

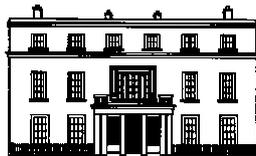
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Loreto Secondary School
Wexford Town, County Wexford
Roll number: 63660A**

Date of inspection: 6 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	5 and 6 November 2012
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 ten class periods: one double and eight single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers,

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good-quality traditional teaching was observed, but there is potential to further develop teaching practices.
- A positive, supportive and affirming learning environment enhanced student motivation and participation.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are very good.
- Senior management is supportive of business education, which has a good profile on the school's curriculum.
- The planning, collaborative and reflective practices of the business subjects department are good; an expansion of subject curricular plans would enhance them.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should incorporate active and co-operative learning methodologies and a visual learning environment into their practice.
 - Business teachers should consider best practice in the assigning and assessment of student work and aim for consistent practice throughout the business subjects department that includes assessment for learning techniques.
 - The content of each business subject's curricular plan should be developed collaboratively to serve as a manual for the provision of the best possible business education in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 715 female post-primary students. Business Studies is a core subject in first year and an optional subject thereafter. Business education is compulsory in the compulsory Transition Year programme (TY). Accounting, Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate Students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good teaching and learning overall was observed. Effective practice included the sharing of good subject knowledge, linkage to real-life business situations and clear explanations of concepts.
- In most lessons teachers adopted a traditional approach. Student input in lessons was through good questioning techniques. In one lesson students worked in pairs and in a TY lesson students worked in groups. However, there is potential in most lessons to use active and co-operative methodologies more frequently.
- Students displayed good knowledge and understanding of topics being taught and were able to apply their knowledge to real-life examples. Business teachers organise student visits to local businesses and trade fairs. This is particularly beneficial to students' understanding of business theory.
- In almost all lessons information and communication technology (ICT) was well utilised by teachers to support their presentation of lesson content. In some lessons business education attained a dynamic focus as relevant case studies, websites, and extracts of television programmes were used to support student learning.
- The development of literacy and numeracy skills was good in some lessons, while in others strategies need to be fully embedded in lesson content. The definition of keywords and development of mental mathematical calculations should be expanded. Business teachers should also identify commonly used mathematical calculations and liaise with the mathematics department to ensure that computations are carried out in a similar way.
- In most lessons learning outcomes were articulated in terms of what students should know by the end of the lesson. In one lesson the learning outcomes were revisited so as to establish whether or not they had been achieved. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- The TY business module is delivered in an explorative manner befitting the programme's ethos and aims. All TY students participate in mini-company which seeks to develop students' entrepreneurial and managerial skills.
- Classroom management was good and effective and there was very good rapport between teachers and students in all lessons visited. Students responded positively and courteously to teachers' instructions and they were in turn positively affirmed in all their interactions with teachers.
- A sample of student copybooks and journals from each lesson indicated varied practice in the quantity and type of homework assigned to students. Business teachers should consider best practice in homework and aim for a consistent practice throughout the business subjects department that includes a variety of homework modes.
- Students' copybooks and account books were found to be neat and well labelled. There was some evidence of formal checking of students' homework that included evaluative

and guiding comments as to how students might improve their performance. This good practice should be expanded particularly for Leaving Certificate students.

- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations. Uptake of all business subjects at higher level is very good and subsequent outcomes are very good.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business Studies is taken by all first-year students. This good practice provides students with an opportunity to attain financial literacy skills and to make an informed decision on subject choices for second year. The uptake of the optional Business Studies in second year is very good.
- All TY students are exposed to business education. There is good uptake of the three optional business subjects in Leaving Certificate.
- The potential to display student work and presentation is limited as it is not possible for all business teachers to have their own base room. However, there still exist opportunities to create a visual learning environment in all classrooms where business education is being delivered and this should be further exploited by all business teachers.
- The majority of business teachers are members of their subject association and some have availed of subject-specific continuing professional development. A formal means of sharing and recording information from in-service activities should be devised.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well established and organised. Business teachers work in a collaborative and supportive manner and are committed to the continued development of business education in the school.
- At the regular subject department meetings most discussions pertain to the organisational aspects of the department. The inclusion of discussions on best teaching and learning approaches and on an overall consistent team approach to homework is recommended.
- There are well designed plans in place for each business subject offered on the school's curriculum. Within each plan there is a good focus on how students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed. It is advisable to have one overall plan for all business subjects and to differentiate each business subject curriculum plan relative to its syllabus content.
- Currently, subject curriculum plans detail the sequencing of topics to be taught to each year group. All curricular plans can be further developed by aligning learning outcomes, resources, differentiated teaching methodologies and a range of assessment and homework modes to each topic.
- A formal annual self-review and evaluation of the business subjects department's activities and outcomes in state examinations is conducted and developmental targets are set for the following year. This practice is praiseworthy.
- Students in senior cycle are to be commended for their development of a book of business definitions and keywords. The use of such a valuable resource could be extended to junior cycle in an electronic format.

- The business subjects' departmental electronic folder is a good resource. The resources and subject-related information are regularly updated. Business teachers are in the process of developing a business webpage where students can access business-related resources and materials used in lessons. This good development will in time reduce the need to reproduce paper-based resources.

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 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.

Published March 2013.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management sees this report as affirming the very good work and practice of the business department in the school and as a constructive pathway towards further development.

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 school welcomes the helpful recommendations in the report. The next series of subject meetings will consider how best to implement them.