

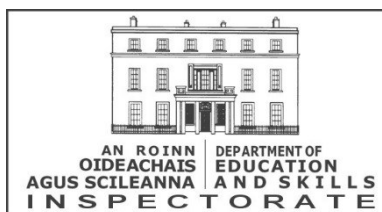
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Kilkenny City Vocational School
Kilkenny, County Kilkenny
Roll number: 70610W**

Date of inspection: 6 May 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	6 May
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 five single class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- A very high standard of teaching was observed throughout the evaluation.
- Students enjoyed the varied and effective learning activities provided by business teachers.
- Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies had a positive impact on student learning.
- The overall quality of whole school support and provision for business education is very good.
- Business teachers are a highly organised, reflective, dedicated and collaborative team who work diligently to ensure the learning needs of students are paramount in their work.
- Planning for business education is exemplary.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further enhance the high standard of teaching and learning, teachers should continue to use, develop and expand their repertoire of successful learning activities and AfL practices.
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INTRODUCTION

Kilkenny City Vocational School is under the auspices of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board, and has an enrolment of 152 post-primary students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Business Studies is an optional subject in junior cycle and Business is offered to Leaving Certificate students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- A very high standard of teaching was observed throughout the evaluation. The quality of planning and preparation for lessons was exceptionally high. Teachers astutely used a range of teaching methodologies such as various quiz formats, a bingo game and co-operative learning tasks that were very suitable for the 'no pen day' in the school. It was clearly evident that students enjoyed the varied and effective learning activities provided.
- Teachers are commended for ensuring that the student voice was a strong feature of all lessons. In a lesson where students were pitching their marketing strategy for a chosen product or service, the quality of presentations was very good. As a means of revision, fifth year students were preparing a project on their chosen topic, which they will present to their peers at the end of the year. This is very good practice.
- In most lessons, students had good opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. Students had a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities when undertaking group activities. Teachers' planning of group tasks allowed for meaningful and productive student exchanges. In many classrooms, the group seating arrangement facilitated co-operative learning activities.
- Very good questioning strategies were used in all lessons. A mix of higher-order and lower-order targeted questions was used effectively to differentiate between ability levels and to challenge students. To further develop student knowledge, it is advisable that as lessons commence, students should be questioned on their understanding and knowledge of the topic being taught.
- In all lessons, information and communications technology (ICT) was used seamlessly as a teaching and learning tool. The presentation of stimulating, informative and colourful video and visual resources successfully embedded subject material. The judicious use of ICT for student quiz games and interactive learning also helped to sustain student interest during lessons. The good practice by some teachers of uploading electronic resources to student virtual learning platforms is commended.
- It is praiseworthy that students in junior cycle and senior cycle are encouraged and supported to participate in enterprise activities as this is beneficial to students' progression of key skills and understanding of business activities.
- At the outset of each lesson, learning intentions were presented in terms of what students should be able to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson and as most lessons concluded, their attainment was reviewed.
- Varied modes of homework are regularly assigned to students. On the day of the evaluation, teachers were innovative in how students recorded their homework. Adhesive stickers that outlined the homework were distributed to each student.
- Students' copybooks and account books were generally very well maintained and mirrored the high standard set by teachers. AfL strategies are having a beneficial impact on student learning through positive comments and annotation of students' work. It is

advisable that the 'two stars and a wish' AfL strategy used by some teachers be expanded and used by all teachers.

- Students are supported and encouraged to achieve to their potential in certificate examinations. The outcomes within each level in certificate examinations are very good within the context and abilities of the students. The narrative that teachers append to their analysis of student outcomes provides them with valuable feedback and is supportive of the mentoring system being developed in the school.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Management's support for business education is commendable in each of the following key areas: curricular provision; equality of access to the subject for all students; timetabling; deployment of staff and subject resourcing. The very high standard of whole-school planning for the 'no pen day' ensured that students experienced a variety of active learning methodologies throughout the day.
- Business education is a relatively new addition to the school's curriculum and is viewed in the school as a subject that provides students with valuable life skills. The proposed introduction of Transition Year will further enhance and expand the provision of business education in the school.
- Student uptake of Business Studies and Business is currently very good in the context of the range of subjects being offered in a small school.
- Currently, first-year students sample Business Studies for half of first year. This very good practice provides students with some financial literacy skills and a good working knowledge of the subject so that a well informed decision on subject choices can be made for second year.
- Time allocation to the subjects is very good at both junior and senior cycle. In particular, the provision of five periods in first and second year is commended.
- In teacher-based classrooms, a very good visual learning environment has been developed that included some praiseworthy exhibits of student-generated posters. Business teachers had good access to learning resources such as a visualiser and the computer room.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. They actively attend continuing professional development (CPD) relating to their subject expertise and have engaged in broader educational themes to support student learning and pastoral care needs.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The business teachers are a highly organised, dedicated and collaborative team who work diligently to ensure the learning needs of students are paramount in their work.
- The business department's own mission statement provides teachers with a guiding ethos for the delivery of business education. The self-evaluation and reflective practice of reviewing lesson delivery and noting outcomes on lesson plans for future reference is praiseworthy and exemplifies the desire to further progress business education in the school.

- A wide variety of pertinent topics are discussed at the regular subject department meetings. It is praiseworthy that discussions pertaining to teaching and learning are a strong feature of all meetings. Annually the reflective team sets targets for on-going improvement. This is commendable practice.
 - A comprehensive plan is in place for the delivery of business education in the school. The plan includes: information from CPD events; teaching strategies; practical and achievable targets to improve student's literacy and numeracy skills; AfL strategies for use in business education; agreed school-self-evaluation targets; DEIS planning targets and information on teaching strategies for students with additional educational needs.
 - It is praiseworthy that the highly developed curriculum plans for each business subject are used as working documents by teachers to further develop subject planning.
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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 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

We are very pleased with the report in general. We are extremely proud and happy with the recognition of the hard work of the teachers in our Business Studies Department. The report also highlighted other very pleasing aspects such as the collaboration between the teachers in our Business Studies Department and the exemplary level of planning that they engage in.

The report also highlighted the “good results that our students achieve within the context of their abilities “and it also highlighted the positive effect that our Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies have had in the Business Studies Department. This is a whole school approach and our Business Studies Department actively engages with all whole school initiatives and strategies and it was very pleasing to see this recognised in the report.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The only main recommendations that was detailed in the report was as follows:

“To further enhance the high standard of teaching and learning, teachers should continue to use, develop and expand their repertoire of successful learning activities and AFL practices.”

In order to address this recommendation to Business Studies Department will aim to utilise the Two Stars and a Wish templates more frequently during lessons. These templates can be used in a number of ways, including for student self-assessment, peer assessment and for students to receive feedback from their teachers in class.

The Department will continue to use the traffic lights system and the green pen corrections. The Test Corrections and Error Analysis Sheets will also be used when students complete examinations.