

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Roscommon Community School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Lisnamult Roscommon County Roscommon |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 72290R |

Date of Inspection: 04-03-2020



**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

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| Dates of inspection | 3 & 4 March 2020 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

School context

Roscommon Community College is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 497 students. It operates under the auspices of the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP) along with the Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good; all lessons were well prepared and students demonstrated knowledge appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Some written feedback for improvement was evident in students' copies; this effective practice is an important strategy for developing student learning.
- Very good everyday real-life examples engaged students and enabled them to make meaningful links between school and the business world.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good, with Accounting, Business and Economics offered at senior cycle.
- Enterprise is offered in TY as part of the business module; a review of the TY programme is required to include sampling programmes in Accounting and Economics.
- Subject planning is good; reflective practice is an area for further development.

Recommendations

- Teachers should develop and embed a departmental approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work.
- The TY business programme should be reviewed with a view to broadening the students' experience of the three business subjects at senior cycle.
- The subject planning process should be progressed to include reflective practice to support the development of an action plan with short, medium and long-term goals.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good. All lessons observed were well prepared and students demonstrated knowledge appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Students' learning experiences were positive when teachers used active methodologies which allowed students to take ownership of their learning and affirmed good quality work. This was particularly noted during one lesson where students undertook peer assessment activities and provided oral and written feedback on peer work. In another highly effective lesson, students were asked to peer teach using a software application which assessed students' understanding of a business topic.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons during the evaluation; this is good practice as it sets out what students should know, understand or be able to do at the end of the lesson. In most lessons, the teachers appropriately revisited the learning intentions to assess students' understanding. Various exit strategies, such as post-its, personal student reflections and traffic lights using pages from the student journal, were used successfully to assess the achievement of the learning intentions. The good practice of using learning intentions to assess students' learning should be extended to all lessons.
- There was evidence in most lessons of teachers placing a strong emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills, as outlined in the subject plan. Teachers worked diligently to ensure that students fully understood the words and terms used on the resources provided.
- The use of digital technologies to support student learning was observed in many of the lessons, through online research activities, the provision of digital student support materials and appropriate software applications.
- Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback for improvement is a key strategy for developing students' learning. While 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.
- Differentiation strategies are well developed within the business department; their use was noted in many of the lessons observed and is supported in the planning documentation. In one lesson of particular note, groups engaged in an activity to prepare a national budget and were assigned differentiated tasks to reflect their varying learning needs and abilities. Other differentiation strategies included the selection of a range of varied teaching and learning methodologies within lessons, the use of visual aids and the effective use of higher and lower-order questioning.
- Very good everyday real-life examples engaged students and enabled them to make meaningful links between school and the business world. Teachers also used examples from students' lives and their own working lives to support understanding. Links with other subjects and programmes were also noted during the evaluation.
- There was a stimulating learning environment in base classrooms, including colourful displays of student generated work as well as the display of past classroom-based assessment (CBA) projects. Examining and sharing students' work with the class group are very helpful in further embedding junior-cycle key skills and helping students to prepare for the 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 timetabling across all years and programmes is good.
- Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle. First-year students complete a six-week sampling programme before making subject choices. There is very good uptake of Business at both junior and senior cycle with Accounting, Business and Economics offered at senior cycle. Option bands for junior and senior cycle are based on student choice.
- Enterprise education is supported within the school and is a core element of the TY business programme. There is now an opportunity to review the business module in TY to include sample programmes in Accounting and Economics, with a view to broadening students' experience of the three business subjects, and increasing student participation at senior cycle.
- Senior management encourages and supports various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to enhance students' learning experiences and fosters a positive learning culture in business education. These activities include educational trips and links with local businesses and social enterprises.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good. The co-ordination of the subject is undertaken by one teacher and the role is rotated. Collaboration is strong across the business department and all resources are shared using an online platform.
- Formal subject department meetings are held regularly, with agendas and minutes recorded. The agendas for these meetings should include a greater emphasis on the discussion of teaching methodologies and student learning strategies along with practical matters; this will facilitate the sharing of pedagogical knowledge and skills within the department.
- The subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings associated with the CBAs provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on student learning and skill development. SLAR facilitator reports are included in the business plan; this is good practice as it supports capacity building and action planning for the CBA process.
- The quality of the subject plan is good overall. To further enhance the plan, it is recommended that a reflective component be added to support the development of an action plan to identify short, medium and long-term goals for the business department.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend a range of continuing professional development (CPD) events. Presently, there is no formal system to share new learning from attendance at CPD events. The business department should agree a formal strategy for sharing the learning from CPD and trialling new methodologies, where relevant.

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 Roscommon Community College wishes to acknowledge the receipt of the Report on the Subject inspection in Business.

The Board of Management would like to acknowledge the ongoing hard work of the teachers in the Business department in Roscommon Community. The Board welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Report.

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

The recommendation that "The TY business programme should be reviewed with a view to broadening the students' experience of the three business subjects at senior cycle" has been implemented on the timetable for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The recommendations that "Teachers should develop and embed a departmental approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work" and "The subject planning process should be progressed to include reflective practice to support the development of an action plan with short, medium and long-term goals" will be communicated to all subject departments and to be included as a matter of best practice.

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; |