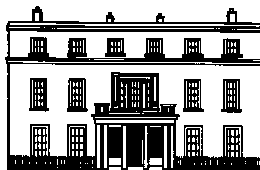


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**St Augustine's College**  
**Dungarvan, County Waterford**  
**Roll number: 64890W**

**Date of inspection: 12 May 2016**



**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>Date of inspection</b>	11 and 12 May
<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 seven class periods; one double and five single lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- In almost all lessons, the quality of teaching was very high; in one lesson scope for development was identified.
- Student learning was very good in almost all lessons as students were challenged and had shared ownership of learning through the use of a variety of effective teaching methodologies.
- Students are afforded many opportunities to develop key skills and extend their business knowledge within and outside of the classroom through co-curricular activities.
- Student achievement and uptake of higher level in certificate examinations are very good.
- Business education has a very good profile on the school's curriculum and senior management is highly supportive of it.
- Subject department planning for Business Studies is well established and organised by teachers who work in a collaborative and supportive way towards the continued development of Business Studies.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Where there was scope for development in teaching, a variety of inquiry-based teaching methodologies should be used by teachers to progress student learning in appropriately paced lessons.
- To further enhance the learning experience for all students, the very good teaching and learning practices such as effective student co-operative learning activities and the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a learning tool should be deployed in all lessons, where appropriate.
- The sharing of considerable expertise and experience in the business department should be formalised through the development by business teachers of a curricular plan for the new specification in Business Studies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

St Augustine's College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 693 students. Business Studies is a core subject in junior cycle. Students can choose Accounting, Business and Economics for Leaving Certificate. Business education is provided in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Business Studies at junior cycle is the focus of this inspection.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching was very high in almost all lessons. In these lessons a range of varied teaching methodologies successfully advanced student learning. In a lesson where scope for development was identified, the pace of the lesson was too slow and did not contain an appropriate degree of challenge for most of the students.
- In all lessons, it was commendable that students engaged in either group or pair work. Co-operative learning was particularly effective when the task challenged students, created good dialogue and the concluding plenary session helped ensure shared learning. The use of flash cards and a cube game in some lessons were clearly enjoyed by students and supported co-operative learning activities.
- All teachers used questioning as a means of accessing student knowledge. In most lessons, higher order and probing questions successfully initiated class discussions and facilitated students to make links with prior learning and consolidate their business knowledge. In a lesson where scope for development was identified, there was an overemphasis on global and lower-order questioning and this did not effectively engage or challenge all students.
- Topical, student-friendly and relevant exemplars were used in many lessons to explain business concepts. In a lesson, the use of students' own paper-based enterprises enabled a real-life understanding of the business concept being taught. In some lessons, the use of additional learning aids such as 'show me boards' and graphic organisers provided good opportunities for students to summarise and display their knowledge.
- In all lessons, ICT was used as a teaching aid. In a small number of lessons, the playing of very good video clips encapsulated student learning. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons where appropriate. Commendably, some teachers are using an electronic learning platform to share learning resources with students.
- It is praiseworthy that some business teachers ensured that a range of beneficial co-curricular activities such as local entrepreneurs speaking to class groups, visits to local businesses and project work are provided for students. These practices aided students' understanding of the application of business theory to practical situations and developed their social and personal competencies.
- In all lessons, learning intentions were shared with students. Best practice was evident in a small number of lessons where they were presented in terms of what students should be able to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson and, as the lesson concluded, their attainment was reviewed. It is advisable that this practice be adopted by all teachers. The pace and structure of lessons was very good in almost all lessons.
- Homework was regularly assigned to students. It was praiseworthy that some class groups received varied modes of homework such as research of subject content and project work. Good practice was observed in a small number of lessons where students' work was returned with affirming and formative comments providing direction as to how

they could improve on their work. Teachers should devise a mechanism to ensure written formative feedback is given to students on their corrected work.

- Student achievement and uptake of higher level in certificate examinations is very good. Subject departments compare their analysis of the outcomes of certificate examinations to national norms.

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

- Management's support for the subject is commendable in each of the following key areas: curricular provision; facilitation of co-curricular activities: equality of access to the subject for all students; timetabling; deployment of staff.
- The allocation of class periods for Business Studies is good. A double period is generally given to students in third year and this is conducive to the completion of book-keeping elements of the syllabus.
- There is very effective communication between the school's special education department and the business department with regard to the educational needs of students.
- In most classrooms where business education is delivered, the visual learning environment is very good. The displays of student-generated presentations and projects are of a very high standard, being colourful, relevant and informative. In many lessons, teachers used some of the visual displays to assist student learning.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. They have attended in-service relating to their subjects. Teachers have also attended meetings and conferences of their subject association.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is well established and organised. Business Studies teachers work in a collaborative and supportive way and are very committed to the continued development of business education. To support the work of the business department, it is advisable to develop an electronic folder to store resources and information.
- There are monthly business department meetings. While it is necessary to discuss organisational aspects of the department, it is also advisable to include and make note of discussions on best teaching and learning strategies at meetings as a means of sharing good pedagogical practice.
- Planning documentation is of a very high quality. Of particular merit is the development of the business department's objectives and aims such as the aspiration to provide a learning environment for students that is conducive to learning in an enjoyable way. Within the plan, teachers have noted the strategies they are using to further develop students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- The Business Studies curriculum plan is a work in progress. The considerable expertise and experience of the school's business teachers will benefit the development of the curricular plan for the new specification in Business Studies. This can be achieved by linking each topic to its learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

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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.