

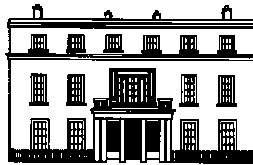
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Scoil na mBráithre
Dungarvan, County Waterford
Roll number: 64880T**

Date of inspection: 11 February 2015



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS SUBJECTS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11 February 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods; one double and four single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching was good overall but scope for improvement existed in many lessons.
- The quality of learning varied in lessons from good to fair.
- Most students do not use a textbook and rely primarily on past certificate examination papers and notes as resource material.
- The maintenance of Accounting as a viable subject option through the co-operation of a nearby school is praiseworthy.
- The business subjects' plan documents some very good aspirational teaching practices.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Business teachers should use a variety of teaching methodologies and assessment for learning strategies in all lessons to further engage students in their learning.
 - Further opportunities for active and co-operative student learning practices should be established by business teachers in all business education lessons.
 - Students should have access to a broader range of enriching learning resources to strengthen their learning in business education.
 - Collaborative planning should be further progressed and subject planning meeting time used to discuss, share and embed best practice in the teaching of business subjects.
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INTRODUCTION

Scoil na mBráithre is a voluntary secondary school which provides Business Studies as a core subject in junior cycle. Business education is compulsory in the optional Transition Year (TY). At Leaving Certificate, students are offered Accounting and Economics. The school has a current enrolment of 313 male students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was good overall with some instances of very good teaching observed, but there was scope for improvement in many lessons. Teachers have noted in planning documentation that they aim to vary methodologies in all lessons but this was only observed in a few lessons. In some lessons there was an overemphasis on instructional teaching which did not actively involve students in their learning.
- The quality of learning in lessons observed varied in quality from good to fair.
- In one lesson, there was an instance of students effectively working in pairs. There were many opportunities in all lessons for students to work in a collaborative manner but these were not availed of. It is recommended that a broader variety of active and co-operative learning methodologies be used in all lessons.
- An appropriate theme running throughout all lessons was the use of topical news events and business exemplars. This approach aided the development of good student discussions in some lessons. To further develop students' oral and communicative skills a greater emphasis should be placed on student oral inputs in lessons.
- The quality of questioning strategies varied in lessons. In a few lessons questioning was very good as it was differentiated, actively involved students and encouraged class discussions. However, in the majority of lessons there was a predominance of lower-order and global questioning which did not allow students to demonstrate or deepen their learning. The use of good questioning strategies should be expanded in business education.
- The use of mind maps in a lesson provided students with a good tool to summarise subject material. Where information and communication technology (ICT) was used it was a good teaching aid. Teachers reported that, on occasion, students use the school's computer room to access interactive business resources. The use of ICT should be further developed both in and out of the classroom as a student learning tool through the accessing of pertinent websites and exemplars in order to deepen student learning.
- Learning outcomes were shared with students in some lessons. It is advisable that learning outcomes in terms of what students should and could know and do be outlined at the outset of all lessons. At the conclusion of one lesson the intended learning outcomes were assessed and this enabled affirmation of student effort and clarification of knowledge. This good practice should be expanded.
- Most class groups do not use a textbook and rely on teacher-generated handouts and transcribed notes to support their learning. While students have access to a small collection of textbooks in a teacher's classroom, a means of expanding access to other enriching student learning resources should be devised. The transcription of large quantities of notes in some lessons constricts time for active learning. This ineffective

use of class time should be reviewed so that students can experience in a meaningful way the breadth and balance of intended syllabus learning outcomes.

- Students, including first-years, are using past certificate examination papers as a learning resource. In the context of students not using a textbook care should be taken that the focus on examination papers does not over-influence teaching and learning practices throughout the year. The use of examination papers in non-examination years should be reviewed.
- An examination of a sample of student copybooks and journals highlighted varied practice in the quantity and type of homework assigned. Business teachers have articulated in their subject plan what they consider to be best practice in setting of student homework. It is advisable that all business teachers aim for a consistent practice in setting homework for students.
- There was some evidence of formal checking of students' homework by teachers. In some lessons teachers wrote comments on how students might improve their performance. This good practice should be expanded.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business subjects have a good profile on the school's curriculum. A high percentage of students continue with business education from Junior Certificate to Leaving Certificate. In recent years the number of students opting for Accounting has been declining and currently, there is no fifth-year class group. The maintenance of Accounting as a viable subject option through cooperating with another school is praiseworthy.
- Business Studies is allocated four single class periods in each year of the cycle. While this time provision is good, senior management should consider the provision of a double period at some point, as some book-keeping topics may require a double period to ensure completion.
- In this current academic year, teachers have their own base classrooms. A good print-rich visual environment is being developed in these classrooms.
- All teachers of business subjects are subject specialists with up-to-date knowledge of their subject and relevant topical issues. In the context of the dynamic nature of business education, teachers should, where possible, partake in subject-related continuing professional development (CPD) and consider active membership of their subject association.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Regular subject department meetings are held. It is recommended that more detailed minutes of meetings be maintained to provide a comprehensive résumé of items discussed and subsequent planned actions. Best practice in teaching and learning pedagogy should be included as a standing item on the agenda in order to implement a consistent and high standard of teaching practice.
- The considerable expertise and experience in the business subjects department can be shared and formalised through the further development of each curricular plan. This can be achieved by linking to each curricular topic its learning outcomes, the range of

resources, teaching and assessment methodologies used by teachers to support and develop student learning.

- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be re-considered so as to ensure linkage between topics and the integration of book-keeping and theory topics.
- The TY business plan is good. Students can develop their entrepreneurial skills by partaking in a mini-company and can experience some aspects of Accounting and Economics through the study of topical events and current economic and political events.

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 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.