

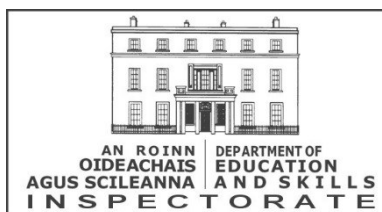
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Studies and Business
REPORT**

**Presentation College
Tuam, County Galway
Roll number: 63170G**

Date of inspection: 11 February 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	11 February 2016
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; two single periods and two double• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching observed varied from lessons where very good practice was evident to lessons where there was scope to develop the approaches used.
- Though all lessons included active learning activities, these were more successfully managed in some lessons than in others.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) applications were used very effectively as an assessment tool.
- There are fluctuations in the participation rates in the business subjects; the school's management and the teachers are working hard to maintain continuity in provision for the subjects.
- The Transition Year (TY) business programme is exceptionally well structured.
- Subject planning is very good and there is evidence of good reflective practice in relation to reviewing schemes of work.

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 agree a department-wide approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work.
 - To support existing teacher reflection, the team should explore ways in which students' views can be incorporated into ongoing reviews of the schemes of work.
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INTRODUCTION

Presentation College is a girls-only voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education – an Irish Schools Trust). The school's current enrolment is 441 students. In addition to Junior Certificate the school offers the established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Uptake of the optional TY programme is high.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In some lessons the quality of teaching and learning was very good. In these lessons a very good balance between teacher and student inputs was achieved and the lessons were well paced. In other lessons there was scope to improve the lessons by better management of the learning activities, including students' practical work.
- A clear emphasis on pastoral care was evident in the management of the students and their interactions with teachers in lessons. Student voice was encouraged with the second-year and TY class groups, specifically through the use of student presentations.
- There was evidence in all the lessons observed of teachers planning for active learning by students. This was more effective in some lessons than in others. Ensuring that structured feedback by students from group-based tasks is facilitated will increase students' engagement and enhance learning in these instances.
- Students were encouraged to frequently assess their own learning in lessons, for example through the use of show-me boards. In one junior cycle lesson on insurance, excellent use was made of ICT for activating students' prior knowledge and checking on their learning. Through the use of a game-based learning platform and students' mobile phones, the class group was tested on its knowledge of key concepts and definitions. This allowed for student self-assessment as well as teacher assessment of students' progress.
- All lessons observed had a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy development.
- The range of additional resources, used by the teachers, was well suited to supporting students with different learning styles. Visual and auditory supports were provided in lessons based on topics including the European Union and insurance.
- Students' responses in class indicated that they had some familiarity with the appropriate use of business terminology.
- Students' project work was displayed on the walls on the classrooms. These projects were used to illustrate the business theory covered in the lesson.
- A very good student-led lesson was observed in TY where the teacher facilitated groups of students to present to their peers. Students then evaluated the quality of the work presented using an assessment rubric.
- Written homework, when assigned, included a good mix of workbook and copybook exercises. These are generally corrected through whole-class assessment, peer-assessment or self-assessment activities. Occasional teacher oversight of the quality of the work completed could be facilitated through the development of an agreed rubric or use of an assessment grid. This approach could also be extended to develop a system of providing written feedback for improvement to students.

- Where students are assigned study or revision tasks for homework, an agreed strategy should be in place for follow-on lesson activities that would check on students' understanding and recall of the learning homework.
- Teachers try to make lessons interesting and stimulating with the emphasis on student learning and understanding. Examples are used to explain business concepts and attempts are made to make these current and relevant. Encouraging students to recount their own examples, or suggest possible current examples, could be used in senior cycle business classes to generate more focused discussion on curricular topics.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for the subjects is good. The time allocation to both senior and junior cycle class groups meets the requirements of the relevant syllabuses. First-year students select the subject prior to entry to the school, and students' subject choices are supported by information sessions when moving from junior to senior cycle.
- Allocation of time to the business aspects of the TY programme is very good. Subject sampling and TY-specific provision is made for business. A finance module has been developed for TY. This module, and other business modules, emphasise the development of financial literacy skills and introduces students, especially those who did not take the subject in junior cycle, to key concepts in both Accounting and Business.
- Over a number of years, uptake of the business subjects declined. Maintaining the breadth of business provision at senior cycle is difficult in terms of both the smaller number of students who take the subject in junior cycle and the consequential implication for the school's management in resourcing smaller senior cycle business classes. In response to these challenges, the business teachers have looked at the potential that the business programme in TY provides in showcasing the subjects for senior cycle as well as reviewing the junior cycle programme.
- Assessment practices in the subjects are developing well. A system is in place to ensure that students who are absent are notified about work to be completed and TY students are encouraged to use ICT as a means of forwarding work to the teacher. This is a very good way of creating a portfolio of each student's work as part of their TY programme.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning is very good. Long-term curricular plans are in place and shorter-term subject schemes of work have been agreed among the business team. The team actively discusses a range of subject-specific priorities including the numbers taking the subjects, schemes of work, results analysis and target setting. A subject co-ordinator leads these team meetings, and discussions are well documented.
- Common schemes of work have been developed and though the department has agreed that common assessments should be undertaken in first and second year, this approach has not yet been fully embedded in second year.
- Links have been made with whole-school strategies, including literacy and numeracy, which have been prioritised, through school self-evaluation, in the school improvement plan. The department plan outlines how these strategies, and others including those appropriate for students with special education needs, can be adapted for use in business

lessons. This very good reflective practice has great potential to enhance students' learning when included in individual lesson planning.

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.