

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Coláiste Éamann Rís
Callan, County Kilkenny
Roll number: 61510R**

Date of inspection: 17 September 2012



**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 SUBJECTS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	17 September 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching was generally good; however, in some lessons not all students were sufficiently involved in leading their own learning.
- Students of business education have opportunities to develop their key skills through the completion of projects and participation in enterprise activities.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are very good.
- Student uptake of Business Studies at junior cycle is good and many students retain a business subject as one of their optional subjects in Leaving Certificate.
- A business subjects plan is in place but it requires some additional detail.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should use a range of active and co-operative learning methodologies and make greater use of higher-order questioning and assessment for learning strategies.
 - The content of the business subjects plan and each curricular plan should be developed as a manual for the provision of business education in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Éamann Rís is a voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 213 male post-primary students. Business Studies is a core subject in first year and an optional subject thereafter. Business education is compulsory in the optional Transition Year programme (TY). Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate students. The business subjects department is normally staffed by a permanent teacher who is a subject specialist. At the time of the evaluation, business education was being delivered by a substitute business teacher and another member of the school's permanent staff.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was generally good. However it was mainly traditional as teacher talk predominated in the majority of lessons. It is recommended that teachers use methodologies that actively involve students in their learning.
- In all lessons, effective use was made of teacher questioning and it was most successful where it differentiated, explored and expanded student learning. It is advisable that more frequent use of higher-order questioning be targeted at students of higher ability in order to progress their learning.
- Teachers used a good conversational approach to impart knowledge and engage students in their learning. However, active and co-operative learning methodologies such as role play, pair and group work were not a feature of any lesson.
- Teachers' and students' use of business language and terminology was good in all lessons visited. The examples used of well-known business people and business organisations helped to develop student business knowledge and understanding. In a Leaving Certificate lesson, students were encouraged to keep abreast of topical business developments as portrayed in the media. This good practice should be expanded to all lessons, where appropriate.
- The opportunity for students to develop key skills through the completion of business topic projects in each year group and through enterprise activities is admirable.
- Students of Business are afforded opportunities to avail of cross-curricular activities through their participation in Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme activities such as visits to local enterprises.
- In a Leaving Certificate lesson, notes and presentations were emailed to students. However, during some lessons students were transcribing notes that were accessible in textbooks and this was not the best use of lesson time. As an alternative, students, particularly at senior cycle, could be encouraged to generate their own summary notes, which could be reviewed by teachers as part of assessment procedures.
- Lesson objectives were shared with students in each lesson. This proved effective in setting the scene and engaging students with lesson content. However, it is advisable to articulate learning outcomes in terms of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Towards the end of the lesson, the stated learning outcomes should be re-visited so as to assess students' learning, affirm effort and clarify points of information.

- Classroom management was very good; there was mutual respect and very good rapport between students and teachers. Students were affirmed and supported in all their interactions in the classroom. The classrooms are print-rich environments with seating arrangements that are conducive to pair and group work. This resource should be fully exploited.
- In each lesson observed, homework from previous lessons was corrected and homework based on current learning was assigned. In the sample of students' copybooks reviewed, work was well presented, neat and labelled. Student homework assignments were generally corrected in class with some teacher annotations. The inclusion of evaluative comment on students' work and the use of student self-assessment in lessons, particularly at senior cycle, should be introduced by teachers.
- Student outcomes in state examinations are analysed and compared to national norms. Student uptake of business subjects at higher level in state examinations is good. Student attainment in state examinations has been consistently very good.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business subjects have a high profile on the school's curriculum. A high percentage of students continue with business education from Junior Certificate to Leaving Certificate.
- All first-year students sample Business Studies for the duration of the year. This affords each student an opportunity to attain financial literacy skills and to make a well-informed decision on subject choices for second year. The uptake of the optional subject Business Studies in second year is good.
- Senior management endeavours to maximise student subject options and in doing so has maintained Economics as an option on the Leaving Certificate curriculum. This has resulted in an amalgamation of the current fifth-year and sixth-year class group. While this arrangement may pose challenges, it is an indicator of the willingness of school management to cater for the needs of students in the context of its resources.
- Business teachers are up-to-date in their knowledge of business subjects. At least one member of the business subjects department attends subject association meetings and conference. At the time of the evaluation, the specialist business teacher was on leave and business education was being delivered by a substitute business teacher and another member of the school's permanent staff. In the context of a dynamic subject like business, teachers should try to avail of centrally-provided continuing professional development.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject plans have been developed for all business subjects; these are good in design. The inclusion of business keywords and terms, and details of the numeracy and literacy strategies used would further enhance the plan. The scheme of work for business education in the TY programme should also be included.
- The business subjects department should liaise formally with the mathematics department to ensure that there are similar approaches to mathematical computations, and the agreed practice could be noted in planning documentation.

- The curricular plan for each business subject delivered in the school can be further developed by aligning learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and a range of assessment and teaching methodologies to each curriculum topic.
- Business teachers had their own electronic resources for use in lessons. The development of an electronic folder to store and facilitate sharing of electronic resources and information should be actively pursued as should the accessing of further resources.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published May 2013.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management feel the school had been producing excellent results in all the Business subjects often far exceeding the national average and we feel this is not reflected in this report.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

All senior Business and Economics students have been signed up to Edmodo and resources available to the teaching staff are available to those students. Homework can be submitted and notice of homework/upcoming tests posted plus marking schemes and tests for those absent to catch up on.