

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business and Accounting

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St Michaels Navan Co Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64370T

Date of Inspection: 07-11-2018



**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 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.

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

Date of inspection	November 7 th 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 8 class periods, two doubles and 4 single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and relevant staff

School context

Loreto Secondary School, St. Michael's, Navan is a voluntary Catholic secondary school with a current enrolment of 798 girls. Transition Year (TY) is an optional programme for students. Business studies is offered as an optional subject in Junior Cycle with Economics, Accounting and Business offered as Senior Cycle subjects.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. A vibrant print-rich display was evident in subject-based classrooms with good quality displays of the students' own work.
- The practice of sharing and discussing students' work in lessons has not yet been adopted by all teachers across the department.
- In a significant minority of lessons very useful assessment for learning (AFL) tools were used such as anticipation exercises and work-sheets.
- Formative feedback that included a grade descriptor was used to mark students' work in a small number of lessons.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; Business subjects have a very good profile within the curriculum with a high level of uptake across the school.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation of the subject is good; however, a deeper level of engagement in subject reflection would enable business teachers to reflect on their practice and build capacity across the department.

Recommendations

- Further examination and sharing of students' work with class groups would be a worthwhile approach to embedding junior cycle key skills and developing students' skills in self-assessment.
- The highly effective practice of guiding students' learning by providing them with formative feedback in their copies should be extended across the business department.

- To increase parents' and students' understanding of the assessment framework that supports junior cycle Business Studies, reporting systems should be developed that reflect the range of student learning experiences and the descriptors used with classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations.
- By developing an action plan focusing on reflective practice and evidence collated on areas for improvement, the business department's planning would be further enhanced and would link in with the whole-school approach to School Self Evaluation (SSE).

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- In highly effective lessons, learner experiences were characterised by high levels of engagement, interest and participation. Students interacted purposefully with teachers and peers and contributed to the class as a whole.
- In the lessons observed, learning intentions were shared with the students. In highly effective lessons, teachers reinforced the lesson content by revisiting and summarising the planned intentions. In some lessons students were also made aware of material that would be covered in forthcoming lessons; this is a good approach to providing a continuum in learning.
- The level of challenge, pace and structure of lessons was good with smooth transitions managed from one stage to the next. In most lessons, there was a good balance between teacher input and student participation. Learning was most effective when group work was well structured and facilitated full student engagement.
- Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers; good circulation by teachers among the students improved their participation levels. Teachers provided one-to-one support to students when necessary.
- A vibrant print-rich display was evident in subject-based classrooms. In these rooms there were good quality displays of the students' own work. Further examining and sharing of students' work with the class group would be a worthwhile approach to embedding junior cycle key skills and developing students' skills in self-assessment and would help students in preparing for classroom based assessments (CBA). The use of a visualiser would provide opportunities to view exemplars of students' work and engage in constructive feedback, assessment and peer assessment.
- Oral questioning was the dominant form of assessment. In highly effective lessons good questioning strategies were used; this had a beneficial impact on developing student understanding.
- Students were active in their own learning through questioning and in response to teachers' questions. It is good that adequate wait time was provided to them. Teachers deployed a wide range of effective methodologies; student peer assessment and questioning were particular strengths.
- A variety of well selected information and communication technology (ICT) resources was used; these included a bank of chrome books, a range of media clips and presentations, all of which enhanced the quality of teaching and learning.

- In a significant minority of lessons, very useful AFL tools were used such as anticipation exercises and work-sheets. Formative feedback that included a grade descriptor was also included to mark students' work. The very good practice of guiding students' learning by providing them with formative feedback in their copies should be extended further across the whole business department.
- Literacy development was evident in most business lessons with the focus on identifying and using the language and terminology for business. By facilitating a key word financial dictionary into senior cycle, business and accounting teachers would further assist students' literacy development of specific fiscal terminology.
- There were some examples of note making but a heavy emphasis was being placed on note taking. Students' understanding of the subject area would increase if they were required to phrase key points themselves.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons observed and is regularly corrected with date stamps and teacher initials evident in learners' copybooks.
- Teachers demonstrated a very high level of pedagogical knowledge, competency and skill in their subject area.
- Highly effective levels of classroom management were observed with exemplary student behaviour evident in all lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. Business subjects have a very good profile on the curriculum with a high level of uptake across the school.
- Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle, with Business, Economics and Accounting offered at senior cycle. The business module within the TY programme is very well designed where students are provided with subject samples of Economics, Business and Accounting for ten weeks. An Enterprise module is provided to all TY students which ensures they have an opportunity to develop their enterprise and creativity skills.
- Enterprise education is well established in the school and it is very good practice that students are encouraged and supported to take part in enterprise activities. Close links have been developed with local entrepreneurs and financial institutions. Students have received numerous awards from the National University, Maynooth to recognise academic achievement.
- Student attainment for the business subjects in certificate examinations is good. Attainment is reviewed annually against national norms. Junior and senior cycle uptake is high in the school.
- To date, the business department is reporting to parents at parent-teacher meetings and through feedback from in-house assessments. To increase parents' and students' understanding of the assessment framework that supports junior cycle Business Studies, reporting systems should be further developed that reflect the range of student learning experiences and the descriptors used with classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations.
- A shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources with one another and with their students. This is good practice.

- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend continuing professional development (CPD) activities by senior management. Some teachers are active members of their subject association, the Business Studies Teachers Association of Ireland (BSTAI). It is recommended that all teachers become familiar with the professional development opportunities provided by membership of the subject association.
- School management is supportive of the subject and a very good time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle for the subject.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation of the subject is good.
- Currently, the business department plan does not contain any reflective component. Business department planning would be further enhanced through the development of an action plan focusing on reflective practice and identified areas for improvement. This would link with the whole-school approach to SSE.
- Currently, there is no system in place for teachers to share new learning from attendance at CPD events. Following attendance at in-service, the business department should agree a strategy for sharing and trialling new methodologies in classes. It would be very beneficial for the teachers to do this through peer mentoring in line with the Droichead initiative which is established in the school.
- The coordination of the subject is shared by the core team of business teachers. They meet as a subject department regularly and compile minutes from all meetings.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, two deputy principals 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 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;