

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

School name	Cabra Community College
School address	Kilkieran Road Cabra Dublin 7
Roll number	701500

Date of Inspection: 11-10-2017



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 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date(s) of inspection	11-10-2017
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 two class periods, a double one-hour lesson and a single one-hour lesson.• Examination of students' work.• Feedback to principal and relevant staff.

School context

Cabra Community College, comprises a further education college and a co-educational post-primary school and operates under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET B). Since 2012, the school has been enrolling post-primary students and caters for 103 students currently. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools (DEIS) action plan and Junior Cycle Schools Programme (JCSP). The school offers Transition Year (TY), compulsory since the beginning of the academic year 2016, and Leaving Certificate Business to post-primary students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was fair, with some satisfactory practice evident in lessons; the main experience for students, however, was one of passive learning with little engagement either with their peers or with the teacher in exploring learning at a pace that suited their aptitudes and abilities.
- Currently, senior-cycle Business is compulsory for all students in the school as is Transition Year (TY) Enterprise; these arrangements will help to provide senior students with a good exposure to Business but there should be greater continuity studying the subject from junior cycle.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in lessons but the practice of involving students in clarifying and confirming these intentions or in assessing progress in learning was limited.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is fair and deployment of teachers is in line with their subject qualifications.
- The quality of subject planning at senior cycle is satisfactory, while junior-cycle planning is fair with no planning evident for the first-year taster programme; this deficit in planning is causing issues in uptake across the subject area and into senior cycle.

Recommendations

- The good practice of revisiting learning intentions of a lesson should include a more student-centred approach that will include, for example, seeking and affirming student opinions and helping them to reflect on learning and how to self-evaluate their progress in learning.
- The business department teachers should collaborate in developing an action plan for the subject, the plan should prioritise strategies to effectively accommodate the needs of the learner experience in classroom teaching.
- There is urgency in the need to review all factors that influence subject choice at Junior Cycle and to share the outcomes with management.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was fair, with some satisfactory practice evident in lessons.
- Teacher-led questioning was the dominant methodology and form of assessment. There should be a greater focus on more differentiated questioning that would challenge the more able learners and encourage a greater level of higher-order thinking in all lessons.
- The pitch and pace of lessons should be carefully examined to ensure that they appeal to all learners. A greater focus on group work would facilitate a move away from instructional teaching and provide opportunities to develop key skills such as peer and self-reflection.
- In all lessons, the interactions between teachers and students were respectful and affirming. Classroom management and student behaviour were good. It was observed that attendance was a major issue across all lessons with a significant minority of students absent from class.
- The language development of the subject was well addressed throughout lessons with teachers making use of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) key word wall.
- Learning intentions were shared with students; however, teachers should use the intention-setting stage to foster greater engagement by students and the intention-revisiting stage to incorporate student opinion. In the lessons observed, there was need to encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning. To do this, they must be enabled to effectively reflect on and assess their own learning. The lessons had limited opportunity for active learning; in planning for future lessons, teachers should incorporate purposeful active learning opportunities.
- Currently, there is no strategy in place for students with special educational needs (SEN) to study the subject; a clear strategy for working with SEN students would be very beneficial, particularly with regard to the development of integration and key skills.
- Homework is assigned regularly, primarily as a method of revision. It would help to enhance learning if assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies were used to support the correction of students' work with formative feedback provided more frequently by teachers.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is fair. Deployment of teachers is in line with their subject qualifications.
- Current provision for Business Studies in the Junior Cycle is unsatisfactory. At the time of the inspection, there were no junior-cycle students studying the subject. It was reported that current first-year students had been given an opportunity to sample the subject, in a line against Technology. However, Business Studies was cancelled after a number of weeks as all the first-year students opted for Technology. The non-provision of the Business Studies at junior cycle will have negative impact on future uptake and study of the subject at senior cycle. It is recommended that school management plan for the re-introduction of the subject at junior cycle; this should be informed by an analysis and review of factors affecting choice for the subject.
- Currently, senior-cycle Business is compulsory for all students as is TY Enterprise. These arrangements will help to provide senior students with a good exposure to Business but there should be greater continuity studying the subject from junior cycle.

- Time allocation and timetabling for senior cycle business are good.
- Student attainment in certificate examinations has been reviewed by teachers and school management. Attainment in the subject is fair; all senior-cycle students are studying ordinary level business, as has been the case for many years. By developing methodologies to further differentiate learning, students may be better equipped to take higher level Business at senior cycle.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning at senior cycle is satisfactory. Junior-cycle planning is fair, with no planning evident for the first-year taster programme. This deficit in planning is causing issues in uptake across the subject area.
- Student attainment in certificate examinations and performance in relation to the national norms should have a greater influence on the planning work due to the issues developing around uptake in the subject area.
- Subject department meetings are not formally documented; this should be remedied.
- There is insufficient evidence to show that subject planning is informed by reflective practice; this oversight should be addressed. Business teachers should collaborate in developing an action plan for the subject that includes, as a priority, effective strategies to better accommodate the needs of the learner in the classroom when teaching the subject.
- There was a lack of clarity in school documentation about the first-year sampling programme which had just run in the school. Subject planning at junior cycle needs to be reviewed with a particular emphasis on first-year Business Studies. An analysis and review of factors affecting choice for the subject should be undertaken and targeted interventions agreed to improve the current situation.
- The TY plan needs to be developed. Currently, it is a two-page document that makes no reference to the teaching and learning in the subject area. The plan should also include greater detail about the community-in-action programme on offer to students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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

Cabra Community College is undergoing a period of transition and is waiting the appointment of a new Principal. The recommendations are being taken very seriously by CDET and the necessary steps will be taken to address the issues highlighted.

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;