

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects  
REPORT**

**Saint Benildus College  
Stillorgan, Co. Dublin  
Roll number: 60261R**

**Date of inspection: 6 May 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	4 and 6 May 2011
<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 ten class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Business teachers' delivery of business education was of a very high quality.
- Students' learning activities were of a high standard but they were somewhat constrained by the time allocated to the subject at junior cycle.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool, communication aid and planning resource was exemplary.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current and they actively share resources and best practice.
- The business subjects department is well organised and ensures that the needs of its students are at the core of its activities.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The provision of at least one specialist business classroom and of four periods including a double period for Business Studies should be pursued by senior management.
  - In curricular plans the learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and range of teaching and assessment methodologies used to teach each topic should be documented.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Benildus College is a voluntary secondary school which provides Business Studies as a core subject in junior cycle. Almost all students choose to complete the optional Transition Year (TY), in which all students take a Business and Economics module. At Leaving Certificate students are offered Accounting, Business and Economics. The school has a current enrolment of 690 students, all male.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In all lessons teachers were conscientious, hardworking and delivered very good learning activities for students.
- Teachers used a suitable blend of active, co-operative and traditional methodologies in each lesson. However in a small number of lessons there was potential to use more active learning such as group work and role play.
- All lessons had a good structure and learning activities were well planned. In some lessons, due to time constraints, the pace was too fast and this lessened the value of the very good learning activities that teachers provided.
- Learning outcomes were shared with students in almost all lessons and at the end of some lessons there was a recap of learning.
- Where ICT was used it was a constructive teaching and learning tool that allowed business education to attain a dynamic real-life focus. In lessons teachers accessed clips from news programmes, youtube and television programmes. They have also developed a 'twitter' account and business webpage from which students can receive daily updates on world-wide economic activities.
- Teachers shared their good topical subject knowledge and used paper-based and physical resources to develop student understanding of business education.
- In all lessons very effective use was made of teacher questioning and it successfully differentiated, explored and expanded student learning.
- Classroom management was very good in all lessons. There was good rapport and positive interactions between teachers and students.
- In a visit to a TY lesson it was evident that the programme is delivered in a way that befits its ethos and aims. TY students displayed very good knowledge of topical economic developments.
- Teachers were aware of the students in their classes with special educational needs and liaised with the school's learning support co-ordinator to ensure they maximised their learning potential.
- Business students are encouraged to strive for the highest possible level in state examinations and outcomes are good.
- Most students are given regular homework and assessments. However in a very small number of class groups there was scope to give more regular homework. Teachers are commended for the good use of helpful guiding and evaluative comments on students' work.
- Common assessments are administered up to the 'mock' examinations at junior cycle. An appropriate balance of long and short answer questions is included in assessments. To

foster the ethos of student ownership of learning the use of peer assessment and student self evaluation could now be developed.

- Student copybooks were well labelled and neat.

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

- The provision of three single periods in each year of Business Studies is low. The absence of double periods to complete practical book-keeping exercises creates an additional difficulty. The good explorative manner in which the subject is taught merits a more generous time allocation.
- Time allocation for the teaching of business subjects in senior cycle is good.
- Business education is provided in a mixed-ability setting and a common programme of work is followed in junior cycle.
- 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.
- Excellent practice was observed 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 a two-way process as trainee teachers share their resources and teaching methodologies with colleagues.
- Classrooms are student-based. Teachers were meticulous in their organisation of lessons and ensured that a variety of resources were used. There were some displays of business related visual aids. However, the potential to develop visual learning environments is diminished in student-based classrooms. As all junior cycle students have the good opportunity to avail of Business Studies the provision of at least one specialist business room should be considered by senior management.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The business subjects plan is comprehensive and contains all the elements of good planning. As evidenced from minutes of subject department meetings and planning documentation, business teachers are a good self-evaluating team and are willing to develop their practices.
- Business teachers meet formally once a term. A very good team-working relationship was observed in practice. Business teachers share a common area in the library where resources are stored and shared with each other. At the end of the school day, business teachers meet in this area to discuss issues, prepare for the next day and make them selves available to students if required.
- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be reconsidered. Year two of the cycle is heavily weighted towards book-keeping topics. It is advisable to incorporate book-keeping elements throughout the three-year cycle as this will facilitate the integration of theory elements into book-keeping.
- All curricular plans can be further enhanced so as to provide a written record of the good practice observed in lessons.

- Teachers' individual planning folders were comprehensive. They included a description of the role of special needs assistants in classrooms and provided a summary of the progress being made by students with special educational needs in business education.
- The substantial folder of paper-based resources is regularly updated and shared within the business subjects department. Business teachers successfully incorporate elements and activities of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme into business education so as to deepen students' business acumen.
- The use of ICT to store electronic resources and up-to-date information that can be accessed by business teachers and students is exemplary.

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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation; a response was not received from the board.