

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT**

**Coláiste Chathail Naofa
Dungarvan, County Waterford
Roll number: 72220T**

Date of inspection: 29 September 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

Date of inspection	29 September 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 five single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons was good or very good and in a small number of lessons there was scope for development.
- The quality of learning was very good in some lessons but in others greater learning opportunities should have been created for students.
- There is good uptake of business subjects and all junior cycle students follow the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).
- The business subjects plan is good in design but there is scope to develop the content and process of business subjects planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- All business teachers should fully integrate opportunities for good co-operative learning into their lessons, where appropriate.
 - In some instances, teachers should develop their questioning strategies and assessment for learning practices.
 - Teachers should explore options for dynamic teacher and student use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons.
 - The subject department should review and develop the content of the overall business subjects plan and each subject's curricular plan, and reconsider the sequencing of topics in the Business Studies plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Chathail Naofa is under the auspices of Wexford and Waterford Education and Training Board, with an enrolment of 153 post-primary students. The school is involved in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Business Studies is an optional subject in junior cycle wherein all students complete the JCSP. In Leaving Certificate, Business is currently provided for students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons varied from very good to good as teachers gave a real-life focus to business education, taught for understanding and maintained high expectations for students. However, in a small number of lessons some teaching methodologies and practices require further development so as to engage students more fully in their learning.
- The quality of learning was very good in some lessons but in others greater learning opportunities should have been created for students.
- In most lessons, a variety of methodologies were used. In one lesson, the use of ‘show-me boards’ and a role play exercise on unfair dismissals was exemplary. The differentiated task encouraged students to apply their business knowledge to real-life scenarios, deepen their understanding of the world of business while further developing their oral literacy. Methodologies such as this should be used by all business teachers, where appropriate.
- In most lessons, students were given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups. This methodology was observed to be most effective in lessons where there was good dialogue between students. In a lesson that looked at inflation, the use of a ‘think-share-pair’ activity enhanced student learning. As class sizes are generally small, the use of co-operative learning methodologies should be expanded in all lessons, where appropriate.
- Questioning was 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 a small number of lessons, where questioning was lower-order and global, an adjustment of questioning strategies will prove beneficial in improving learning outcomes.
- Additional resources such as worksheets, hand-outs and real-life exemplars were used effectively in most lessons. The use of video clips in some lessons facilitated class discussions and engaged students in their learning. Some class groups are using tablet computers and the learning opportunities that they present in terms of research and expansion of learning should be fully availed of.
- In the majority of lessons, learning outcomes were framed in terms of real learning. The use of the comprehension strategy: what is known, what we want to know and what we want to learn (KWL) was used to good effect and it supported students in articulating and building on their knowledge.
- The development of students’ literacy skills was well supported by clear explanations of unfamiliar terminology, keywords and outcome verbs. In some lessons, students deciphered unfamiliar terminology and this was beneficial to their learning.

- Students were regularly assigned homework. On occasion, some class groups are involved in projects such as the JSCP 'Make a Book'. It is advisable that all students receive alternative and additional modes of assignments such as research tasks and projects that further develop their key skills.
- Homework is regularly corrected by teachers. Very good practice was observed where students' work was returned with affirming and formative comments which provided students with direction as to how they could improve their work. On occasion, students should also evaluate and assess their own work so as to apply their own critical skills and internalise learning.
- Students of business subjects are encouraged to take business subjects at the higher level in the certificate examinations. Student attainment is good within each level.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good provision for business subjects in the school. First-year students are offered a short taster programme of all optional subjects. This provides students with an opportunity to make an informed subject choice that is guided by some practical subject experience. A high percentage of students continue with business education from junior cycle to Leaving Certificate.
- Through the Schools Business Partnership programme the school has developed good links with a local enterprise. This will be beneficial to students involved in business education as students can attain practical experience in the world of work.
- Not all teachers in the business subject department are classroom based. A good print rich environment is being developed in the *de facto* business classroom and its use for business education should be maximised.
- One of the business teachers is a member of the Business Studies Teachers' Association and teachers have availed of some subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD).

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- At the regular business subject department meetings there are occasionally discussions pertaining to classroom practice. There should be a greater focus at meetings on teaching methodologies and student learning strategies. This could be achieved through a "show and tell" where teachers present an effective resource or strategy they use in their practice or have gained from CPD.
- An overall business subject plan has been developed for all business subjects and it is good in design. The inclusion of how JCSP learning statements are progressed, the articulation of an agreed business department strategy to progress the school's improvement plan and the linking of DEIS targets to the practices used in business education would further enhance the plan.
- Currently, the curriculum plan for each year group is written by the teacher who has responsibility for the class group. It is advisable that each business subject's curriculum plan be written collaboratively. The current template being used by teachers is good and the addition of a range of teaching methodologies, homework assignments and

assessment modes that could be used to teach each topic would further develop the plan as a manual for classroom practice.

- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be re-considered. It is advisable to incorporate book-keeping elements throughout the three-year cycle and to schedule topics so that students can build on previous learning.
- Business teachers have their own electronic resources for use in lessons. The development of an electronic folder to store and facilitate sharing of electronic resources and information within the business department should be actively pursued.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.