Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Coola Post Primary School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Via Boyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Sligo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>72310U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 26-11-2019
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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>25 &amp; 26 November 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons  
• Examination of students’ work  
• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

• Review of relevant documents  
• Discussion with principal and key staff  
• Interaction with students

School context
Coola Post Primary School is a co-educational school operating under the patronage of the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). It has a current enrolment of 495 students. As well as the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school has an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (LCA).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings
• The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.
• A range of digital learning technologies was used effectively in most lessons observed to promote and develop student understanding and engagement.
• Written feedback for improvement was evident in some student copies and this effective practice is a key strategy for developing student learning.
• Subject provision and whole-school support are very good.
• Business and Accounting are offered at senior cycle, though the number of students taking these subjects has fluctuated over the past years and is a cause for concern.
• Subject planning is very good, with comprehensive schemes of work available for junior and senior cycle business subjects; and teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend a range of continuing professional development (CPD) events.

Recommendations
• Teachers should develop and embed a collective departmental approach to the provision of written formative feedback for improvement on students’ work.
• The uptake of Business and Accounting at senior cycle needs to be monitored with a view to implementing appropriate interventions which will seek to increase participation in the future.
• The business department should agree a formal strategy for sharing the learning from CPD and trialling new methodologies, where relevant.
1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good. Teachers demonstrated a very high level of pedagogical knowledge and skill in their subject area.
- A range of digital learning technologies was used effectively in most lessons observed to promote and develop student understanding and engagement. In one highly effective lesson, the teacher had created a video clip to support students with the completion of a task. The link to the video clip was shared with the students to support their learning outside of the classroom.
- Active and collaborative methodologies facilitate students to take ownership of their learning; this highly effective practice was noted when students worked in groups and collaborated to complete assigned tasks. Opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning should be incorporated into all lessons.
- In keeping with good practice and supported by the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons observed during the evaluation and revisited to assess student understanding. In one lesson, there was highly effective use of a digital learning technology to assess the achievement of the learning intentions.
- 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.
- Teachers’ questioning was very good in all the lessons observed. There was a mix of oral and written questions which were well dispersed. The use of higher-order and lower-order questioning was employed appropriately for differentiation to occur in the mixed-ability lessons.
- During the evaluation, homework was assigned in all lessons and in a range of formats including written and learning tasks. Some written formative feedback for improvement was evident in students’ copies. It is recommended that this highly effective practice be extended and embedded across the business department. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students’ learning and will complement the school’s strategy for the provision of regular summative feedback to students.
- Teachers made good linkages to local and topical business exemplars while explaining key concepts. Relevant linking with other subjects and programmes was also highlighted by teachers during the evaluation. Students displayed good subject knowledge and an ability to apply their knowledge to everyday business-related contexts.
- Examining and sharing students’ work with the class provides a helpful approach to further embedding key skills and preparation for self-assessment. Greater modelling of students’ work within the department is recommended as it allows students to view a piece of work in real time and engage in constructive feedback. The greater use of existing technologies, such as visualisers, would be useful in this context.
- A stimulating learning environment was evident that included imaginative displays of students’ work. Such practices provide students with a sense of ownership and encourages their development as independent learners.
- In all lessons observed, the interactions between students and teachers were very respectful, facilitating a positive learning environment.
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 for the subject. Timetabling of the subject across all years and programmes is very good, with the option bands for both junior and senior cycle based on student choice.
- Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle. Subject selection is made in advance of entry to first-year. Flexibility is provided for students who wish to transfer to other subjects up to the October mid-term break.
- Business and Accounting are offered at senior cycle. The number of students taking the subjects at senior cycle has fluctuated over the past years and is identified as a cause for concern in the Business department action plan. The uptake of these subjects needs to be monitored with a view to implementing appropriate interventions which will seek to increase participation in the future.
- The business teachers have specialist classrooms and access to the computer room. The use of digital learning technologies is actively promoted by senior management and was evident by the range of technologies to support learning observed.
- Close links have been developed with local financial organisations and other local businesses. School management facilitates the engagement of students in a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that encourage innovation, enterprise and initiative.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is very good. Collaboration is reported as being very strong and facilitated by the use of an online platform where all resources are shared.
- Formal subject department meetings are held regularly. Agendas are prepared and minutes are recorded for the meetings. It is recommended that the agendas for these meetings should include a stronger emphasis on the discussion of teaching methodologies and student learning strategies along with practical matters; this will facilitate additional sharing of pedagogical knowledge and skill within the department.
- Comprehensive schemes of work are available for junior and senior cycle business subjects. Teachers record their reflections after each unit of learning is completed using the shared online platform which can be accessed by all teachers in the business department.
- Enterprise education is supported and promoted within the school and is a core element of the TY business programme, and it is also the CBA1 Enterprise in Action option selected for Junior Cycle Business Studies. The subject department should review the TY programme with a view to broadening the student experience of sampling business subjects at senior cycle.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend a range of continuing professional development (CPD) events. Currently, there is no formal system in place for teachers 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 business department has devised an effective action plan with identified short, medium and long-term actions based on their collective reflections and grade analysis of certificate examinations.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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 quality the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>