

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Loreto College
St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2
Roll number: 60820E**

Date of inspection: 29 November 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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	28 and 29 November 2011
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 eleven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Business teachers' delivery of business education is of a very high quality.
- Students of business subjects were afforded many opportunities to further their learning and develop key skills.
- Business education has a good profile in the school and students are afforded many opportunities to avail of it.
- The planning, organisational, evaluative and collaborative practices of the business subjects department are of a very high quality.
- Business subject planning is of a very high standard and the focus is on the development of the student as a self-motivated learner.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further enhance the high standard of teaching and learning teachers could consider more use of learning activities that would increasingly challenge and stimulate students, such as inter-class debates and role play.
 - The work-in-progress in regard to the noting of specific methodologies and homework modes in each curriculum plan should be continued so as to provide a manual for business education in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto College, St, Stephen's Green is a voluntary secondary school which offers Business Studies in junior cycle, and Accounting, Business and Economics as optional subjects in Leaving Certificate. Business education is compulsory in the school's highly-subscribed optional Transition Year (TY). The school has a current enrolment of 562 female students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teaching and learning observed was of a very high standard. Students were afforded many opportunities to develop their skills, to think for themselves and to become self-directed learners.
- In all lessons an outline of learning activities was shared with students at the outset of lessons and in many instances this took the form of learning outcomes. Good practice was noted where outcomes were re-visited at the end of the lesson to assess students' learning and clarify points of information.
- In almost all lessons observed either group or pair work was effectively used. These methodologies were well planned and fitted seamlessly in with the other lesson learning activities.
- In all lessons observed, there was very good use of teacher questioning to elicit and clarify knowledge, to check student progression and to develop class discussions. Targeted questions were good; they were mainly higher-order and served to differentiate learning in the lesson. Student answering was good and reflected good use of business terminology and knowledge.
- Within class groups students were afforded many opportunities to partake in project work, student presentations, enterprise activities and quizzes. These activities helped students to develop higher-order and key skills. To further enhance these good practices teachers could consider inter-class and inter-year group competitions in the form of debates and similar activities.
- There is good development of meta-cognitive skills such as problem-solving and creativity through the provision of enterprise activities for first-year and TY students. Teachers could also consider a more frequent use of methodologies such as role play to develop the aforementioned skills.
- In Accounting lessons there was good integration of book-keeping practice with theoretical knowledge. A good step-by-step approach with an emphasis on teaching for understanding was adopted by teachers and this enabled students to become familiar with concepts and practice.
- All lessons had a good structure and learning activities were well planned.
- Teachers made good use of teaching and learning aids which included flashcards, wall charts, case studies, worksheets and handouts.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in all lessons as a constructive teaching and learning tool. The use of ICT was particularly effective when it allowed business education to attain a dynamic real-life focus. It was admirable that teachers and students used ICT as a communication vehicle for assignments, evaluation and monitoring of project work.

- In some lessons business teachers encouraged students to develop their own subject notes outside of lesson time.
- Students were assigned homework in each lesson observed. A review of a sample of homework copybooks and student journals indicated that a good blend and variety of homework is regularly assigned to students.
- Assessment outcomes are very good in state examinations; students are encouraged to achieve to their highest ability level.
- Classroom management and atmosphere was very good and was characterised by very good teacher support for students, affirmation of students' efforts and very good rapport between teachers and students. The positive classroom atmosphere created a positive learning environment where students were enthused about their learning.
- Teacher-based classrooms are well utilised as a resource for business subjects. There are effective displays of business materials. Such displays have the potential to act as a motivating influence for students, especially where student projects on business topics are displayed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business education has a high profile on the school's curriculum. A high percentage of students continue with business education from Junior Certificate to Leaving Certificate, along with a number of new entrants into Leaving Certificate who have experienced business education in TY.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge and practice is current and have continually availed of continuing professional development. Teachers are active members of their subject associations.
- Very good practice was noted in the mentoring of trainee and newly-qualified business teachers. A weekly meeting is convened by the business subjects co-ordinator to discuss progress and give advice.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The business subjects department is highly organised and the seven business teachers work in a collaborative manner that is supportive and professional. The department aspires to high standards in the delivery of business education.
- The subject department evaluates the TY programme on a yearly basis and regularly reviews other aspects of the delivery of business education in the school.
- Planning documentation is of a very high quality. The plan is written in terms of what is the best teaching and learning experience that the department can give to its students. Its primary aim is that students become self-directed learners.
- There are curriculum plans in place for each business subject offered on the school's curriculum. Of particular merit is the linking of learning outcomes, resources, and the methodologies to be employed in the delivery of each business topic in the classroom. This is good practice as it allows each class group to have a similar teaching and learning experience. The addition of homework modes and a continuation of the expansion of specific methodologies for each topic would enhance the plan.

- There is a well-planned and organised storage press for paper and electronic resources. It is accessible to all business teachers and serves as a means of formal communication, as all business-related correspondence is displayed in its environs.
- The provision and preparation of an invaluable resource file that contains business worksheets, keywords and their definitions for use in learning support is praiseworthy.
- Teachers plan and organise a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for business students such as quizzes, guest speakers, enterprise days and trips.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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