

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business Studies and Business

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballinode College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Clarion Rd Sligo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	72360M

Date of Inspection: 24 October 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 Studies and 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	24 October 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 five class periods: one single period and two double periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballinode Community College is a co-educational school in Sligo, operating under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). The school's current enrolment of second-level students is 161. It participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion. Junior cycle business students participate in the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good or very good.
- Students' learning was supported through the range of learning aids developed by teachers, though better management of students' oral contributions to lessons was required on occasion.
- Assessment practices were very good, especially the supports provided for peer assessment and the use of success criteria for project work.
- Whole-school provision and support for the subjects is good, especially the analysis of student outcomes in certificate examinations in relation to in-house base-line data.
- Management endeavours to minimise disruption to students' learning when changes in staffing are required, though this year relevant information transfer was not completed.
- Teachers' individual planning for lessons is very good, however planning for junior cycle requires significant development.

Recommendations

- Greater integration of student presentations during junior cycle is needed to better manage students' oral contributions in lessons and to help prepare students for the classroom-based assessments in the subject.
- A long-term curricular plan for junior cycle Business Studies should be developed and supporting short-term schemes that build on units of learning for each of the three years of the cycle are required.
- In the event of staff changes, a handover policy outlining procedures for access to planning documentation and to students' work should be agreed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Lessons were very well planned and a wide range of customised resources was prepared by teachers to accommodate the range of learner abilities within the class groups. For example matching exercises, cloze tests and visual stimulus material were used in all lessons.
- Respect for others was a key principle underpinning teachers' management of students' interactions with the teacher and with each other. Student contributions were consistently affirmed and students with special education needs (SEN) were well supported within lessons.
- While many lessons observed were overambitious in terms of the number of activities that were planned, teachers adapted and responded well to the emerging progress of students within the class groups.
- Where questioning was best, the teacher's questions were spread through the class group. Where less successful, approaches to consider using include a no-hands strategy for selecting students and written questions that provide sufficient differentiation for the range of learners within the group.
- The prevalence of student voice within lessons varied. Students were more vocal in junior classes than in senior and in general girls were more vocal. Given the oral strengths of students, teachers need to undertake additional planning to capture students' oral learning and to ensure a balance between the use of written supports and other supports. In particular, more strategic use of student presentations, with associated research tasks would provide a structured opportunity to manage students' oral contributions in lessons.
- Opportunities were provided for students to work with others. The prompt materials used were good as was the collection of student feedback from the tasks. Teachers made very good use of electronic tablets to screenshot completed task sheets for the class to review.
- In senior cycle Business, a very good approach to homework was evident. The homework was assigned early in the lesson so that students could see how the learning from the lesson would contribute to the completion of the task. To support peer assessment, students used a teacher-developed sample to evaluate each other's work. As the correction of students' work was a feature of lessons, it helped establish expectations about homework completion. , It was evident that teachers are observing the levels of homework completion.
- Students' prior learning was also assessed in all lessons through a range of approaches including teacher-led question and answer inputs, show-me boards, and graphic organisers. Teachers provided students with comment-only checks on their work and oral feedback on progress was ongoing through the lessons. Also, success criteria were provided for second year students completing a project on marketing.
- There was evidence that the teachers were promoting the school's literacy and numeracy targets in their teaching.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Time allocation for the subjects is good and the uptake levels are relatively stable at around fifty percent of the year group. As the subject is optional and class sizes can be small, there is need to ensure a good balance between whole-class teaching approaches with the needs and sizes of the class groups.

- Whole-school priorities relating to DEIS planning are evident from the subject department planning folders and from the use of JCSP statements within the subjects at junior cycle. In addition, through DEIS the school has a well-established industry link by way of the Business in the Community (BITC) programme. This link supports senior cycle Business students as well as those students participating in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.
- There has been some turnover in the staffing of the subject department in recent years that has impacted on assigning teachers to groups for the duration of the junior or senior cycle. School management has endeavoured to minimise the impact on students' learning by appointing substitute teachers who understand the school, the profile of the student cohort and their needs. However, there is evidence that relevant information transfer is not always completed. It is recommended that a school policy be prepared for dealing with staff changes, detailing procedures for the access to planning documentation and to students' work.
- Where relevant, teachers have availed of professional development training for the introduction of the new specification for Business Studies. Also, the school self-evaluation target of developing research tasks with junior cycle class groups is very closely aligned to the skills associated with the first classroom-based assessment for Business Studies. Further analysis is required to determine the focus for the first classroom-based assessment.
- Senior management and the senior cycle Business teacher analyse students' attainment in certificate examinations in relation to available in-school base-line data for the students rather than against national averages. Given the school's context, this provides a more student-centred analysis of the outcomes achieved.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning ranges from very good to satisfactory. A particular challenge in the current school year has been the handover of class groups to a substitute teacher in the context of the new specification for Business Studies.
- The senior cycle scheme for Business is a working document that is evidently used to support lesson planning and teacher reflection. The absence of a long-term plan for the delivery of the junior cycle business studies specification outcomes over a three-year period has meant temporary short-term schemes are being developed on an ongoing basis throughout the year. While those short-term schemes have used sample planning materials prepared by the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service, they require significant development.
- All first-year students participate in a sampling programme for the subject. Future planning for this taster programme should centre on the specification element *Managing my Resources* to develop appropriate units of learning and associated activities for the sampling programme. Some analysis of the impact of the taster programme on student preferences for the subject is required.
- Minutes of department meetings are maintained and there was evidence of action planning from a previous incidental inspection, especially in the senior cycle lesson, in terms of the format and frequency of homework assigned.

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 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.

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 very good 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;