

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Scoil Mhuire,
Strokestown, County Roscommon
Roll number: 65100S**

Date of inspection: 28 March 2014



**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	27 and 28 March 2014
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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident in the lessons observed.
- In a small number of lessons there was a tendency for whole-class teaching to dominate the lesson structure.
- Classroom management was very good and teachers are observant of students' progress and levels of homework completion.
- Business Studies is set from second year with students allocated to higher and ordinary level class groups.
- Recent increases in the number of students taking Accounting are indicative of the positive approach taken towards Accounting in the Transition Year (TY) programme and the emphasis placed by teachers on the bookkeeping elements in junior cycle.
- Significant progress has been made in advancing subject planning in the past two years.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lessons should be planned to provide sufficient opportunities for students to actively engage with the lesson outcomes and opportunities should be provided for students to demonstrate their learning.
 - The school is advised that Business Studies class groups should be organised on a mixed-ability basis for at least the first two years of junior cycle.
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INTRODUCTION

Scoil Mhuire is a mixed voluntary secondary school located in Strokestown. The school operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education – An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST) and has a current enrolment of 469 students. It offers a broad curriculum including, at senior cycle, a compulsory TY programme, the established Leaving Certificate (LC) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school has recently completed a major building programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident in the lessons observed.
- In a number of lessons whole-class teaching dominated the lesson structure and in these instances teachers are advised to be cognisant of the balance of interactions during lessons and to increase the emphasis on small group, pair, co-operative and individual learning opportunities.
- The practice of sharing lesson outcomes, reviewing and summarising should be promoted. This should be used by all teachers including appropriate referencing to structuring lesson content to achieving this objective and matching the assessment to the lesson objective. Also, as an assessment for learning (AfL) technique, homework outcomes should be shared and reviewed during the lesson to enable students to engage actively with the exercise.
- In some lessons it was evident that teaching strategies for mixed-ability were being implemented. However, in planning for mixed-ability teaching, strategies and interventions other than emphasising the selection of ordinary level for some students, must be included. There is scope for the very good practices in this area being used by some teachers to be shared more widely among the team.
- Teachers made good use of information and communication technology (ICT) including personal computers (PC) and tablet devices. In addition, it is evident that a range of appropriate resources are being accessed through the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), including templates for use in Accounting and in bookkeeping. One excellent approach of using a grid template for the calculation of depreciation was observed.
- Neatness in teachers' presentation is mirrored in the students' work, across all class groups.
- Classroom management was very good and teachers are observant of students' progress and levels of homework completion. There is also evidence of teachers' correction of the numeric aspects of students work in particular.
- A review of the students' homework journals indicates that homework is regularly assigned and is linked to lesson content. The homework assigned is mainly written work and there is also evidence of ongoing continuous assessment of students' progress through the setting of class tests. Some consideration should be given, however, as to how and when examination material is introduced as part of the ongoing lesson assessment process for students. There is also scope to expand the range of assessment tools used to include extended work and project work building on, for example, the current 'company watch' approach used in TY assessment.

- A subject-specific strategy for key words is currently being developed by the subject department for use in Business Studies.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business Studies is core at junior cycle and two options, Accounting and Business are provided at senior cycle. Timetable provision is in line with the recommended guidelines.
- The subject is set from second year with students separated into higher and ordinary level class groups. This is uncommon in the context of the teaching of Business Studies. The school is strongly advised to reconsider this arrangement, at least in second year, and ensure that the criteria for selection to levels are transparent and based on a criterion other than a result of a summative assessment test.
- The number of students taking Accounting in the current school year is very high. This is indicative of the positive approach taken towards Accounting in the TY programme and the emphasis placed by teachers on the bookkeeping elements in junior cycle.
- Teachers are classroom based and are developing a print rich environment in line with the whole-school literacy strategy and priorities. All teachers are assigned a base room and the rooms are equipped with a PC and data projector. The resources provided for teaching business subjects are well used. Teachers engage with subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD), often focused on examination themes.
- A whole-school assessment policy is in place and teachers of the subject are consistent in their application of the policy to the teaching of the business subjects.
- The inspector's sampling of students scripts from the recent mock examinations indicates that an analysis of question frequency could aid the teachers' self-evaluation of teaching and learning approaches and inform planning, especially at junior cycle.
- Analysis of subject uptake at senior cycle should be undertaken. Given that the subject is core at junior cycle, some additional analysis is required as to why students do not continue with at least one of the business subjects at senior cycle. Among the main factors to be reviewed are the guidance provided, students expectation of future career choices, and their experience of the subject at junior cycle.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The role of subject co-ordinator rotates which is a positive approach to the development of skills among the team.
- Significant progress has been made in advancing subject planning since a previous inspection visit in 2011. The minutes of subject department meetings indicate that the team has worked collaboratively on developing the plan and associated schemes. The schemes of work are very well laid out and there is further evidence of ongoing review in the subject department meeting minutes.
- The business programme within TY is well designed. It is structured in terms of aims and learning outcomes and the elements emphasise the development of students' work and enterprise skills in addition to introducing students to a range of business concepts.
- Comprehensive schemes of work have been developed for TY. Of particular merit, is the review undertaken of the TY business programme and the ongoing development of

materials for use in the business modules. Module objectives though linked to the relevant senior cycle subjects ensure that content is not directly taken from them.

- Individual planning is of a high standard with teachers developing their own range of resources and materials for use in lessons. Some very good examples of the use of current business material was evident.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.