

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business and Economics
REPORT**

**Gonzaga College
Ranelagh, Dublin 6
Roll number: 60530S**

Date of inspection: 18 April 2013



**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 AND ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	18 April 2013
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 four lessons; one double and three single periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching observed was good overall; business teachers were diligent in ensuring that students' knowledge was comprehensive and were cognisant of learning styles and needs.
- A good learning environment, in which students were encouraged to participate through good questioning strategies, was evident.
- Teachers gave good formative feedback on students corrected work.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and the uptake of higher level in State examinations is excellent as are the subsequent outcomes.
- The uptake of Business and Economics in Leaving Certificate is very good, considering that Business Studies is not offered to junior cycle students.
- Individual planning is good but there are opportunities for more collaborative planning activities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further develop student's learning, teachers should incorporate additional active and co-operative learning methodologies and a visual learning environment into their practice.
- Students should be given more opportunities to further expand their own awareness of topical business and economic-related events through research and project work and, on occasion, should evaluate and assess their own work.
- With the introduction of the new junior cycle, educational stakeholders should re-visit the option of introducing Business Studies or a business related short course into the curriculum.
- Collaborative planning should be progressed with opportunities at subject planning meetings to discuss and share best practice in the teaching of all business subjects.

INTRODUCTION

Gonzaga College is a voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 539 male students. Students' first formal introduction to business education is through the core module of Business in the compulsory Transition Year programme (TY). Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was good overall with some very good teaching practices observed during some lessons. Business teachers were diligent in ensuring that students' knowledge and know-how was comprehensive and were cognisant of students learning styles and needs.
- In lessons, there was a sense of shared ownership of learning between teacher and student. Teachers related the learning in lessons to real-life situations and the lively student teacher discussions helped to develop students' analytical and communication skills.
- Effective questioning strategies were used in lessons to assess and deepen student knowledge and to encourage interaction and engagement. Questions were directed to named students and sufficient time was given to students to articulate their answers.
- In the majority of lessons, students were given the opportunity to work in pairs. However, there is potential to further expand co-operative learning activities such as group work in lessons, where appropriate. In addition activities such as project work, debates and presentations could be established in all class groups so as to further involve students in leading their own learning and the development of their key skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was well utilised by teachers to support the presentation of lesson content. In a business lesson, a video clip provided an excellent real-life exemplar of the lesson topic. The use of ICT in this manner should be fully exploited where possible.
- All lessons were well planned and prepared. At the outset of lessons, an outline of work was shared with students. This should now progress to the articulation of learning outcomes in terms of what students should and could know, and as the lesson concludes the key points of learning could be recapped by students.
- In lessons observed, students were motivated in their learning. When questioned by teachers, students displayed very good subject knowledge and their responses to higher-order questioning were reasoned and succinct. To further develop students' application of knowledge and understanding to everyday business situations, students should expand their awareness of topical business and economic-related events through media resources.
- Students were regularly assigned homework. It is advisable, on occasion, that all students receive alternative and additional modes of assignments such as research and project work.
- Homework is regularly corrected by teachers. Very good practice was observed where students' work was returned with affirming and formative comments which provided students with direction as to how they could improve their work. On occasion, students should also evaluate and assess their own work so as to apply their own critical skills and internalise learning.

- Students of Business and Economics are encouraged to aim for high academic standards. Participation rates at higher level in State examinations are excellent as are the subsequent outcomes.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business Studies is not offered on the school's junior cycle curriculum. However, all TY students have the opportunity to avail of business education. It is encouraging that despite having not had the opportunity to take Business Studies in junior cycle there is very high uptake and a very strong demand for each of the business subjects provided as Leaving Certificate optional subjects. The introduction of the new junior cycle curriculum will create an opportunity to re-visit the option of introducing Business Studies or a business-related short course.
- TY students experience Economics and Business on a modular basis. The business module introduces students to the world of enterprise. However, it is difficult to give students a meaningful and practical experience of Enterprise in ten weeks. This provision should be reviewed in the interest of giving students a worthwhile year-long experience of Enterprise which would further develop student's key skills.
- Business teachers have their own base classrooms in which there are good ICT facilities and teaching aids. However, the potential to create visual learning environments in all business classrooms should be further exploited through the display of relevant subject-related posters; news items and students project work. Senior management should consider the provision of a notice board in the school environs for business-related news.
- All business teachers are subject specialists and are up-to-date in their knowledge of business subjects. At least one member of the business department attends subject association meetings and conference. In the context of a dynamic subject like Business, teachers could also avail formally of continuing professional development that is available in their subject area.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Each business subject has its own co-ordinator, yet an informal collaborative relationship was observed in practice. However, a joint meeting annually would facilitate discussion on areas common to both subjects such as methodologies, resources and student assessment. Business teachers could also consider the appointment of an overall business department co-ordinator whose position should rotate within the department.
- The economics and business teachers have each devised individual plans for each subject as they have full ownership of their respective curriculum. These plans are good in design. Of particular merit is the teacher's individual curricular plan where learning outcomes, resources, and the methodologies to be employed in the teaching of each topic are noted. To further enhance these plans, the details of specific methodologies and homework modes for each topic could be noted.
- Teachers' short-term lesson planning and preparation are of a high standard. Teachers commendably had devised a schedule to ensure that students work is regularly monitored and corrected.

- As senior-cycle students are new to business education, the compilation of a list of keywords and definitions for each business topic would serve as a resource for students.

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.