

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business Subjects

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Stepaside Educate Together Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Belarmine Vale Belarmine Stepaside
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68241F

Date of Inspection: 29-11-2019



**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 Subjects 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

Date of inspection	29-11-2019
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 three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant teachers

School context

Stepaside Educate Together Secondary School is a co-educational multi-denominational post-primary school which operates under the patronage of Educate Together. The school first opened in 2016 and has a current enrolment of 215 students. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle programme and Transition Year (TY) programme and from next year will provide the established Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment of a very high standard was observed in all the lessons visited.
- Business teachers created an active, meaningful and enjoyable learning environment that sustained student interest and engagement while also challenging students to do their best.
- Teachers and students effectively used digital technologies to enhance students' learning experience and develop key skills.
- Students are regularly provided with constructive, developmental written feedback on their work.
- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good.
- The overall quality of planning for business education is very good, although, within the existing curriculum plan for Junior Cycle Business Studies, the units of learning require some further development.

Recommendations

- To further enhance the high standard of learning and teaching, learning intentions could sometimes be linked to success criteria that would focus on how students and teachers make judgements about the quality of student learning.
- Collaboratively, teachers should fully develop units of learning for Business Studies by detailing the rich learning experiences that take cognisance of the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that teachers wish to develop in lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching, learning and assessment of a very high standard was observed in all the lessons. Business teachers created a learning environment that enabled students to develop their key skills, knowledge and understanding of business in an active, meaningful and enjoyable manner.
- Lessons were very well planned. Teachers, used a range of highly effective learning activities that sustained student interest and engagement while also challenging students to do their best.
- During lessons, teachers' modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment of subject matter and used well-chosen exemplars, related to students' own lives and experiences. These approaches helped develop students' understanding of business life. Students demonstrated very good knowledge of subject matter.
- Students have electronic access to lesson plans which contain the learning intentions for each lesson. The shared learning intentions contained very good action verbs and provided a clear learning pathway for students. To enhance this approach, learning intentions could sometimes be linked to success criteria that would focus on how students and teachers make judgements about the quality of student learning.
- There was very effective use by teachers and students of digital technologies to enhance the learning experience and develop key skills. Students used digital devices in lessons to research content, to assess their knowledge and to collaborate and prepare presentations. Commendably, students are using digital technologies to share their reflection on learning with teachers. Teachers used digital technology to share learning resources, set homework assignments, provide feedback to students and show video clips.
- Students do not use a text book for business education. Students maintain their own notes which are supplemented by teacher prepared handouts, learning resources, exemplars and worksheets. These are shared with students through the school's electronic platform.
- In all lessons, a very good teacher-student learning partnership facilitated learner autonomy. There were many instances of students selecting the content they wanted to explore further. The student voice featured strongly in lessons and in some instances students took a role in leading the learning of a section of the lesson. This is highly effective practice.
- Very good opportunities for collaborative learning were provided in all lessons. Well planned deep learning tasks were a seamless aspect of the teaching and learning process. The set tasks required students to conduct research, negotiate their learning and present the outcomes of their collaborative learning.
- Teachers circulated well in lessons and their engagement with students encouraged learning. Individual oral feedback was provided to support students where necessary. Progress in learning was checked regularly.
- Commendably, in some lessons teachers sought to develop some of the Wellbeing programme indicators such as being connected and aware through their use of a 'check and connect' process and a reflection phase at the end of the lesson. This enabled students to reflect on what they did well and wanted to improve on.

- Very good differentiation strategies were observed in lessons and in homework tasks. At times, students were given a choice of tasks to complete and, in some instances, extension tasks were provided for students who had completed a task early.
- In all lessons, highly effective explorative questioning provided students with opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills and critique their answers.
- A variety of homework modes were regularly assigned to students and, in keeping with good formative assessment practices, students are regularly provided with constructive, developmental written feedback from teachers.
- Agreed targets, set as part of the school's self-evaluation process in the aspects of improving students' learning were very well integrated into teachers' classroom practice.
- The TY module in Enterprise is delivered in a manner befitting the programme's ethos and aims. Learning activities such as project work, student presentations and participation in Mini-company seek to further develop students' entrepreneurial and key skills.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good. There is very good support and encouragement by management of co-curricular and extra-curricular related activities to enhance learning in business education.
- Senior management's promotion of improvement, collaboration and creativity in teaching and assessment is evident through the provision of whole-school continuing professional development opportunities for teachers in areas that support active student learning, engagement and skill development. Commendably, the whole school engages in a 'Phenomenal learning week' in which each year group participates in a group task related to the chosen theme with teachers integrating the theme through their subject area. This project facilitates cross-curricular linkages to occur in business education.
- The school liaises with a local business to help with strategic planning for and the use of digital technology and to foster students understanding of the world of business. This is good practice.
- There is very good communication between the learning support department and the business department with regard to supporting students with additional educational needs in daily lessons. Business teachers have access to the informative student profiles which detail the strengths and priority learning needs of students and gives advice on the appropriate teaching and learning strategies that teachers can use in classrooms.
- In TY, modules in Enterprise and Leadership Skills and aspects of Accounting and Business are taken by all students. This provision enables students who are new to business education to explore aspects of business education and further develop entrepreneurial skills.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning was very good. Business teachers work in a highly organised, and dedicated manner. Their planning is focused on providing positive learning experiences and key skills development for students.
- The business department has increased this year from a one to a two teacher department. Good collaborative practice is developing with regular formal and informal meetings.

Through a collaboration with a business teacher in a neighbouring school, business teachers hold Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings to reach consistency in their judgments of student work against common features of quality.

- The overall plan for business education is a very good reference document on how business education is organised and delivered in the school.
- Significant progress has been made in planning for the delivery of the new specification for Business Studies. The subject department has made good use of the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) resource materials in developing curriculum plans. Further work on detailing the rich learning experiences that take cognisance of the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that the teacher wishes to develop in lessons through units of learning should be progressed. In addition, it is advisable that teachers of Business Studies provide a reflection on the delivery of the programme which will aid curriculum planning.

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.

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 of Stepside Educate Together Secondary School is delighted with the affirmation from the Business Inspection report with the main characteristics of learning and teaching in the school.

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

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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;