

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects  
REPORT**

**Presentation College  
Terenure, Dublin 6W  
Roll number: 76092K**

**Date of inspection: 24 September 2015**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	24 September 2015
<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 four 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 observed ranged from good to very good.
- In all lessons, shared ownership of learning between the teacher and students was prominent.
- Management's support for business education in terms of student access is commendable.
- The hour long lessons facilitate active and co-operative learning, however, current timetable provision for Business Studies falls below recommended requirements.
- Business department planning is good, with frequent meetings and regular reviews.
- Curriculum plans are available for all business subjects, however, further development of these plans is necessary.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should further integrate assessment for learning (AfL) strategies, co-operative learning and information and communication technology (ICT) as a student learning tool in lessons.
- School management and business teachers should evaluate the impact of current timetable provision on students' learning.
- Differentiated learning outcomes and teaching methodologies for each topic should be included in curriculum plans.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Presentation College Terenure operates under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, and has an enrolment of 337 female post-primary students. Business Studies is an optional subject in Junior Certificate and Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate students. In the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, business education is a core module for all students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in lessons observed. Of particular merit was the very good use of questioning strategies that were explorative and which encouraged students to think in a critical manner.
- In all lessons, shared ownership of learning between teacher and student was prominent. Students were encouraged to ask questions and to participate in the good student-teacher discussions which aided the development of students' communication and thinking skills. To further enhance learning, students should be encouraged and supported to research lesson material and present it to their peers in some lessons.
- In all lessons, students were given the opportunity to work in pairs. The potential to further expand co-operative learning strategies such as group work and think, pair, share tasks should be fully exploited, where appropriate. In addition, activities such as project work, debates and presentations could be established in all class groups so as to further involve students in leading their own learning and the development of their key skills.
- ICT was effectively used in all lessons as a presentation tool that aided teaching and learning. In a Business Studies lesson the playing of a video clip enhanced and reinforced student learning. In some class groups, students were encouraged to use the internet as a research tool as part of their homework assignments. These good practices should be further extended. The use of the student virtual learning platform to share material would reduce the need for student note taking in some lessons.
- Teachers' use of pertinent exemplars aided student understanding of lessons. Good links were made with theoretical knowledge and every day business activity. In most lessons the use of graphic organisers and mind maps helped students to summarise and reinforce their knowledge.
- All lessons observed were well planned and included a good blend of teaching methodologies and revision of past material. Learning objectives were clearly stated at the beginning of lessons. Good practice was observed in one lesson where students had to note three things that they learned at the end of the lesson.
- In all lessons, there was a good focus on the development of students' literacy skills. Students and teachers worked in partnership to explore and decipher unfamiliar keywords and subject-specific terminology.
- From a review of planning documentation and in discussion with TY students it was evident that business education is delivered in a way that supports the key aims and objectives of the programme. TY students displayed very good knowledge of topical economic developments.

- Homework that consolidated the learning outcomes of lessons was regularly set for students. This aspect of students' extended learning is very important as most students only have two contact times per week with their business teachers.
- In many lessons, good practice was observed where students' work was returned with affirming comments. To further support student learning detailed formative feedback that gives direction as to how students could improve on their work should be provided on all lengthy assignments. On occasions, students should also evaluate and assess their own work using set marking criteria so as to apply their own critical skills and to internalise learning.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential. The uptake of business subjects at higher level is good as are the subsequent outcomes in certificate examinations. Teachers review students' attainment in certificate examinations against national norms and provide a narrative on students' achievements. This is good practice as it contextualises students' achievements.

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

- Management's support for business education in terms of student access and curricular provision in TY is commendable.
- All lessons are of one-hour duration which facilitates the provision of active and co-operative learning activities for students. However, current timetabling provision of two lesson periods in junior cycle could compromise the delivery of syllabus aims and objectives. School management and business teachers should evaluate the current impact of timetable provision on students' learning.
- In classrooms where business education is delivered, the visual learning environment is very good. The displays of student-generated presentations are colourful, and informative. In one classroom the configuration of desks enabled students to permanently sit in a group format which is conducive to co-operative learning.
- Business teachers are active members of their subject association and have availed of subject-specific continuing professional development. A formal means of sharing and recording information from in-service activities should be devised.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is well established and organised. At the regular business subject department meetings discussions pertaining to classroom practice are sometimes on the agenda. It is advisable that the agenda for meetings should include a greater focus on the discussion of teaching methodologies and student learning strategies.
- The folder for the planning and provision of business education in the school is comprehensive and includes the subjects department's own mission statement. Of particular merit is the range of strategies that the business department will use to embed the whole school agreed targets as part of the school's self-evaluation process.
- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be reviewed to ensure that students' understanding of business concepts is incremental and that throughout the three-year cycle there is integration of theory and book-keeping elements.

- Each business subject's curriculum plan requires further development. The inclusion of differentiated student learning outcomes and specific examples of teaching methodologies for each topic would further enhance the plan.
- A review and evaluation of the operation of the business subject department takes place annually as part of whole-school development planning. Following the review, appraisal targets are set by the subject department. It is now advisable that an agreed action plan is put in place with timed, targeted strategies to progress the perceived area for development.
- Teachers had their own electronic resources for use in lessons. The further development of an electronic folder to store and facilitate sharing within the business department should be actively pursued.

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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.