

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Studies  
REPORT**

**Loreto High School Beaufort  
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14  
Roll number: 60340N**

**Date of inspection: 18 September 2013**



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS STUDIES**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	18 September 2013
<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><li>• Discussion with fifth year students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods: two single lessons and one double lesson</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching observed was of a high standard overall, with scope for further development in a few aspects of teaching methodologies.
- Teachers gave a real-life focus to Business Studies through the exemplary use of information and communication technology (ICT) and by encouraging students to take an interest in current economic affairs.
- Learning was very good in lessons where students were challenged, guided and given autonomy in their learning.
- Student uptake of Business Studies at higher level in certificate examinations is consistently very good, as are the subsequent outcomes.
- The planning, organisational and collaborative practices of the business subjects department are good and an expansion of subject curricular plans would enhance planning further.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should make further use of active and co-operative teaching methodologies in their practice and make greater use of higher-order questioning strategies, where appropriate.
  - The curriculum plan for Business Studies should be further developed with the addition of details of the range of teaching and assessment practices in use.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Loreto High School Beaufort is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 627 female students. The school offers Business Studies in junior cycle, and Accounting, Business and Economics as optional subjects in Leaving Certificate. Business education is provided in the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY). While Business Studies at junior cycle is the focus of this inspection, it is noted that the vast majority of students who have taken Business Studies at junior cycle continued on to take at least one of the business options at Leaving Certificate. Additionally, a number of students new to business education have also chosen a business subject option for Leaving Certificate, having experienced it in TY.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning overall was of a high standard, and some very good practices were observed. However, in some lessons there was potential to further develop methodologies that actively involve students in their learning.
- Commendably, teachers teach Business Studies as a living subject. In lessons visited, tangible links to subject matter were made with references to events in the economy. Students were encouraged to keep up-to-date on current affairs, to conduct research and do project work on business-related topics.
- In all lessons, there was a good focus on development of literacy skills through student and teacher explanation of keywords and the exploration of unfamiliar business terminology. Good numeracy development strategies were in-built in all lessons and all opportunities to develop numeracy skills were exploited.
- It was noted positively that learning outcomes were shared with students at the start of each lesson. In most lessons, learning outcomes were referred to periodically during the lesson and student understanding was assessed as the lesson concluded. This very good practice provided clear direction and focus for students' engagement and learning.
- A very good group-work activity was observed in a lesson where the 1913 lockout and current industrial disputes were analysed through case studies. In some lessons, students were afforded opportunities to work in pairs. However, there is scope to further develop the use of pair work and other methodologies such as group work and role play, where appropriate in some lessons.
- In most lessons, teachers used good questioning strategies as a means to differentiate learning, assess student knowledge and develop class discussions. In one lesson, global questioning was the main strategy and it was often the more confident student who tendered answers. In lessons where higher-order questioning was targeted to individual students, it successfully shared and deepened business acumen. This good practice should be extended to all lessons
- During the course of junior cycle, students work in pairs to complete a research project on a chosen topic from the business studies syllabus. These projects are displayed in business classrooms and they serve as good learning aids for all business students.
- Excellent use was made ICT in most lessons to support students' learning; it gave a real-life and dynamic focus to business education.

- All business teachers regularly assign homework. In all lessons, there was very good practice in relation to monitoring of homework. The good oral formative comments shared with students' work enriched their learning. In one lesson, good peer assessment was observed. It is praiseworthy that business teachers have chosen the development of assessment for learning practices as a goal for this academic year.
- Students complete their written work to a high standard. Copybooks were very neat, labelled, and in some instances included graphic organisers that were completed by students to help them recap on the main points of topics and to summarise their learning.
- Overall, students were motivated in their learning and were keen to share their knowledge. Through the continued development of project work and student presentations of their independent research, students will have further opportunities to develop key skills.
- Student uptake of Business Studies at higher level in certificate examinations is consistently very good, as are the subsequent outcomes.

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

- First-year students select their optional subjects prior to entry. Uptake of the subject is at national norms. The possibility of providing a 'subject fair' for in-coming students, so that they can make a more informed decision on optional subjects, could be considered by senior management.
- There are some good examples of how classrooms have been used to display student projects, keywords, topical news items and learning aids. Teachers are classroom based for lessons. The four main business specialist classrooms adjoin each other which facilitate the sharing of resources and team-teaching.
- 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.
- The allocation of four periods per week for Business Studies is good. The mix of double and single periods spread through the week encourages continuity between classes and provides an opportunity for homework to be assigned regularly.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is well established and a collaborative approach underpins planning practices. Business teachers are committed to the continued development of Business Studies. To further enhance the work of the subject department, an aspect of teaching and learning practice could be included on the agenda of each subject department meeting for discussion and evaluation.
- Commendably, an annual self-review and evaluation of the business subjects department's activities is conducted and developmental targets are set each year.
- The Business Studies plan contain elements of good planning. The detailing of the strategies to develop literacy and numeracy and to help students with special educational needs is particularly good.

- The aligning of learning outcomes to each topic in the curricular plan is good. The addition of the specific resources, the range of teaching methodologies available, differentiation strategies and modes of homework would further enhance it.
  - There was good individual planning and preparation for the lessons observed. All teachers made outline lesson plans available during the inspection.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject 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.