

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business and Accounting

REPORT

School name	Saint Joseph's C.B.S. Secondary School
School address	Newfoundwell Road Drogheda County Louth
Roll number	63840C

Date of Inspection: 27-04-2017



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 and Accounting under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

The board of management 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	27-04-2017
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 in five lessons: two double-period and three single-period classes.• Examination of students' work.• Feedback to principal and relevant staff.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Joseph's C.B.S. Secondary School is a voluntary Catholic school for boys, operating within the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school has a current enrolment of 727 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good.
- The recording of homework was an area of weakness across the department and there is need for more regular assignment of work.
- The business department planning and procedures are good for the induction of new staff members; a mentoring programme has been set out for Professional Master of Education (PME) students and newly appointed teachers.
- Business Studies is an optional subject in the junior cycle; currently, the uptake rates are below the national norm and this is providing a lower base for selection at senior cycle where the uptake of Business and Economics has shown a decline in recent years.
- Teachers are not using the business studies specification to plan for teaching and learning in the subject with first-year students' due to ongoing industrial relations issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- An analysis and review of factors affecting subject choice for Business should be undertaken and targeted interventions agreed to improve the situation; these should include developing the annual open day promotion of Business Studies for incoming first-year students and expanding the provision for Business in TY to raise the subject profile at senior cycle.
- Student achievement and performance needs to influence planning due to the issues developing around uptake and attainment; the department needs to develop a first-year plan.
- The monitoring and recording of homework needs to be addressed; it would assist teachers in tracking attainment across the department.
- In order to ensure that the learning of all relevant students is informed by the new business studies specification, all teachers of first year should familiarise themselves with the new specifications and work collaboratively with their colleagues in planning for the subject.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good.
- In the majority of lessons observed the language register of Business was well addressed by the teachers through a focus on developing students' financial literacy skills; this strategy was seen to work well.
- The pace and structure of the lessons were good and students engaged well with the learning. The interactions between teachers and students were respectful. Teachers were affirming of students' efforts and circulated well throughout the lessons, providing support to students and checking their progress.
- At times there was an overemphasis on teacher-led instruction. A greater structure around more active methodologies is recommended in the delivery of lessons.
- Enterprise is strong in the school with students taking part in many initiatives, such as the school bazaar and food culture day.
- As identifying and affirming students' work is key in order to develop self-assessment skills, a visualiser could be further utilised to view exemplars of students' work and develop modelling of practice and peer assessment.
- In a minority of lessons examination techniques featured too prominently. Managing examination technique with wider learning needs to be developed and care should be taken to maintaining the focus of the lesson, as originally introduced.
- Students' work is corrected but work needs to be assigned more regularly. This approach would assist teachers in tracking students' progress and help to address the issues with attainment and uptake.
- In the lessons observed, the recording of homework was an area of weakness and this was consistent across the department. There is need for more regular assignment of work.
- Note taking was evident in the lessons observed; students should also be encouraged to note make and phrase key financial points in their own words.
- Some business teachers have engaged actively in continuing professional development (CPD) for senior cycle subjects. All members of the department should engage in CPD in line with best practice.
- No teachers within the department are members of their subject organisation, the Business Studies Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI). This gap in professional development should be addressed.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject is good.
- Business Studies is an optional subject in junior cycle; currently the uptake rates are below the national norm and this is providing a lower base for selection at senior cycle. An analysis and review of factors affecting subject choice should be undertaken and targeted interventions agreed that will improve the situation.

- Business is offered in TY over a rotating ten-week module for all three classes; this is an area that can be addressed in relation to developing the uptake of the subjects at senior cycle.
- The reintroduction of Accounting over the past two years is a positive move in promoting a wider understanding of Business and uptake of the subject is rising. A strategy is needed, however, to tackle the declining numbers taking senior-cycle Business and the very low numbers studying Economics.
- Resources within the classrooms are good but more effective use needs to be made of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment to enhance learning.
- Students and teachers have received awards from Maynooth University in recent years for academic excellence in Business Studies at Junior Cycle; this achievement should be used more to promote the subject.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning within the department was good; the development of a business studies plan in first year needs to be addressed.
- A subject department structure is in place within the school. The role of subject co-ordinator has not rotated in four years. It would be better to rotate the role more frequently in order to build capacity.
- Departmental planning facilitates the induction and mentoring of new subject teachers and student teachers. A mentoring programme has been set out for PME students and newly appointed teachers.
- Business teachers meet formally during the academic year and have documented minutes of items discussed.
- CPD has not been availed of to support the introduction of the new junior cycle business studies specification due to ongoing industrial relations issues. In order to ensure that the learning of all relevant students is informed by the new specification, the teachers of first year should familiarise themselves, and work collaboratively in planning and delivering the subject, in accordance with the specification.

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

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the inspector's recommendations and affirms its commitment and support to their implementation. Purposeful and constructive engagement has taken place between the Senior Management Team and the Business Department.

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

A number of actions have already been implemented:

1. The T.Y. Business programme has been restructured for the 2017-2018 school year to include distinct modules for Economics, Business and Accounting. Each module will last ten weeks and provide for student experience of the Senior Cycle curriculum along with engagement in co-curricular activities through active learning methodologies. Formal feedback from students will be gathered at the end of each module to assist the department in future planning.
2. As part of a whole school strategy to addressing student recording of homework, the Business Department has met and prioritised this issue.

The Business department will undertake the following:

1. Development of a First Year plan to include the collection and analysis of data from 1st year Business and non-Business students to determine the factors affecting their subject option choices. This data will be used to devise a promotional strategy targeting incoming 1st year students. This strategy will concentrate on the development of the annual Open Night, Subject Sampling Day and linkages with the feeder primary schools. The Business Department sees scope to purposefully project the attainment and achievements of Business students past and present, the awarding of Certificates of Excellence by NUI Maynooth and its enterprise culture. On-going monitoring of homework recording by students and commitment to ensuring the use of homework is optimised for the purposes of learning. It will explore further a formative assessment initiative to track the progress of each student by means of their homework.
2. Full engagement with the new Junior Cycle Business specification and uptake of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) following the resolution of the recent industrial action. The Business teachers in St. Joseph's Secondary School are committed to collaborative practices to ensure all aspects of the new Business specification are embedded.
3. The Board of Management and the senior management team will undertake to promote membership of the Business Subject Association to the Business teachers and that they avail of future relevant in-service.

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 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;