

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

Subject Inspection in Business Studies and Economics

REPORT

School name	Scoil Dara
School address	Church Street Kilcock County Kildare
Roll number	61691B

Date of Inspection: 13-03-2018



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 all 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.

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	12 th and 13 th of March 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 five one hour class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, two deputy principals and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

School context

Scoil Dara is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The current year 2017/18 enrolment is 842 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) as an optional programme, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the evaluation was good or very good, a small number of lessons were satisfactory.
- Highly effective feedback on students' written work was evident in one lesson which included formative feedback and advice to guide improvement as well as a fraction and a percentage mark; this strategy should be adopted across the business department.
- Enterprise education is well established in the school; a student will represent the school at national level in the enterprise competition later during this academic year.
- Provision for business subjects and whole-school support is very good and is well supported by timetabling and subject options arrangements; there is scope to extend the range of business subjects at senior cycle further by including an experience of all three business subjects in TY.
- The quality of planning and preparation within the business department is good and the teachers have recently developed an action plan to guide improvements in teaching and learning, there is a need to develop the first and second year plan in line with the new subject specification.

Recommendations

- In order to identify and affirm students' work that is of good quality teachers should provide opportunities to students to view exemplars of their fellow students' work and engage in constructive feedback, assessment and peer assessment; a visualiser would be a useful tool in this approach to sharing success criteria and engaging students more in the learning process.
- Teachers should differentiate their lessons further by facilitating students to note make and phrase key points into their own words; this would develop a greater level of understanding of how students learn and guide teachers in meeting all learning needs.

- There is scope to develop the TY module by incorporating a rotating module of Business, Accounting and Economics; encountering all three subjects would offer students a greater insight into what the three subjects are about and would allow them to make an informed decision on what senior cycle subjects to study.
- Significant work needs to be carried out on the junior cycle first and second year plan to engage all aspects of the specification's three strands.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the evaluation was good or very good, a small number of lessons were satisfactory.
- In the lessons observed which were satisfactory there was an overemphasis on teacher-led instruction; a wider range of methodologies was needed to achieve more active student participation in learning.
- Learning intentions were displayed and shared with students in all lessons. This highly effective practice was most effective when teachers revisited the learning intentions and assessed student understanding through an exit strategy at the end of the lessons. There was an awareness of how students' feedback can be used to inform teaching practice in future lessons.
- Highly effective feedback was evident in one lesson where a teacher provided feedback on an assessment task in written form which contained a fraction, percentage and formative feedback in order to guide students' understanding. This formative feedback should be extended across all teachers' practice in the department and used to guide improvement for learners.
- In order to identify and affirm students' work that is of good quality teachers should provide opportunities to students to view exemplars of their fellow students work and engage in constructive feedback, assessment and peer assessment. This strategy would enable students to see their peers achieve and raise awareness among the rest of the cohort that it is not only the teacher who can produce a high quality answer. A visualiser would be a useful tool in facilitating this approach to sharing success criteria and engaging students in the learning process.
- Literacy and numeracy development across all business lessons was evident, there was a good focus on key words and numeracy development. The third strand of school self-evaluation (SSE) focuses on active methodologies, this should be further embedded into planning for teaching and learning of the new junior cycle specification.
- In accounting and book-keeping lessons a check balance approach would assist students in developing their financial skills and allow students to reflect on their learning and review and correct their own work.
- A print-rich environment was evident in subject-based classrooms. There were some very rich displays of the students' own work. This display is particularly important as teachers and students prepare to embed junior cycle key skills and prepare for classroom based assessments (CBA).

- Second year students were very well prepared as they started on their CBA journey during the evaluation. This group task will appear on students' junior cycle profile of achievement award (JCPA) in September 2019. Teachers have worked hard to stay informed of specific material having only recently received junior cycle continuing professional development (CPD).
- Teachers should differentiate their lessons further by facilitating students to note make and phrase key points into their own words; this would develop a greater level of understanding of how students learn and guide teachers in meeting all learning needs.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was very well used in many lessons through the use of media clips, online assessment applications and electronic presentations; these resources brought an extra dimension to lessons and were seen to appeal to all learners.
- Group and pair work was evident throughout the lessons observed. Students were provided with clear roles to take up as they developed their practice of communicating and working with others.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good with appropriate provision made for the subject area and in all relevant curriculum programmes on offer.
- Business studies is offered prior to entry to Scoil Dara and there are currently three first year classes. Students who have decided to study Business Studies in first year are provided with a four week subject-sampling programme after which they decide if they will continue studying the subject. Senior cycle students may study two business subjects from the three subjects on offer through the option bands.
- There is scope to develop a three-part TY business module by offering a rotating module of Business, Accounting and Economics. This experience would offer students a greater insight into the three subjects and would allow them a broader choice of senior cycle subjects to study.
- Enterprise education is well established in the school with recent success in the local county enterprise competition, a student will represent the school at national level later during this academic year.
- Resources in subject-based classrooms were good. In one lesson there was highly effective use of ICT through a tablet device to improve students learning. A shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share teaching resources with one another and their students.
- It is important that teachers stay informed of the subject association body, the Business Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI) and become familiar with the professional development opportunities provided by membership of the association.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation within the business department is good. Significant work needs to be carried out on the junior cycle first and second year plan to engage all aspects of the specification's three strands.
- Detailed schemes of work have been documented for senior cycle subjects. Teachers have created very good teaching and learning resources linked to these schemes.

- Planning seeks to identify current and future departmental requirements. Beginning this year, teachers have developed an action plan to guide improvements in teaching and learning in Scoil Dara, which is very good practice. This action plan should be redeveloped to focus on enhancing the teaching and learning of the business subjects in Scoil Dara.
- Business teachers hold regular meetings which are documented with clearly established agendas and minutes.
- A member of the business department has been identified to co-ordinate and lead the subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings related to the assessment of the CBAs in the school; during the evaluation teachers presented students with a very useful booklet as an aid to carrying out CBA tasks.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, two deputy principals 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.

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 of the school's provision in 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;