

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Wilson's Hospital School
Multyfarnham, County Westmeath
Roll number: 63300Q**

Date of inspection: 12 April 2011



**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 SUBJECTS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	12 April 2011
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 7 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Students' engagement with lesson content was usually good and teachers' expectations of students were good.
- Occasionally new material was introduced using a teacher-centred approach when an activity-based approach would be more appropriate.
- Some good examples of varied lesson activities, including student-led surveys, were observed.
- Though presentation software was used to present some text-based material, overall insufficient use is made of the available information and communication technology (ICT) resources in teaching the subjects.
- Within the overall subject plan there is scope to develop the schemes of work.
- Very good practice in recording students' attendance and homework completion was evident during the evaluation.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be provided with more opportunities to develop their research skills through increased use of self-directed learning activities.
 - There should be increased consistency in the use of keyword strategies in supporting students learning in the subjects.
 - Greater integration of ICT within teaching is required to support students learning.
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INTRODUCTION

Wilson's Hospital School is a voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland, and has recently entered the free education scheme. The school has a current enrolment of 384 students, of whom approximately two-thirds are boarders. The school provides junior cycle Business Studies, and senior cycle Business and Economics as optional subjects. Mini-company is included as a module with the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY). 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall standard of teaching was very good in the majority of the lessons observed.
- Lesson routines were strong with particular attention paid to student punctuality and organisation.
- In the majority of lessons a good range of teaching methodologies was used to support learning. However, occasionally when new material was introduced a teacher-centred approach was used when an activity-based approach would have been more appropriate.
- Good examples of independent learning opportunities were provided in many of the lessons observed. In particular the opportunity in the first-year lesson observed for students to develop their research and recording skills through conducting a survey linked to foreign trade was very good.
- A pastoral approach is evident in the management of students within lessons. Teachers' expectations of students' ability and attainment are good and this was reflected in many of the lessons observed.
- In most lessons questioning was directed at individual students, and where relevant it is recommended that the use of global questions that encourage chorus answering is minimised.
- It was evident in senior-cycle classes that students engage in self-directed learning as there were examples of students generating their own revision notes, though the notes tended to be text-based. Some additional guidance should be given to students about appropriate note generation that accommodates the range of students' learning styles including, for example, the use of mnemonics and graphic organisers.
- Some good practice in relation to the students' acquisition of keywords was evident where the teacher disseminated the keywords and students transcribed them into their copybooks. The extension of this approach to all classes is advised, especially as a strategy for business vocabulary instruction for students for whom English is an additional language.
- The teachers made strong efforts to bring the richness of students own experiences into the lesson content, especially when exploring the applied aspects of business theory.
- The questions assigned for both class work and homework, especially at junior cycle, included a good degree of challenge.
- Good preparation for state examinations was evident in some Leaving Certificate classes visited including examples of where students were developing their own question banks.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Time allocation to the subjects at junior and senior cycle is good. A combination of a survey of student preferences and management's planning for the allocation of available teaching resources is used to determine the availability of Business Studies as an option to class groups at junior cycle.
- The numbers taking the subjects at senior cycle are very good. Of particular merit is that access to the subjects at senior cycle is open to all students, regardless of whether they have taken the subject at junior cycle.
- The allocation of one period per week for Transition Year (TY) mini-company is low and as a result the teachers have strengthened the links between mini-company and other TY modules to ensure a broad learning experience for students within the limited time allocation.
- The provision of ICT resources for teaching business subjects is very good, including the recent provision of interactive short-throw projectors in the classrooms. While training in the use of the new projectors has been undertaken by the teachers, further self-directed learning is required to ensure the potential created by their availability is fully utilised to support teaching and learning.
- A whole-school approach in relation to homework is that it is regularly assigned and based on work completed in class. Adherence to these principles was strongly evident in the lessons and copybooks reviewed during the inspection.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- As the subjects are taught mainly by one teacher subject planning is individually led and a formal subject department structure is not in place.
- Subject plans were provided for each business subject during the evaluation with associated schemes of work. Greater detail is required in the schemes of work including establishing learning outcomes for each topic with associated teaching and assessment methodologies.
- A good mentoring system exists for supporting student teachers on placement in the school. In business this includes clear delineation of areas of the syllabus to be assigned and the sharing of good practice.
- The subject department demonstrates a capacity for self review, through its recent work on developing proposals for alternative TY business modules and altering the yearly schemes of work in business to reflect current business trends. Further development of this initial work is advised to advance the development of the subjects within the school's curriculum.
- Of particular merit in subject planning is the capacity of the lead teacher to integrate cross-curricular links, in particular TY development studies, with related business learning outcomes.
- Individual lessons were generally well planned and consistent with the schemes of work.

- Until recently analysis of results in state examinations was undertaken only by the school principal. The subject department is advised to analyse the outcomes from state examinations on an annual basis as part of the subject planning process.
- Very good systems for recording students' attendance and homework completion were observed that use a coding system in the teacher's journal to record the outcomes quickly at the start of lessons. This is particularly appropriate to the school's context as the majority of students are boarders and daily contact with home through the student's journal is not feasible.
- The lead teacher has recently developed an accessible filing system for the collation and storage of homework presented for correction. It is advised that this practice is adopted across the department.

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.