

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Subject Inspection in Business Studies and Accounting

REPORT

School name	Larkin Community College
School address	Champions Avenue Dublin 1
Roll number	760770

Date of Inspection: 06-02-2018



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; a response was not received from the board.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	06-02-2018
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 one fifty-minute class period and two one-hour class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Larkin Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of City of Dublin Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 402 students and participates in the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). The school offers the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed in most of the lessons was good; in a small number of lessons teaching, learning and assessment were fair.
- Enterprise is strong in the school with students taking part in many initiatives run by financial institutions.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is satisfactory but the arrangements for offering Business Studies to current first-year students are poor.
- Turnover in the staffing of the subject department in recent years has limited the capacity of management to assign teachers to groups for the duration of the junior or senior cycle, resulting in some negative impact on student learning and experience of the subject.
- The quality of planning and preparation within the business department was good.

Recommendations

- The heavy emphasis being placed on note taking should give way to developing students' skills to phrase key points in their own words; students' understanding of the subject area would increase as a result.
- Modelling of students' work within the department should be developed; this would allow students to view a piece of work and engage in active constructive feedback and develop peer assessment and self-assessment skills.
- The poor arrangements made for offering Business Studies to current first-year students need to be reviewed in order to give students the opportunity to sample the subject and make an informed decision on studying it and to ensure that uptake of the subject is maintained.
- A school policy should be prepared for dealing with staff changes and ensuring that procedures are in place for substitute or newly appointed teachers to access planning documentation that provides a profile of student needs.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed in most of the lessons throughout the evaluation was good. In a small number of lessons teaching, learning and assessment was fair.
- At times, there was an overemphasis on teacher-led questioning as the dominant methodology and form of assessment. There should be a greater focus in all lessons on the use of more differentiated questioning in order to challenge the more able learners and encourage a greater level of higher-order thinking.
- The pitch and pace of lessons should be carefully examined to ensure that lessons appeal to all learners.
- Learning intentions were shared with students orally in lessons thus setting a clear expectation for learning. The intention-setting stage of the lesson should be used to foster greater engagement by students and the intention-revisiting stage used to incorporate students' opinions. In the lessons observed, there was need to encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning. To achieve this, they must be enabled to reflect effectively on and assess their own learning.
- There were some examples of note making but a heavy emphasis is still being placed on note taking. By phrasing key points in their own language, students' understanding of the subject area would increase.
- Modelling of students' work within the business department should be developed further; it would allow students to view a piece of work and engage in active constructive feedback. As identifying and affirming students' work are key to developing self-assessment skills, a visualiser could be further utilised to present exemplars of students' work and develop modelling of practice and peer assessment.
- Enterprise is strong in the school with students taking part in many initiatives run by financial institutions.
- Students' work is corrected but work needs to be assigned more regularly in order to challenge all of the student cohort. A regular approach would assist in tracking students' progress and inform target setting and actions to improve attainment and uptake.
- Currently, the business department has no links to the subject organisation, the Business Studies Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI). Teachers should avail of the professional development opportunities attached to membership of and participation in the subject organisation's activities.
- In all lessons, the interactions between teachers and students were respectful and affirming. Teachers circulated regularly to assist students with their learning and classroom management was very good in all lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is satisfactory.
- Business studies is not offered to first-year students currently and they did not have the opportunity to experience the subject as part of the subject-sampling programme. This unsatisfactory arrangement needs to be reviewed so as to ensure that students are introduced to the subject and can make an informed decision about studying it. Such an approach would also support the aim of maintaining uptake of the subject.
- Uptake of the subject at junior cycle is below national norms at present and this in turn creates a lower base for selection at senior cycle.

- There has been some turnover in the staffing of the subject department in recent years that has limited the capacity of management to assign teachers to groups for the duration of the junior or senior cycle; this has impacted negatively on students' experience of the subject. 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, relevant information transfer was not completed this year. A school policy should be prepared for dealing with staff changes, detailing the procedures for accessing planning documentation.
- Student attainment in the certificate examinations is reviewed annually against national norms for the business subjects. Attainment is an area that needs to be monitored more closely due to the consistently low numbers taking business subjects in relation to national norms. By developing methodologies to further differentiate learning, students may be better equipped to take higher level in the business subjects.
- A subject department policy is in place that ensures common-level examinations are held at two assessment windows and, in line with good practice, continuous assessment takes place throughout the academic year.
- Timetabling is very good across second to sixth year for the business subjects.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation within the business department was good.
- Planning to cross all three strands of the business studies specification—personal finance, enterprise, and our economy—should be extended in order to prepare students to engage fully with the specification.
- A subject department structure is in place within the school. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The role of the subject co-ordinator has not rotated in a number of years. It would be good practice to rotate the role more frequently in order to build capacity within the department.
- The introduction of Accounting for the first time to fifth-year students during this academic year is a positive move in promoting a wider understanding of Business throughout the school.
- Business teachers meet formally during the academic year and have documented minutes of items discussed. Teachers have recently developed an online platform to share resources. It would be beneficial to align and develop this resource to the schemes of work.
- Teachers are facilitated and encouraged by senior management to engage in continuing professional development (CPD). It would be worthwhile to formulate a strategy for trialling methodologies that teachers have encountered in CPD activities across the whole department.
- The development of an action plan would further enhance the planning documents and would tie in with the whole-school approach to DEIS planning.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.

2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 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;