

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Deansrath Community College
Deansrath, County Dublin
Roll number: 70040H**

Date of inspection: 25 October 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

Date of inspection	25 October 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Students were very supported in their learning through the teaching methodologies used.
- The teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge that provides great opportunities for upward differentiation.
- Effective use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning.
- Students were provided with a range of revision notes and learning aids.
- A very high level of teacher preparation for lessons was evident and subject planning is well advanced.
- There is a positive improvement in the number of students taking the subjects at higher level in the state examinations in recent years.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In line with the stated whole-school approach to learning there should be greater variety, including an emphasis on students developing their own notes, in the range of support notes and revision aids provided to students.
-

INTRODUCTION

Deansrath Community College has a current enrolment of 315 students of whom 113 are post-leaving certificate (PLC) students. The school provides both the Junior Certificate and Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) at junior cycle following which students can opt for one of three leaving certificate programmes. Business Studies and Business are offered as optional subjects. The school is involved in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teachers were very well prepared for the lessons and students had the required materials.
- Very effective use was made of ICT to support teaching and learning including the use of multimedia presentations.
- The teachers' subject knowledge was very good and current.
- Students' behaviour observed during the inspection was very good. Students were kept busy and on task. Teachers should ensure that a good balance is achieved between tasks and interaction so that students are not passive in the learning environment.
- A good volume of work had been completed since the start of the school year. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on the completion of class work evident in the students' workbooks and copies.
- Considerable efforts were made to meet the needs of students including the customisation of lesson materials. Particularly commendable was the role played by Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) in assisting students in the lesson environment.
- All lessons observed were conducted in the business classroom. The room presents a very pleasant learning environment and the ICT resources are well positioned for effective use in lessons.
- A range of teaching methodologies was used. Each lesson was defined by the use of learning objectives, expressed either in writing or orally and reviewed towards the end of each lesson. However, there is scope to vary the range of questioning styles used with students, especially when recapping the lesson outcomes as a summary lesson activity.
- Formal assessment practice is in line with the whole-school policy. Additional consideration should be given to formally recording students' homework completion and how the teachers' evaluation of students work will impact on teaching and learning. In addition, whole-school suggestions for improvement such as an Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy should regularly be incorporated as part of the review of students homework and class work.
- There was some evidence of students' homework being dated by the teachers.
- The approach towards summarising lesson content is teacher-led and the teachers should increase the focus on student-developed summary notes and revision aids in line with the existing whole-school teaching and learning strategies.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Time allocation to the subjects in each cycle is good with a good mix of single and double lessons.
- First-year students take a three-week taster programme that results in the formation of one class group for Business Studies each year indicating a relatively consistent take-up of the subject.
- Students are not precluded from taking Business at senior cycle if they have not studied it at junior cycle and this is good practice. In addition, many students of Business are also participating in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).
- Access to ICT in the base business room is very good. There is an interactive whiteboard, static whiteboard and overhead projector and these were used interactively within the lessons observed to present content, correct homework and introduce new material.
- The school is engaged in a number of whole-school initiatives that focus on supporting and improving teaching and learning and the teachers have engaged in the whole-school training associated with these initiatives. There was evidence that these approaches were used in the lessons observed.
- The whole-school assessment policy advocates that a mix of written work and learning should be assigned for homework. It also advises that homework is mainly corrected in class as a strategy to assess students learning. In all lessons observed this approach was adopted. However, consideration should be given as to how this work is recorded and monitored and how the outcomes for student learning arising from this process are incorporated within follow-up lessons.
- Students and teachers use of the journals to record homework assigned was consistent with the whole-school approach outlined in the whole-school assessment policy.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A detailed subject department plan has been developed for the subjects that includes the overall yearly curriculum content for each subject and more defined schemes of work. The schemes of work are in many instances presented as detailed lesson plans with sample lesson content and materials. Some initial work has been completed on suggesting appropriate methodologies for each unit and this work will expand as subject planning progresses.
- Some sample tests were included within the subject plan and these showed very good practice. For example the first and second-year samples included word searches which are consistent with the whole-school keyword strategy. For certificate examination year groups the sample test instruments mirror those of the State Examinations Commission.
- A formal subject department is in place with a job description for the role of co-ordinator. Meetings are held regularly and the recent discussion on the selection of suitable resources for teaching demonstrates the department's capacity to engage with the learning agenda. Future subject department meetings should include a review of pedagogy as an agenda item.
- Very good individual lesson planning was evident throughout the inspection.

- Attendance is recorded manually and there is evidence in student journals of monitoring of students punctuality. The ongoing development of the school's ICT infrastructure will provide additional scope for the use of electronic systems including the recording of students' homework.
- The school undertakes a detailed analysis of student outcomes in the state examinations process. This analysis of the results in business subjects indicates that there is an upward trend in the numbers of students taking the subjects at higher level in recent years and this is very positive.

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.