

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Muire Gan Smal
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Convent Of Mercy Roscommon Town Roscommon
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65090S

Date of Inspection: 15-10-2019



**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 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

Dates of inspection	14 & 15 October 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 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Muire gan Smal is an all-girls' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education – An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). It has a current enrolment of 510 students. The school offers Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with highly effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Pair work was observed in most lessons where students worked successfully in a collaborative manner.
- In highly effective lessons, the teacher revisited the intended learning at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding fully.
- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good, and uptake in junior and senior cycle is very good with Business, Economics and Accounting provided at senior cycle.
- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good, with schemes of work developed for junior and senior cycle business subjects which contain a valuable teacher-reflection component.
- At junior cycle, schemes of work are structured on the delivery of individual learning outcomes rather than linking learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification.

Recommendations

- Teachers should ensure that collaborative learning tasks are clearly structured and have focused outcomes.
- The use of appropriate exit strategies to assess students' understanding of the intended learning needs to be embedded across the business department.
- At junior cycle, the development of units of learning linking learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification is required.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with highly effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Pair work was observed in most lessons where students worked successfully in a collaborative manner which supported a positive learning environment. In some lessons, there were opportunities for greater engagement of students in their learning. Teachers should include appropriate opportunities for students to engage actively in their learning during all lessons, thereby facilitating them to take ownership of their learning and become independent learners.
- Students were provided with opportunities to work collaboratively in most lessons. Highly effective practice was observed when students' learning involved tasks that were structured to provide opportunities to further develop key skills and knowledge through discussion and a concluding plenary session. Teachers need to be mindful that all collaborative tasks should be clearly structured and have focused outcomes.
- Peer assessment practices are well advanced within the business department. This highly effective practice was observed in the majority of lessons and allows students to view and assess each other's work so that they develop their understanding of success criteria and how to achieve success in their own work.
- In all of the lessons observed, there was an emphasis placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, as outlined in the subject plan and supported by the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. All teachers worked diligently to ensure that students fully understood the key words and terms used on the resources provided and the display of subject-specific key words was noted in all lessons during the evaluation.
- In keeping with good practice, the learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. In highly effective lessons, the teacher revisited the intended learning at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding fully. The main exit strategy used to assess student understanding was teacher questioning. In all lessons, teachers should ensure student understanding is fully assessed through the use of a range of appropriate exit strategies. Revisiting and assessing learning intentions, when used effectively, inform the planning for subsequent lessons; it is recommended that this practice is embedded across the business department.
- Teachers made good linkages to local and topical business exemplars while explaining key concepts. Commendably, at the beginning of some lessons, the teacher and students engaged in a discussion about business and economic events in the news; this valuable activity promotes student interest in the business world beyond the business classroom.
- Individual teacher circulation during the lessons was productive, students' progress was checked and appropriate one-to-one oral feedback provided as required. Homework was assigned in all lessons during the evaluation. Some written formative feedback was noted. Teachers are encouraged to provide regular written feedback to students.
- A stimulating learning environment was evident in all classrooms visited. Students' work and projects were displayed as means to support further embedding of junior-cycle key skills and helping students in preparing for the 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 and an appropriate time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle.
- Business studies is an optional subject at junior cycle. All students study Business Studies in first year and have the option to continue the subject in second and third year. Uptake in junior and senior cycle is very good, with Business, Economics and Accounting provided at senior cycle.
- It is praiseworthy that an elective year-long module on Enterprise is provided in TY along with a module on Financial Literacy. In addition, sampling modules for Accounting, Economics and Business are provided in the programme.
- The business department has specialist classrooms and access to digital learning technologies. The layout of all classrooms supports and facilitates collaborative student activity. The school has introduced an online platform which supports the sharing of resources within the department and with students.
- School management facilitates the engagement of students in a range of valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that foster innovation, enterprise and creativity.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good.
- Collaboration is strong across the business department. Teaching resources are shared using the online platform, which is good practice. The coordination of the subject is undertaken by one teacher and the role is rotated. Teachers have engaged actively in subject-specific continuous professional development (CPD).
- Formal subject department meetings are held regularly with minutes recorded. Going forward, the agenda for these meetings should include a greater emphasis on discussion of teaching methodologies and student learning strategies along with practical matters. While such discussions are reported to occur informally, a formal record of these discussions should become part of the subject planning documentation and shared using the online platform.
- Schemes of work which contain a valuable teacher-reflection component are developed for junior and senior cycle business subjects. At junior cycle, the present schemes of work are structured on the delivery of individual learning outcomes. The development of units of learning where learning outcomes are linked from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification is recommended.
- Action planning has begun within the business department and is based currently on the grade analysis of certificate examinations which take place each year. The action plan should now be linked with the teachers' collective reflections and include defined strategies for the achievement of the stated actions.

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