

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Business
REPORT

Coláiste na hInse
Bettystown, County Meath
Roll number: 76103M

Date of inspection: 16 November 2012



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	15 and 16 November
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 seven single class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in business subjects was good overall.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are good.
- Senior management is supportive of business education.
- The planning activities of the business subjects department are very good; the overall plan for business education is good but each business subject's curricular plan could be further developed.
- Business teachers regularly evaluate and analyse their practice and the inclusion of the student voice in the analysis is praiseworthy.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should incorporate a greater variety of active teaching methodologies into their practice so as to further enhance student learning and develop key skills.
 - The sequencing of topics in the Business Studies plan should be re-considered.
 - Schemes of work for each business subject should be further developed as a coherent plan for the provision of business education in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste na hInse is under the auspices of County Meath Vocational Education Committee and has an enrolment of 613 students. Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle as is Business for Leaving Certificate students. Business education is a core element in the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in business subjects was good overall. In all lessons there were elements of effective teacher practice.
- During the inspection some good student-teacher discussions were observed and in mini-company lesson TY students worked effectively in groups. However, the emphasis in most lessons was on instructional teaching. Further development of methodologies that support student learning in an active and co-operative way should be actively pursued so that students experience a blend of learning activities.
- Teachers generated good links between students' prior knowledge and new learning. This was supported through student and teacher use of very good real-life examples and references to topical matters.
- Very good questioning strategies that were differentiated and targeted at individual students developed student learning in almost all lessons. The use of information and communication technology in most lessons provided a good visual stimulus and deepened student learning.
- Teachers were meticulous in imparting as much knowledge as possible to students. However, in Leaving Certificate there was an over-reliance on transcription of notes. In response to a recent questionnaire on classroom learning, almost all students in this class group had indicated that they would prefer a more active alternative to note-taking. To maximise the use of lesson time, students could be encouraged to be responsible for their own note-making outside of class time. Where additional class notes are required, these could be given to students electronically.
- The pace of lessons was suited to the needs of students, and every effort was made to ensure students understood key concepts. Learning objectives were clearly stated at the beginning of all lessons and were recapped as the lesson concluded. This practice was particularly effective in lessons where good student questioning techniques were used.
- In all lessons there was a clear focus on development of good literacy skills through the explanation of keywords and exploration of unfamiliar business terminology. Good numeracy strategies were integrated into all lessons and a common method of conducting calculations was employed in all business lessons.
- The TY business module is delivered in a way that befits the programme's ethos and aims. Students are provided with opportunities to develop key skills through their participation in enterprise activities.
- Classroom management was very good; there was mutual respect and very good rapport between students and teacher. The good teaching and classroom management practices created a positive and affirming learning environment for students. The use of the student journal to affirm students and to record academic progress was particularly good.

- All business teachers regularly assign homework which is well monitored. However, there is no common approach to the assigning of homework and class groups in the same year were receiving differing quantities of homework. This merits a review to ensure that all students experience a similar and consistent quantity of homework that is active and engaging.
- In planning documentation, assessment for learning was noted as a baseline methodology. It is praiseworthy that the layout and content of students' journals embed the practice through the use of colour-coded sheets aligned to the traffic-light system used in assessment for learning.
- Students of business education are challenged, encouraged and supported to aim for high academic standards and to take the highest possible level in the certificate examinations. Student attainment at each level is good.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Student numbers taking Business Studies have increased each year since the school opened in 2008. The majority of students who have taken Business Studies at junior cycle continue with business education, as do a number of students who have experienced business education in TY.
- Currently Business is offered at Leaving Certificate. As student numbers are increasing in the school, the introduction of another business subject is being considered by senior management.
- Senior management supports business education in a tangible manner. The provision of concurrent timetabling and an additional teacher to team-teach in third year is indicative of the good support that students receive.
- Business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. Business teachers regularly attend subject association events and have availed of professional development courses.
- Business teachers have their own base classrooms since moving to the school's new premises in August. These business classrooms allow for the creation of good print-rich environments. Of particular merit are the displays of book-keeping resources for use in Business Studies.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The planning activities of the business subjects department are ably co-ordinated by a member of the team, and the position is clearly defined and rotated. The organisational, evaluation and collaborative practices of the business subject department are very good. The process of planning is focused on the teaching and learning needs of the student.
- The business subjects department engages in robust self-evaluation through the process of a yearly curriculum action plan. As part of the evaluation, students' outcomes in state examinations are analysed and targets are set for further development. The student voice is included through the use of a questionnaire to assess how students are learning. The use

of a star system by students to assess how learning objectives have been attained is particularly effective.

- Planning documentation indicates that high standards are maintained within the business subjects department. However, the sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be re-considered so as to facilitate the integration of theory elements with book-keeping.
- Business teachers are aware of the importance of the development of student literacy and numeracy skills and have developed a clear succinct policy for use in their practice.
- All schemes of work could be further developed by aligning learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and a range of assessment and teaching methodologies to each curriculum topic.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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, 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

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The subject inspection of Coláiste na hInse Roinn Gnó took place on 16th November. The process as operated by the inspector was a very positive and enriching process. She was both thorough and professional in her execution of her duties and the process had encouraged genuine reflection and development at a very mature level. For this we are most grateful. The content of the report is very fair and considered. A recommendation that stimulated much reflection was with regard to sequencing of topics in the Business Plan. The department are committed to differentiation and will reconsider the sequencing within this context.

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

The Business Department has met four times since the inspection draft findings and are committed to implementing the finding and recommendations. Work is currently being undertaken on the following:

- **Active Methodology:** Research and introduce more active methodologies into Business classes. Showcase methodologies between teachers. Develop a repertoire of active methodologies that are tried and tested to support existing teachers and encourage any new teacher in the department to introduce as matter of good and normal practice.
- **Sequencing of topics:** The members of the department agree that the sequencing of topics is of great importance to promote understanding. The sequencing of topics in the Business Studies plan will be re-considered per year group. The department is committed to differentiation and will re-consider sequencing to develop Schemes of Work in line with the abilities and needs of the daltaí in each year group. The department will continue to evaluate Schemes of Work on a regular basis taking into account the needs and abilities of each year group.
- **Schemes of Work:** These are being reviewed at the end of this year 2013 with the ambition of developing them further into a fully coherent plan for the provision of business education in the school.