

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects  
REPORT**

**Loreto College  
Foxrock, Dublin 18  
Roll number: 60240J**

**Date of inspection: 30 January 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 SUBJECTS**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	29 and 30 January 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight lessons: six single and two double class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching observed was of a very high standard overall.
- Students were engaged, challenged and motivated in their learning.
- Students are afforded many opportunities to develop their key skills and deepen business acumen outside of the classroom through extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
- Uptake of business subjects at higher level is very good as are subsequent outcomes in state examinations.
- Business education and activities have a high profile in the school and senior management supports them in a tangible way.
- The planning, organisational, mentoring and evaluative practice of the business subjects department is excellent; the focus is on the learning needs of students.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In the small number of areas where scope for development was identified, student learning would be further developed through enhanced questioning strategies and increased use of evaluative and guiding feedback.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Loreto College, Foxrock is a voluntary secondary school which offers Business Studies in junior cycle. Business education is core in the school's highly-subscribed optional Transition Year (TY). In Leaving Certificate, Accounting and Business are optional subjects on the timetable as is Economics which is provided outside of the main timetable. The school has a current enrolment of 654 female students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching observed in business subjects was of a very high standard. In each lesson teachers used a variety of methodologies that included good co-operative and active learning strategies.
- Students were highly engaged in learning. In all lessons students were afforded many opportunities to develop their key skills and understanding of business knowledge in an active and meaningful manner.
- In all lessons there was a good focus on the development of students' literacy skills. Students and teachers worked in partnership to explore unfamiliar keywords and terminology. Simple strategies such as the correct layout of numerical calculations were effective in developing good practice.
- All lessons observed were well structured and prepared, and had a logical sequence of activities. Learning outcomes were shared with students at the outset of lessons and as the lessons concluded teachers involved students in summarising the learning in the lesson.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in most lessons. ICT was most effectively used when it allowed business education to attain a dynamic real-life focus through the viewing of pertinent video clips and WebPages.
- The use of newspaper advertisements and articles deepened student learning, while the use of graphic organisers and mind maps aided students in the summarising of knowledge. In an Accounting lesson, student use of "show-me" boards was a sensitive and efficient way of evaluating student knowledge.
- In most lessons observed, there was good use of targeted questioning to elicit and clarify knowledge and to develop class discussions. The use of the "think pair, share" strategy in a lesson was effective in motivating students to develop their higher-order thinking skills. These good questioning strategies should be promoted in all lessons.
- All first-year students have the opportunity to partake in an enjoyable and valuable six-week module in enterprise. Summer, Christmas and parish fairs are organised each year for students to exhibit and sell their produce. It is praiseworthy that TY students mentor and liaise with first-year students in the organisation of the fairs. TY students are responsible for the running of a healthy eating and activity week in a way that mirrors a commercial enterprise.
- Leaving Certificate students' folders were good and comprehensive. In addition to learning material they contained a résumé of students' evaluation of their learning in each topic.
- The sample of students' copybooks and folders viewed were found to be neat and well labelled, and mirrored the high standards set by teachers. There was evidence of formal checking of students' homework and some evaluative comments as to how students might

improve their performance. This good practice should be expanded throughout the business subjects department.

- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential. Uptake of business subjects at higher level is very good as are the subsequent outcomes in state examinations. Business teachers analyse outcomes and the comparison is presented in a clear graphic format. The analysis forms part of the yearly evaluation of the workings of the business subject department.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- There is very good provision and support of business education and related activities in the school.
- The uptake of business subjects on the school's curriculum in junior cycle and senior cycle is very good. The majority of students who have taken Business Studies at junior cycle retain at least one business option at Leaving Certificate. In Leaving Certificate a number of students are new to business education, having experienced it in TY.
- In the majority of teacher-based classrooms a good print-rich environment has been created. Of particular merit are the displays of book-keeping resources and student projects. The use of a business notice board in the school environs to update students on business related news, activities and mentor group meetings is praiseworthy.
- All business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. Business teachers regularly attend subject association meetings, conferences and workshops and have availed of professional development courses. It was evident in lessons and in planning documentation that teachers share good practice and that the expertise and skills gained from in-services are deployed in business education.
- There is excellent practice in the mentoring of trainee teachers. A weekly meeting is convened by the business subjects co-ordinator to discuss progress and give advice. The flow of expertise is two-way as trainee teachers share their resources and teaching methodologies with colleagues.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The six teachers in the business subjects department are a professional team who work in a collaborative manner. They are committed to the continued development and enhancement of business education in the school.
- There are regular subject department planning meetings. A portion of these meetings is used for the sharing and explanation of effective and new teaching methodologies. This good practice ensures that the learning needs of students are central to business teachers.
- Planning documentation is comprehensive and is indicative of the very high standards that are maintained within the business subjects department.
- The schemes of work for each business subject offered on the school's curriculum provide a good roadmap for its delivery in the classroom. Of particular merit is the linking of learning outcomes, resources, and the methodologies to be employed in the teaching of each topic. To further enhance the plan the details of how and where specific methodologies can be used for each topic could be noted.

- The range of teaching methodologies detailed in TY modules indicates that it is delivered in an interactive and explorative manner.
- Individual planning is of a high standard and all teachers follow the agreed schemes of work. At the end of each topic teachers noted their reflections on the delivery of the topic and these are discussed at subject department meetings so as to further refine teaching in the business subjects department.
- A well-organised electronic folder has been developed containing resources and subject-related information that is relevant and regularly updated.

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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

*Published May 2013.*