

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business Subjects

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Heywood Community School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Ballinakill Portlaoise Co. Laois |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 91427C |

Date of Inspection: 03-10-2018



**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 Subjects 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 and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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 | 02-10-2018 & 03-10-2018 |
| 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 three double and five single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and business teachers |

School context

Heywood Community School is a co-educational post-primary school which offers Business Studies in junior cycle. Business education is provided in the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme, while Accounting, Business and Economics are offered as optional subjects in Leaving Certificate. The school has a current enrolment of 739 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good; students developed key skills and understanding of business in an active, engaging and meaningful manner.
- The quality of formative assessment varied; some very good oral feedback was provided during lessons, and, less often, written formative feedback was observed in students' copybooks.
- The quality of whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good; senior management's support for a variety of learning opportunities outside of the classroom helps to foster a culture in which business education flourishes.
- The quality of subject department planning is very good and is focused on providing rich student learning experiences.

Recommendations

- To further enhance the high standard of teaching and learning, teachers should continue to expand the range and use of local and topical business exemplars and information and communications technology (ICT) resources in lessons, where appropriate.
- All teachers should further develop and extend formative assessment approaches, including the use of success criteria, the tendering of written feedback for students on their assignments, and the use of higher-order questioning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. In the majority of lessons, teaching of a very high quality was observed and in other lessons it was of good quality.
- Teachers helped students to develop key skills and understanding of business in an active, engaging and meaningful manner. Students are provided with a range of appropriate learning experiences, including research, presentation and reflection tasks.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. Best practice was evident where the learning intentions were presented as what students should be able to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson. In the majority of lessons, teachers recapped on learning through student-targeted questions. It is advisable to expand these effective practices and to develop success criteria to support attainment of learning intentions where appropriate.
- Agreed school improvement literacy and numeracy targets, such as the development of students' oral literacy, were well integrated into teachers' classroom practice. The encouragement of students to make mental calculations and the provision of a numeracy rich environment aided proficiency in numeracy.
- The use in some instances of topical and local business exemplars was effective in helping students to apply business concepts. Commendably, some teachers have ensured that senior cycle students have access to a weekly national newspaper to increase interest in business matters and progress the school's literacy target of reading for pleasure. In lessons that had an accounting focus, a very good step-by-step and a teaching for understanding approach helped students' attain the concepts.
- ICT was effectively used by teachers in lessons as a presentation tool. In a number of lessons, the use of a video clips and use of good visuals enhanced and reinforced student learning. An electronic learning platform is used to set student homework and to share resources and news items for some class groups. These good practices should be expanded.
- In all lessons, the positive and respectful interactions among students and teachers were conducive to a sense of student well-being. Teachers circulated well in lessons and their engagement with students supported learning.
- Students worked in pairs and small groups in all lessons. Co-operative learning tasks such as think-pair-share activities were well planned and helped ensure there was very good dialogue between students.
- In most lessons, the student voice was a strong feature; students had opportunities to present their homework and the outcomes of co-operative learning activities. Student participation in lessons was enhanced where teachers asked directed rather than global questions. In a small number of lessons, the student voice could have been strengthened.
- Differentiation was facilitated through questioning by teachers and on occasion differentiated assignments. This good approach aims to meet students' needs within mixed-ability classes. In a very small number of lessons, increased use of higher-order questioning would have provided opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- Teachers assess students work through a mix of self-assessment, whole-class corrections and teachers' review of work. The provision of topical stimulus material and reflective tasks where students had to outline the learning and knowledge gained from classroom based assessment in a recent second year summative assessment was very good practice.

- Individual teacher's use of formative assessment varied. In some instances, some very good oral feedback was provided during lessons. Less often, written formative feedback was observed in students' copybooks. To further support student learning written formative feedback that gives direction as to how students could improve on their work should be provided on assignments, where appropriate. On occasions, students should also evaluate and assess their own work using success criteria so as to apply their own critical skills and to internalise learning.
- Students of business subjects are challenged and encouraged to aim for high academic standards and, where possible, to take subjects at the highest possible level in the certificate examinations. Student uptake at higher level and subsequent outcomes are generally very good.
- It is praiseworthy that a range of beneficial co-curricular activities such as local entrepreneurs speaking to class groups, the provision of a bi-annual business week, participation in enterprise competitions and build a bank competitions are provided for students.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good. The provision of the full range of business subjects and support for a variety of learning opportunities outside of the classroom helps to foster a culture in which business education flourishes.
- First-year students have the opportunity to sample Business Studies for a three-week period. The uptake of Business Studies is good and increasing. Most Business Studies students continue with business education in Leaving Certificate as do a number of students whose first experience of business education was in TY.
- The three business modules in TY further develop students' work-life, financial literacy and enterprise skills. The aims of the TY programme are promoted through the use of active teaching methodologies and assessment modes.
- Most business teachers have their own base classroom wherein the visual learning environment is very good. The colourful and informative student-generated presentations displayed in some classrooms were of high quality.
- Business teachers are members of their subject association, have availed of subject-specific continuing professional development and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current and shared within the business department.
- There is very effective communication between the school's special education department and the business department with regard to the educational needs of students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject department planning is very good. The process of planning is one that is focused on providing rich learning experiences and opportunities for development of students' key skills.
- There is evidence of strong collaboration and reflective practice within the business team. It was evident in lessons that business teachers actively share resources and discuss methodologies.

- The business department's substantive and well organised planning folder exemplified teachers' enthusiasm for business education in the school. Included in the planning folder were relevant student-related policies including a homework policy that details the rationale, varied modes, setting and correction of student homework and the business department's strategy to progress the school's improvement plan.
- Commendably, the business teachers produced a booklet on formative assessment strategies that are relevant to the business classroom. The booklet contains a section for teachers' to reflect on their use of various strategies in lessons.
- The detailed curriculum subject plans developed for the delivery of each business subject are of a very high quality. Teachers have made use of and adapted Junior Cycle for Teachers resource materials materials to suit their own context, including the needs and abilities of students in both Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate. Commendably, teachers are using the Junior Cycle units of learning as working documents, wherein reviews and comments are made on the success or otherwise of learning experiences.
- The very well-organised and comprehensive electronic folder that is accessible to all business teachers facilitates communication and collaboration within the business department. The resources and subject-related information are regularly updated.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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 quality of 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; |