

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects  
REPORT**

**Meánscoil Iognáid Rís  
Walkinstown, Dublin 12  
Roll number: 60480G**

**Date of inspection: 08 October 2014**



**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>	7 and 8 October 2014
<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: one double and eight single lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching as observed was good overall but in a small number of lessons students were not sufficiently active in their learning.
- Student learning was good in lessons where teachers were facilitators of learning.
- The practices among teachers of assigning and assessing students' homework varied.
- Student uptake of Business Studies at junior cycle is good and many students retain a business subject in Leaving Certificate.
- The business subjects plan is good in design but there is scope to further develop the content and process of business subjects planning.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Where scope for development was identified, teachers should enhance student learning through the increased use of higher-order targeted questioning, effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and co-operative and active learning methodologies.
- Teachers should assign homework of a sufficient standard to build on the lesson's learning outcomes after each lesson, and the use of formative feedback should be extended.
- The content of the business subjects plan and each curricular plan should be developed collaboratively by business teachers and used as a manual on how to provide the best possible business education in the school.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is a voluntary all boys' secondary school which has a current enrolment of 662 students. Business Studies is provided in junior cycle. Business education is compulsory in the optional Transition Year (TY). At Leaving Certificate, students are offered Accounting and Business.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching as observed was good overall. However, in a small number of lessons, students were not sufficiently actively involved in learning.
- Student learning was good in lessons where teachers were facilitators of learning. Teachers achieved this through good co-operative learning activities and higher-order questioning strategies.
- In the majority of lessons, students were given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups. This was particularly effective in TY and in a lesson where students completed club account questions as there was very good student activity and dialogue.
- In most lessons observed, ICT was used as a teaching aid. In some lessons, the showing of appropriate video and news clips engaged and deepened student learning. The use of ICT to provide a context for learning should be expanded.
- In accounting lessons, the integration of book-keeping practice with theoretical knowledge was very good, as was the use of pair work and student questioning. A step-by-step approach that had an emphasis on teaching for understanding was used throughout.
- Within all lessons, teachers frequently used questioning strategies to check student progress and understanding. Some very good higher-order questioning that explored students' subject knowledge was observed in many lessons. In a small number of lessons, questioning tended to be global and not sufficiently differentiated so as to challenge more able students. A small adjustment to questioning techniques would prove beneficial in improving learning outcomes.
- In a small number of lessons, students were transcribing information that was available in their textbooks and this was not an effective use of lesson time. Students should be encouraged to generate their own notes and summarise their learning.
- It is praiseworthy that TY and some junior cycle groups complete projects. The potential to expand the use of project work in all class groups as a significant learning activity and the creation of displays of student work should be fully exploited.
- At the outset of most lessons, teachers visibly noted intended learning outcomes in terms of what students should and could know. At the conclusion of many lessons, there was a recap of learning and this was particularly effective where students were involved through good questioning strategies.
- While all business teachers regularly assign homework, there was a mix of approaches among the team in terms of the type of work assigned. Good practice was seen in a lesson where students received a range of differentiated homework tasks. In some lessons, students were given the opportunity to start homework. However, many of the students had the homework task finished before the lesson ended. The type and quality

of homework assigned merits a review to ensure that there is a similar and consistent approach for all students and that lesson learning time is effectively used.

- In a small number of lessons, the very good monitoring and checking of students' homework included evaluative comments as to how students might improve their performance. This practice should be deployed in all class groups and in particular for Leaving Certificate students. In one lesson, students, with the aid of marking criteria, reviewed the work of their peers. This good practice should be further developed and extended.
- Students of business subjects are encouraged to take the subject at the highest possible level in the certificate examinations. However, participation rates and progress at higher level in Leaving Certificate Business should be carefully monitored and analysed by business teachers.

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

- There is good whole-school provision of business education in the school. The uptake of Business Studies at Junior and at Leaving Certificate is good.
- Business Studies students are banded in ability groupings from the start of third year onward. Students of business subjects should be taught in a mixed-ability setting until as late as possible in third year so as to diminish any possible negative effects on student motivation, attainment and opportunity.
- Currently, business teachers are not active members of their subject association nor have they availed of available subject-specific in-service opportunities. In the context of changes in the business environment, it is good practice for teachers to engage in subject-specific continuing professional development.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Business teachers have opportunities to meet as a team but there is scope for greater collaboration in subject planning. As a means of formally sharing good teaching and learning practice, the agenda for subject department meetings should include time for discussion of pedagogical practice and the effective use of teaching methodologies that will further enrich student learning. It is advisable that more detailed minutes of meetings be maintained and that agreed actions be noted.
- Subject plans have been developed for all business subjects. The subject plans include curricular plans that outline the sequence of topics to be taught and the intended learning outcomes. The expertise and experience in the business subjects department should be shared and formalised through the development of each curricular plan.
- The curricular plans should be developed by linking the learning outcomes for each topic with selected resources, differentiated learning strategies and range of teaching and assessment methodologies for each area. The plans should also contain details on the specific numeracy strategies used in lessons and the teaching strategies for students with additional learning needs.
- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be re-considered so as to ensure linkage between topics and the integration of book-keeping and theory topics.

- Teachers maintain their own electronic resources for use in lessons. The use of a shared electronic folder on the school's network to store and facilitate the sharing of resources is good practice and should be further developed.

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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.