

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business and Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballymakenny College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballymakenny Road Drogheda
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91573N

Date of Inspection: 13-03-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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. 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.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	13 th & 14 th March 2019
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 six one-hour class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballymakenny College is a co-educational community school under the shared patronage of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board and Educate Together. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate programme for a student body of 670.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good, with some exemplary practice noted; however, in some lessons learning was not sufficiently differentiated to meet the students' individual learning needs.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons during the evaluation; lesson planning requires further refinement in the context of the one-hour lessons.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons, and some examples of highly effective written formative feedback was evident in students' copies although this was not universal practice.
- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation in the business department is very good.
- A highly effective shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources with one another and with students; however, the business department plan does not contain any reflective component.

Recommendations

- All lessons should include an extended range of teaching and assessment approaches that provide for effective differentiation.
- The highly effective practice of guiding students' learning by providing them with formative feedback in their copies should be extended across the business department.
- The subject planning process should include further reflective practice with the development of an action plan identifying short, medium and long term goals for the business department.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with exemplary practice noted in some lessons.
- In keeping with good practice, the learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons during the evaluation. However, there were a number of lessons where the pace was either too fast or too slow as the learning intentions were either under or overestimated in the context of the time available. Lesson planning should be further refined in the context of the one-hour lessons.
- Highly effective learning was noted when teachers provided a variety of teaching and assessment strategies to meet the students' individual needs. These approaches supported appropriate expectations and challenge for learners across the ability range. However, this practice was not evident in all lesson. The range of teaching and assessment approaches should be extended to provide for effective differentiation.
- Students' learning experiences were positive when teachers used active methodologies which allowed students to take ownership of their learning. The teachers identified and affirmed good quality students' work and this was key to preparing the learners to self-assess. In a few instances, teachers provided time to the class group to examine exemplars of students' work and engage in feedback. This highly effective practice should be developed across the department.
- A variety of well selected Digital Learning Technology (DLT) resources was used. These resources included student and teacher tablet devices, and a range of worksheets and presentations, all of which enhanced the quality of teaching and learning.
- In all lessons observed, the interactions between students and teachers were very respectful, with exemplary student behaviour evident. These very good relationships facilitated a positive learning environment.
- Effective literacy development was evident in most business lessons with the focus on identifying and using subject specific language and terminology. A vibrant print rich display of business material was evident in business classrooms which further reinforced the key words.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons. Some highly effective examples of written formative feedback were evident in students' copies. This good practice should be extended across the whole department.
- Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers. Good circulation by teachers among the students improved student participation levels. Teachers provided valuable one-to-one support to students when necessary.
- In the majority of lessons, group tasks allowed for meaningful discussion and productive student engagement. Students had a clear understanding of their roles within the group when undertaking such tasks.
- Teachers of business organise educational visits to local enterprises and encourage students to partake in a range of enterprise activities; this is very good practice. Student award schemes are displayed recognising student achievement from the local enterprise board.

- The deployment of co-operative teaching within the business department is a welcome development. All third-year business teachers are involved in this practice. Some highly effective practice was observed in one of the two co-taught lessons. There is scope to share this practice across the whole-school community to build capacity. Formal continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of co-teaching should be accessed to further develop teacher practice.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good. Teachers and students avail of very good DLT facilities with students and teachers having access to Wi-Fi enabled tablets. School management is supportive of the subject and a very good time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle for the subject.
- Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle. First-year students complete a four-week sampling programme before making an informed subject choice. All three business subjects, Accounting, Business and Economics, are offered to students at senior cycle.
- The business module within the TY programme is very well designed; students are provided with subject samples of Economics, Business and Accounting. Enterprise education is well established in the school and it is very good practice that students are encouraged and supported to take part in enterprise activities. Close links have been developed with local entrepreneurs and financial institutions.
- The business department has established highly effective systems to support newly qualified teachers including peer mentoring and teacher observation in-line with the school's involvement in *Droichead*.
- The business department reports to parents at parent-teacher meetings and through feedback from in-house assessments, which is good practice. To increase parents' and students' understanding of the assessment framework that supports junior cycle Business Studies, reporting systems should be further developed. Feedback that reflects the range of student learning experiences and the descriptors used with classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations should be provided.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is very good. A shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources with one another and students.
- The coordination of the subject is undertaken by one teacher and this role is rotated every two years. Collaboration is very strong across the business department. Formal subject department meetings are regularly held with extensive agendas prepared and minutes recorded.
- A member of the business department has been identified to lead and facilitate Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings in-line with best practice. Professional time is provided to every teacher in the department and the deployment of all teachers is in line with their qualifications, skills, knowledge and interest.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend CPD. Currently, there is no system in place for teachers to share new learning from attendance at CPD events. Following attendance at

in-service, the business department should agree a strategy for sharing and trialling new methodologies in classes. It would be very beneficial for the teachers to do this through peer mentoring in-line with the *Droichead* initiative which is established in the school.

- The quality of the subject plan is very good overall. However, it currently does not contain any reflective component. Subject planning would further benefit from reflective practice with an evaluation section at the end of each identified learning area and the development of an action plan which would identify short, medium and long term goals for the business department.

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 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;