

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT

Christian Brothers Secondary School
Mitchelstown, County Cork
Roll number: 62420V

Date of inspection: 22 January 2016



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	21 and 22 January
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 three double and three single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning was good overall with instances of very good practice in some lessons.
- Transition Year (TY) students are afforded good opportunities to engage in experiential learning through their participation in mini-company activities.
- The quantity, variety and assessment of students' homework requires further development.
- School management is commended for its high level of cooperation and endeavours with a neighbouring school to provide a broad curriculum in senior cycle.
- The planning, organisational and collaborative practices of the business department are good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should integrate additional co-operative and active learning methodologies, and information and communication technology (ICT) as a student learning tool into business-related lessons.
 - Business teachers should follow agreed criteria regarding the type, quality and correction of homework assigned to students so that consistent practice is developed throughout the business department.
 - An electronic folder to store and facilitate the sharing of electronic resources should be developed by business teachers.
-

INTRODUCTION

Christian Brothers Secondary (CBS) School, Mitchelstown is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 320 male students. The school provides Business Studies as an optional subject in junior cycle. In TY, Business education is compulsory, while senior cycle students are offered Accounting and Business.

TEACHING AND LEARNING.

- Teaching and learning was good overall. While, there were instances of very good practice in some lessons, possibilities existed in most lessons to enhance student learning through more widespread use of active and co-operative learning methodologies.
- The teaching methodologies used in the majority of lessons were mainly traditional and teacher-led. In a small number of lessons there were instances where students worked in pairs. It is recommended that teachers use pair and group work, where appropriate to further engage students in their learning.
- In all lessons, questioning strategies were successfully employed to make links with prior learning, assess student knowledge and facilitate differentiated learning. In some lessons, the use of probing and higher-order questions initiated very good student and teacher discussions.
- In most lessons, ICT was used as a tool to present lesson material. In one lesson, the use of video clips that promoted student thinking and facilitated in-depth class discussion was an example of the good use of ICT to support learning. The use of ICT should be further developed so as to give a dynamic focus to business education by accessing relevant case studies, websites, extracts of television programmes and interactive resources, where appropriate.
- In all lessons there was good use of topical and student-friendly relevant exemplars to explain business concepts and link subject material to real-life activities.
- The operation and management of the school canteen at lunchtime and participation in mini-company provide TY students with very good opportunities to engage in experiential learning. Teachers and students are commended for their development of the very high quality of products and services that form part of the TY mini-company.
- All observed lessons were well structured and prepared and had a logical sequence of activities. In a small number of lessons an outline of lesson content was shared with students. It is advisable that all lessons should commence with teachers articulating learning intentions in the form of what they want students to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- Classroom management and atmosphere in all lessons was very good and was characterised by very good teacher support and affirmation of students' efforts.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons observed. However, a review of student journals and copybooks indicated that the assignment of homework is not always consistent. It is advisable that students receive an appropriate quantity of homework in each lesson. In addition, teachers should broaden the range of student homework modes to further develop students' key skills.
- In the sample of copybooks reviewed in each lesson student work was regularly monitored and annotated. In a small number of instances, student's work contained

evaluative comments. This good practice, where it exists, supports student learning and should be extended.

- Student achievement at all levels and uptake of higher level in certificate examinations is very good. Subject departments compare their analysis of the outcomes of certificate examinations to national norms.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior management's support for business education is commendable in the key areas of curricular provision and equality of access to business subjects for all students.
- Business Studies is taken by almost all first-year students as part of a year-long taster program. This good practice affords students the opportunity to attain some financial literacy skills. Uptake of the subject from second year is very good.
- Currently, CBS Mitchelstown co-operates with a neighbouring school to ensure that both schools can offer a broad curriculum and that students can maximise their subject options for senior cycle. Students from both schools can attend Business lessons in each other's school at different times and on different bands in order to widen subject choice. Accounting students in both schools are facilitated in the CBS Mitchelstown. School management in both schools are commended for their high level of cooperation particularly in timetabling arrangements and curriculum planning.
- It is praiseworthy that the two business-related modules on the TY curriculum programme are taken by all students. Mini-company is assigned a double period each week and the second module which introduces students to the world of business and computerised accounting is assigned three single periods each week.
- Business teachers work from their own base classrooms. The potential that exists in these classrooms to create visual learning environments should be further exploited.
- All business teachers are subject specialists and most are members of their subject association. Senior management facilitates attendance at available continuing professional development (CPD) activities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning and individual teacher planning are well organised. Business teachers work in a collaborative and supportive manner and are committed to the continued development of business subjects.
- The business department has no formally appointed subject co-ordinator or convenor. It is advisable that a team leader be appointed to co-ordinate and plan the work of the department. This position should rotate among business teachers in order to build leadership capacity within the business subject department.
- Business department planning meetings are convened regularly and minutes reveal that a range of relevant topics and teaching and learning issues are discussed. It is advisable that more detailed minutes of meetings be maintained to provide a comprehensive résumé of items discussed and subsequent planned actions.

- Whole school CPD in assessment for learning was recently provided for teachers. Currently, a member of the business department is trialling some of the acquired strategies so that effective practice can be embedded throughout business education. This is praiseworthy.
- The folders for the planning of business education in the school are comprehensive and include the subjects department's own mission statement. Of particular merit is the agreed specific business-related strategies to embed whole school literacy and numeracy targets.
- The layout of each subjects' curricular plan is good. However, the subject department should work collaboratively to include topic-specific learning outcomes, resources, teaching methodologies, differentiation strategies and modes of homework in the plan.
- The early introduction and emphasis placed on the book-keeping elements throughout the three years of junior cycle is in line with best practice.
- The majority of teachers used their own electronic resources in lessons. The development of an electronic folder to store and facilitate sharing of electronic resources and information between business teachers should be actively pursued.

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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report and is appreciated of the work of the inspectorate in its completion.

The Board is pleased to note the affirmative comments by the Inspectorate, including the positive learning environment, the standard of teaching and learning, the collaborative work practices within the subject department, the timetabling and curricular provision and the innovative TY programme.

The Board is committed to continuing its support of the development of quality teaching and learning and to working with teachers in ensuring that the recommendations of the Inspection report will be implemented.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

In March 5 teachers from the school began the Barrie Bennett Instructional Leadership course and their work with the whole staff as part of in-school CPD over the coming year will further enhance existing practice.

The Business teachers are committed to looking at how to encourage and monitor recording of homework by students, to ensuring consistent practice within the department, and to linking with the Assessment for Learning staff group so as to incorporate best practice across the subject.

The subject department will continue to collaborate in developing the subject folders as recommended, and in the development of an electronic dropbox to better facilitate the sharing of the very good resources used. A rota for subject co-ordinator will be established.