

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Subject Inspection in Business Subjects

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto Abbey Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Dalkey Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60130C

Date of Inspection: 18-01-2018



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Business subjects under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	17-01-2018 and 18-01-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 8 class periods, four single and two double lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and business teachers

School context

Loreto Abbey Secondary School has an enrolment of 622 girls. Business Studies is a core subject in first year and an optional subject thereafter. Business education is compulsory in the highly-subscribed optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Accounting and Business are offered to Leaving Certificate students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching was very high with just a few areas for further development.
- The quality of student learning was very good as enthusiastic teachers provided a highly student-centred, enabling and enjoyable learning experience for students.
- Teachers used highly effective assessment practices.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for business education is very good.
- The planning and collaborative team spirit within the business department is of a very high quality.

Recommendations

- The use of video and media resources to deepen students' subject knowledge and their awareness of topical, business and economic issues should be fully exploited by business teachers where appropriate, in business education.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching was very high with just a few areas for further development. Throughout the evaluation there was a consistent focus on the use of effective assessment for learning (AfL) strategies, questioning techniques and co-operative learning activities that enabled students to think in a critical manner.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. Best practice was observed in lessons where these learning intentions were presented as what students should be able to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson. In all lessons, student learning was reviewed through either targeted questions or by a quiz. In some lessons, students were

asked to reflect on their learning and identify areas where they wished to improve; this good practice merits expansion.

- Teachers' well-chosen teaching methodologies supported students' attainment of learning intentions.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in all lessons as a presentation tool that aided teaching. While there were good visuals on electronic presentations, there was a general absence of the use of video resources. It is recommended that the use of video resources be fully exploited where appropriate in business education in order to deepen student subject knowledge and understanding. In some class groups, students were encouraged to use ICT to research and present classwork and homework assignments. This good practice merits expansion. The use of the virtual learning platform by some teachers to share learning resources with students is good practice.
- In all lessons concepts were well explained. Where relevant, business theory was linked to current business and economic issues and students' experience from co-curricular activities. It is advisable that students, particularly in senior cycle, are encouraged to expand their own awareness of topical, business and economic issues through media sources.
- At the time of the evaluation, TY students were not available. From a review of planning documentation, samples of student work and discussions with teachers, it was evident that a good skills-based approach underpins the delivery of the TY business education module.
- Students and teachers worked in partnership to explore and decipher unfamiliar keywords and subject-specific terminology. It was praiseworthy that students were encouraged to make numeric calculations without the aid of a calculator in some lessons.
- The quality of student learning was very good, as enthusiastic teachers provided a highly student-centred, enabling and enjoyable learning experience for students. Commendably, in some lessons, students were encouraged to learn in a manner that suited their dominant learning style.
- Students were confident enough to ask questions and to participate in the good student-teacher discussions which aided the development of students' communication and thinking skills.
- In all lessons, students successfully worked in pairs or small groups. Students had a clear understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities when undertaking group activities. Teachers' planning of activities such as 'think-pair-share' allowed for meaningful and often challenging and productive student exchanges.
- There is a very good focus on enterprise activities within the school. It is praiseworthy that junior cycle students participate in enterprise activities that aid development of key skills.
- In senior cycle, the cross-curricular links between Business and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are good. The participation of Business students in LCVP activities such as classroom visits by entrepreneurs is beneficial to their understanding and application of business theory to practical situations.
- Teachers used highly effective assessment practices. The high standard of questioning strategies encouraged students to think critically and in many instances students had to give a rationale for their answers.
- The use of 'traffic lights' in some lessons allowed the teacher to instantly assess the level of student understanding and knowledge. It is praiseworthy that students regularly receive constructive oral and written feedback on the quality of their work.
- Students are supported and encouraged to achieve to their potential in certificate examinations. The outcomes in these examinations are very good. The narrative that teachers append to their analysis of student outcomes provides them with valuable feedback and is supportive of the tracking system being developed in the school.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for business education is very good. Management is supportive of co-curricular and extra-curricular business-related activities which helps to foster a culture in which learning in business education flourishes.
- All first-year students have the opportunity to attain financial literacy skills through their study of Business Studies. The uptake of Business Studies is good and is increasing. Most students continue with business education from junior cycle, as do a number of students who have experienced business education in TY.
- In classrooms where business education is delivered, the visual learning environment is very good. The displays of student-generated presentations are colourful, and informative. The configuration of desks enables students to permanently sit in a group format which is conducive to co-operative learning.
- All business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. Business teachers are regular attendees at conferences and workshops and have availed of relevant continuing professional development courses in order to further enrich the learning experiences of their students.
- Commendably, the school's assessment policy is underpinned by AfL practices which were visible in all lessons visited.
- There is good practice in the mentoring of trainee teachers. At the regular meetings of the established teacher and trainee teacher, the use of various teaching methodologies is discussed and advice is shared.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The planning and collaborative team spirit of the business department is of a very high quality. The process of planning is one that is focused on providing rich learning experiences and key skill development for students.
- The curriculum plans for each business subject are developed to a very high standard. The linking of learning outcomes, resources, and the methodologies to be employed in the delivery of each business topic in the classroom is very good practice as it provides a coherent manual for the delivery of business education.
- The regular business department meetings include discussions that directly relate to student learning such as teaching and student learning styles, differentiation, assessment practices and literacy and numeracy development. It is evident from minutes of meetings that teachers use formal meeting and planning time to reflect on and evaluate their work. Commendably, the business department's preparation of a three-year strategic plan sets targets for on-going improvement.
- The electronic business subject folder is very well organised and regularly updated. Business teachers routinely include their prepared notes, presentations, and other resources in the folder for all business teachers to access and use.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.

2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school is pleased that the very high quality of teaching in Business Subjects and the enthusiasm of the teachers and their strong student-centred approach is acknowledged and endorsed in the report.

The report reflects the focus on collaboration and good team spirit in the department and the encouragement given to students to achieve their full potential.

The Board appreciates the recognition of the support given by management for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that enhance learning for students.

All the above points are underpinned by the school's ethos, philosophy and strategic plan.

Child Protection: The Board takes its duties in relation to Child Protection very seriously and was glad that the Inspectors found that the school met all the requirements in relation to the checks.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Business teachers are developing a resource bank of video and media resources focusing on contemporary Business issues for use in the classroom.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;