observed, the interaction between students and teachers was very respectful and facilitated a productive teaching and learning environment.
- Some written feedback for improvement was evident in students' copies. It is recommended that this highly effective practice be extended and embedded across the entire business department. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students' learning.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons during the evaluation. High-quality oral feedback was provided to students on the completed homework tasks. Consideration should now be given to developing strategies to encourage students to engage purposefully with oral feedback.
- A stimulating learning environment was evident that included print-rich displays of students' work. Such practice provides students with a sense of ownership and encourages their development as independent learners. This good practice should continue to be developed to include the display of classroom-based assessments (CBAs).

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good. School management is very supportive of the subject.
- Business Studies is a compulsory subject at junior cycle. Timetabling of the subject across all years and programmes is very good, with the option bands for senior cycle based on students' choices. There is very good uptake of business subjects at senior cycle with the provision of Accounting, Business and Economics.
- Teachers have designed good-quality sampling modules for Accounting and Business along with Enterprise and Economics for the TY programme.
- School management facilitates the engagement of students in an extensive range of valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that encourage innovation, enterprise and creativity.
- Teachers have engaged actively in subject-specific CPD. Commendably, a whole-school policy for sharing information from CPD attended has been formulated and supports the sharing of information within the business department. The majority of business teachers are members of their subject association.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is very good. Comprehensive planning is present for junior and senior-cycle business.
- Collaboration is reported by teachers as being very good across the business department, and this is reflected in the quality of the subject plans and schemes of work. To promote greater collaboration within the department, the appointment of a single co-ordinator for the subject is recommended.
- Going forward, agendas should be devised and minutes recorded for all subject meetings; this will ensure informal discussions taking place currently are formally documented. It is also recommended that agendas include a teaching and learning item.
- Commendably, all schemes of work reviewed contain a teacher-reflection component. The introduction of a shared online platform for departmental planning will support the efficient ongoing development of collaborative and collective planning and reflection.
- Subject planning would further benefit from the development of an action plan based on teachers' collective reflections, which would identify short, medium and long term goals for the business department. This action plan should be linked with the review of student attainment in certificate examinations which takes place annually within the department.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the report and has commended the teachers of Business Subjects on the hugely positive observations within the report. It welcomes especially the commendations in relation to the following:

- In all lessons observed, the interaction between students and teachers was very respectful and facilitated a productive teaching and learning environment.
- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good. School management is very supportive of the subject.
- Teachers have engaged actively in subject-specific CPD. Commendably, a whole-school policy for sharing information from CPD attended has been formulated and supports the sharing of information within the business department.
- The overall quality of planning within the business department is very good.
- There is very good uptake of business subjects with Accounting, Business and Economics offered at senior cycle.
- Commendably, all schemes of work reviewed contain a teacher-reflection component.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Methods that may be used to bring these findings of effective practice to highly effective practice in all classes:

- More active methodologies to be used in classrooms such as group work, and more oral feedback from students after their group work.
- More effective questioning of a higher order and lower order for differentiation to occur.
- Cross-curricular links with other subjects should be more pronounced in class e.g. Maths, English, Geography and with the subjects within the faculty such as Business, Accounting and Economics.
- Learning Intentions should be written on the board and ideally students should record them. It has been agreed to implement an "Exit Pass" strategy to review the teaching and learning that takes place in class.
- Written feedback needs to be more structured and embedded in the faculty. The business department have agreed to link this in with the current School Self-Evaluation initiative. While high quality oral feedback was visible in the inspection, it has been agreed that this feedback should be recorded by students.
- While some teachers had a rich display of students' work, it has been decided that, with the written consent of parents, samples of Classroom Based Assessments will be displayed in classrooms. A consent form is being developed by the Head of department.

It has been further agreed to make two important changes within the Department, in light of the Inspection.

- A single co-ordinator of all of the Business subjects has been appointed. An agenda will be drafted for every meeting to incorporate Teaching and Learning. This should be used in both formal and informal meetings, to clearly show collaboration within the Dept. and the use of JCT professional time.
- An Action Plan is to be developed following review of student attainment in the State Examinations results, in conjunction with teachers' collective reflections.

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;