

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Studies and TY Business  
REPORT**

**De La Salle  
Waterford City, County Waterford  
Roll number: 649500**

**Date of inspection: 9 February 2012**



**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 STUDIES AND TY**  
**BUSINESS**

---

**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	8 and 9 February 2012
<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 twelve class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning observed varied in quality from very good to fair.
- The delivery of the Transition Year (TY) Business programme is good.
- There were varied practices in the type and quantity of homework assigned to students and in its assessment.
- Of the thirteen business teachers, only eight have more than two class groups while a number of business teachers are teaching outside of their main subject specialism.
- A Business Studies plan is in place but it requires some additional detail so as to serve as a manual on how business education is delivered in the school.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should incorporate active and co-operative learning methodologies, effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and a visual learning environment into their practice.
- Business teachers should consider best practice in the assigning and assessment of student work and aim for a consistent practice throughout the business subjects department.
- To deliver business education in the school a smaller core group of suitably qualified teachers of business subjects should be established. This would also serve to strengthen collaborative planning.
- The Business Studies curriculum plan should be enhanced through further development of the plans have been devised for all business subjects and by the inclusion of learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

De La Salle College is a voluntary secondary school which provides Business Studies as a core subject in junior cycle. All students take the Enterprise, Accounting, Business and Economics module in the optional TY. The school has a current enrolment of 1174 students, all male.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning varied from very good to fair. Where scope for further development was noted, teachers have the capacity to deliver desirable change.
- Most lessons observed were well prepared. In some lessons, learning objectives were clearly stated at the beginning and in one lesson they were reviewed as the lesson concluded. ICT is installed in almost all classrooms. It was not used in all lessons, although there were suitable opportunities. Its use should be expanded so as to give a dynamic focus to business education.
- In the majority of lessons, the teaching methodologies used sought to engage students in their learning. They included a mixture of pair and group work, student debates, targeted higher-order questioning, use of ICT and class discussions that explored and expanded student knowledge. In half of the lessons observed, students were given opportunities to work together in pairs or group. Nevertheless, there was very little dialogue between students in most of these lessons.
- In some lessons, there was a focus on keywords and development of literacy skills. In one lesson as part of homework assignments, students were encouraged to record their own explanation of key terms.
- Questioning strategies were most effective when differentiated and targeted at named students throughout the classroom.
- Students' efforts were positively affirmed and individual support was tendered to students where required. In some lessons teachers gave formative feedback orally or on student copybooks.
- In lessons with a book-keeping focus, a good step-by-step approach was used. While board work was good, the use of visual aids such as visualisers or data projectors to display answers should be considered.
- The TY business module is delivered in an explorative manner befitting the programme's ethos and aims. Learning activities such as debates, project work, mini-company and student presentations sought to develop students' key skills.
- A review of student journals, copybooks and workbooks indicated that not all students were receiving a sufficient quantity of homework or using journals to record homework. While all business teachers regularly assign homework, there is a mix of approaches among the team in the type and quantity of work assigned. This merits an immediate review to ensure that all students experience a consistent approach.
- On inspection of a sample of students' work, neatness, layout, headings and labelling required attention in some instances. It is advisable that teachers devise strategies to improve students' presentation of work.

- Teachers compare students' attainment in state examinations against national norms. The balance between uptake of higher and ordinary level in state examinations is good and attainment at both levels is good.

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

- There is good provision of business education in the school and the time allocated to teaching all business subjects is good.
- The business subjects department comprises thirteen teachers. Five teachers deliver business education to one or two class groups only. Some teachers whose main subject is not business education are teaching business subjects while other teachers whose main specialism is business are teaching other subjects. A smaller core group of suitably qualified teachers of business subjects should be established. This would also strengthen collaborative planning.
- It was noted that teachers did not always have the same class group from year to year. As Business Studies is core, continuity in provision should be actively pursued.
- The majority of business teachers are members of their subject association and some have availed of subject-specific continuing professional development. A formal means of sharing and recording information from in-service activities should be devised.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Regular subject department meetings are held. However, most discussions pertain to the sequencing of topics and the content of assessments. While this is necessary, it is advisable to also focus on the sharing of good teaching and learning practices.
- The number of teachers teaching other subjects in addition to Business has led to a situation where the full team is not always available for subject planning meetings.
- Subject plans have been developed for all business subjects; however, there are some deficits of information. It is advisable to note literacy and numeracy strategies, the provision for students with additional learning needs, an inventory and location of paper-based resources and keyword lists and their meanings for use in learning support and the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP).
- The Business Studies curriculum plan is a work in progress. The considerable expertise and experience in the business subjects department should be shared and formalised through the development of the curricular plan thus ensuring that all business students experience the curriculum in a similar manner. This can be achieved by linking to each topic its learning outcomes, resources, differentiated learning strategies and range of teaching and assessment methodologies.
- First-year students have common assessment and a common plan of work is delivered. Divergence between class groups on the sequencing of topics was noted. As this was not related to ability levels, it should be addressed.
- Individual planning in some lessons was very good and in such lessons good progress was made. In other lessons, however, further attention to lesson planning is necessary. Good practice was noted where teachers shared study plans with students and their parents.

- The majority of teachers had their own electronic resources for use in lessons. The development of an electronic folder to store and facilitate sharing of electronic resources and information should be actively pursued.
- Most teachers have their own base classroom. These classrooms could be further developed as a business learning resource with displays of business materials and the creation of a good visual learning environment.

---

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

*Published October 2012.*