

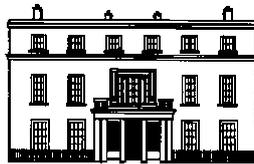
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Studies  
REPORT**

**Christian Brothers Secondary School  
Thurles, County Tipperary  
Roll number: 65450W**

**Date of inspection: 24 January 2014**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS STUDIES**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	23 and 24 January 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly good or very good.
- Students' learning was enhanced in many of the lessons observed by teachers' use of active learning methodologies. However, in a few lessons observed the teaching approach used required significant development, especially in relation to the management and focus of lesson activities.
- In most lessons students and teachers made very good use of the wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources available.
- Business Studies has moved from core to optional provision, uptake remains good and the number of students taking higher level is very good.
- The subject department has adopted a common assessment process in first and second year, though there is scope to review the range of test instruments used.
- There is a good degree of collaboration at subject department level and teachers are working within the whole-school framework to develop a subject-specific approach to literacy.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers are advised to broaden the discussion at subject department level about the range of teaching strategies used so that good practice can be shared and applied among the group of teachers.
- Teachers should broaden the range of formative and summative assessment strategies that is used.
- The subject department is advised to include the views of both students and teachers when reviewing the schemes of work.

## **INTRODUCTION**

CBS Thurles is a boys-only voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 708 students. The school operates under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). In addition to junior cycle, the school provides an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and both the established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) at senior cycle. Business Studies is an optional subject for Junior Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly good or very good. In a few lessons observed the teaching approach used required significant development, especially in relation to the management and focus of lesson activities.
- The teachers have access to a wide range of ICT resources to support teaching and learning. These include short throw interactive data projectors, desktop computers and tablet devices. The interactive use of tablet devices by a number of teachers was particularly commendable. This provides great scope for teachers to promote the interactive use of such devices with students in the context of the school's planned introduction of tablet devices for incoming first-year students in September 2014.
- While the key word strategy of writing up within the students' copies was evident, it was clear that students were not familiar in some instances with using the strategy. The recent introduction of the strategy should be supported by departmental agreement as to the most effective approach to incorporate it into lessons effectively. Additional literacy approaches which could be considered include: word searches, matching exercises, keyword dictionaries and reading.
- The teachers' register of subject-specific language was very good throughout all year groups. Across the department teachers' knowledge of the current business environment was very good. A feature of all lessons was the use of relevant age specific examples and teachers' capacity to relate the theory aspects of the course to the current business environment.
- Thematic approaches were taken in a number of lessons where practical activities including group work centred on current business examples. This supported knowledge acquisition and the development of competencies including team working, and oral presentation.
- Among the active learning methodologies observed were; traffic lights to indicate learning achieved, structured pair and group work, oral presentations and in one-third of the lessons students' board work to frame lesson reviews and lesson continuity.
- There is a need to introduce an effective strategy of self-assessment as the core of the approach to monitoring questions in bookkeeping, for example a 'check figures' approach. This can also be strengthened by enhancing peer assessment as a strategy for first and second-year class groups in particular.
- Bookkeeping is spread over the three years of the cycle and the students engage with this aspect to a high degree with the emphasis on the completion of higher level outcomes for all students throughout, including for example, appropriations in second year. This is very good practice as it encourages students to take the subject at higher level.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Provision for the subject is good. First-year students take a year-long taster programme in the subject and at the end of first-year can choose three optional subjects. The pattern of uptake is relatively consistent since the subject moved from core to optional provision in 2008.
- The subject is well resourced and it was evident that almost all teachers had availed of relevant professional development programmes. Teachers are also involved in the subject association and have availed of subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD).
- Analysis of outcomes in the certificate examinations is undertaken at whole-school and subject department level and the number of students taking the subject at higher level is very good.
- Very good ICT resources are available to support teaching and learning. At whole-school level, there is very strong awareness of the value of ICT as a resource to support teaching and learning and the school's administration.
- In addition to reporting on examination results, teachers also report on students' effort and commitment. As formative and summative assessment approaches develop further, the department should develop subject-specific assessment criteria in relation to Business Studies, including for example, working with others and communication.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A subject department structure is in place with the role of co-ordinator rotated bi-annually. The records of subject department meetings indicate a range of topics are discussed, including subject development. A dual approach operates involving a planning meeting at the start of the year that adheres to a school-wide common agenda, and ongoing department-led meetings throughout the year. This approach provides good basis for future developments.
- In recent years the focus of the main planning meeting has centred on agreeing the delivery of outcomes for each academic year, the use of resources, ICT integration and strategies for improving learning and engagement. This approach could be further supported by an annual review of progress in each of these key areas.
- The department uses common assessment tests for first and second-year students at Christmas and summer. This is good practice towards promoting consistency among teachers in completing the agreed outcomes for the subject. As the task of designing the assessment instruments is shared among teachers, including the compilation of the marking schemes, it is a very good approach for promoting professional development among the team. This approach also provides the potential for the development of a moderation processes within the subject department.
- Some additional work is required in designing these common assessments to reduce repetition and the dependency on certificate examination material that may sometimes not be current.
- There is evidence that resources, especially those developed and stored electronically are shared among the team which is an indicator of collegiality among the subject team.

- The school has a tradition of providing placements for student teachers of the subject. The agreed plans and summative assessment processes at junior cycle provide a good framework for facilitating student placements. The subject team should ensure that the student teachers provide the department with progress reports in relation to outcomes completed and that they are actively involved in mentoring student teachers within the subject areas.

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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.