

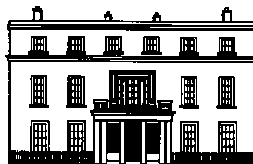
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Newport College
Newport, County Tipperary
Roll number: 72450N**

Date of inspection: 27 March 2015



**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 AND
BUSINESS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	27 March 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods; one double and two single periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very high quality teaching and learning was evident in the lessons observed with exceptionally good practice in using appropriate strategies to support students' diverse learning needs in most instances.
- The lessons were very well planned with good consideration of the range of resources required to support the achievement of the lesson objectives.
- First-year students participate in a year-long subject sampling programme where two periods per week are allocated to Business Studies; this reduced time allocation is redressed by the provision of five periods per week in both second and third year.
- Careful consideration has been given to the structure and content of the first-year taster programme with the emphasis placed on the development of basic financial literacy skills.
- Time allocation at senior cycle is below the recommended guideline.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Current self-assessment practices should be further developed to include the use of success criteria and target setting.
 - Upward differentiation should be further promoted by using check balance approaches with accounts questions and modifying the existing assessment test format.
 - School management should increase the time allocation for Business at senior cycle as a priority, as resources allow.
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INTRODUCTION

Newport College is located in Newport, Co. Tipperary. The school operates under the auspices of Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB) and has a current enrolment of 133 students, which includes twenty-one Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) students. Business Studies is provided at junior cycle and Business at senior cycle. There is currently no Transition Year (TY) programme. The school participates in Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very high quality teaching and learning was observed in lessons with exceptionally good practice in using appropriate strategies to support students' diverse learning needs in most instances.
- Questioning strategies observed were good. There was good use of targeted and global questions supported by good use of wait time. Awareness of the importance of differentiation to support students' learning was very high.
- Lessons had a consistent structure in that each lesson commenced with a recapitulation of the learning from previous lessons. Whole-school literacy and numeracy priorities were addressed in each of the lessons.
- The base room was a print-rich learning environment and included student developed materials. The room is very well laid out to support both independent and collaborative learning. Teacher mobility was maximised and there was effective teacher movement around the room to support individual learning. In all lessons opportunities were provided for students to learn collaboratively and independently.
- Content-focused learning outcomes were written on the board at the start of each lesson with reminder verbal prompts utilised to indicate lesson transitions. Homework was also written up before the start of the lesson as outlined in the whole-school homework policy.
- Pair work was managed through the use of a single recording instrument with each group and this generated the desired student interaction. Also cloze tests and other similar resources were used to accommodate the range of students' learning styles.
- The tone of interactions with students was very positive and differing personalities of students were very well managed. Consideration should be given to developing an oral dimension to the literacy strategy which would channel the contributions of male students more formally.
- Learning aids and notes were provided. Additionally, students' folders includes copies of templates completed by them, teacher-developed summaries and the use of model answers as supports for the students' learning.
- A number of whole-school strategies including the homework policy focus on promoting student attainment. For example business students are required to redo exercises that are not up to a specified standard. Additional strategies to consider in promoting upward differentiation are the use of check balance approaches with accounts questions to encourage students' accuracy and reflection and modifying existing common tests with differentiated elements in examination year groups.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school is maximising access to the subject within the constraints of the resources available to it. In order to achieve this, second and third-year students are taught in a combined setting as are fifth and sixth-year students.
- First-year students participate in a year-long subject sampling programme. Careful consideration has been given to the structure and content of this business programme. The emphasis had been placed on the development of basic financial literacy skills through the topics covered.
- Participation at junior cycle varies between thirty and forty percent in terms of uptake and students have open access to the subject at senior cycle regardless of whether they have taken the subject at junior cycle.
- The shorter time allocation of two periods per week for Business Studies in first year is redressed by additional time of five periods per week for each of second and third year. Time allocation at senior cycle is below the recommended time and this deficit should be addressed, as resources allow.
- Access to additional resources is facilitated on a needs basis and it is evident that with the support of school management, considerable progress has been made in developing the range of supports to enhance the delivery of the subject.
- Access is provided to additional resources through the use of information and communication technology (ICT), specifically through email. The potential of using a cloud-based system to develop this approach should be further explored, as it will continue to make students more responsible for managing their own progress.
- The recent review of the school's homework policy provides potential for the further development of assessment for learning (AfL) in terms of the format and structure of the feedback provided to students. Currently sixth-year students engage in target setting for examination performance and there is scope to extend this approach to other year groups. Additionally, the current approaches used in formative assessment should be supported by introducing strategies of setting targets, reviewing learning and identifying paths for improvement.
- The school participates in DEIS and the school-business link is currently under review. In addition, the students engage in a number of co-curricular activities including the school bank and a range of enterprise projects.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The planning documentation facilitates the integration of whole-school approaches within the teaching of subjects for example, literacy and numeracy and assessment for learning.
- Long-term plans are supported by well-structured short term schemes of work. It is evident that these short-term schemes are regularly updated as the topics for the combined groups by necessity evolve on a continuous basis. In addition, current business developments for example in the banking sector have been referenced.
- Among the challenges of the combined settings is to deal with topics in an integrated way rather than as discrete topics linked, for example, with certificate examination paper topics. The care taken with subject planning assists in minimising the difficulties associated with these constraints.

- Topics listed in the plan have associated lists of key terms and the recently introduced system of formally reporting to the board on subject attainment demonstrates good reflective practice.
- The lessons observed during the evaluation were very well planned with good consideration of the range of resources required to support the achievement of the lesson objectives.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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.