



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Business Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Meán Scoil Muire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	5 St. Joseph's Road Longford Town Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63760E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	07-12-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	01/02/2023

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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Business under the following headings:

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

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.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	7 th and 8 th December 2022
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Meán Scoil Mhuire operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). There are currently 614 girls enrolled in the school. Business Studies is a core subject in junior cycle and Accounting and Business are offered as optional subjects in senior cycle. The school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) for students and Enterprise and Accounting are the business subjects offered to all. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good, with highly effective practice observed in a small number of lessons.
- Provision for business subjects was very good and was well supported by timetabling and subject option arrangements.
- In most classes student learning experiences were positive. In these classes, teachers used active learning methodologies which facilitated students to take ownership of their learning.
- Enterprise education was strongly supported within the school; students had opportunities to participate in numerous enterprise activities and experiences.
- The overall quality of planning within the business department was good.

Recommendations

- At junior cycle, teachers should plan units of learning which link learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification.
- It is recommended that the business teachers engage in action planning for improvement through looking at what is working well and identifying its priorities. Following collective reflection on these areas, it should develop an action plan for improvement which would align with the whole school approach to DEIS planning.
- Teachers should facilitate students to make notes and phrase key points in their own words.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good, with highly effective practice observed in a few lessons. In these instances teachers demonstrated a very high level of pedagogical knowledge, competency and skill.
- Most lessons were well planned and this supported positive learner experiences. In all lessons observed the interactions between students and teachers were very respectful, promoting a positive learning atmosphere. In most lessons students engaged appropriately with active and collaborative methodologies that facilitated them to take ownership of their learning and provided them with opportunities to affirm each other's work.
- Students who participated in the focus group reported that active methodologies allowed them to become involved and engaged in their learning. However, they expressed a concern at the high number of written notes that they were expected to record. Students also valued the use of digital technology and the opportunity to access this at their own pace which supported their learning and engagement beyond the classroom.
- In keeping with good practice, learning intentions were presented at the outset of all lessons either orally or displayed on the board. Highly effective practice was noted when the planned learning intentions were revisited to assess students' learning and affirm understanding. The main exit strategy used to assess student understanding in lessons was teacher questioning and observation. Effective revisiting of learning intentions to assess learning, can inform the planning for subsequent lessons; it is recommended that this practice is embedded across the business department.
- The quality of note-taking varied in the lessons observed. Where practice was most effective students were given time to think about their ideas, develop their understanding of lesson content and make notes in their own words. However, in most lessons students passively copied notes. To reduce time spent transcribing notes teachers should facilitate students to make their own notes and phrase key points in their own words. In order to do this effectively, teachers should use approaches that support the development of these skills.
- Good use of digital learning technologies (DLT) was observed in most lessons, with a variety of well selected DLT resources. These resources included a range of worksheets and media clips all of which enhanced the quality of teaching and learning. In engaging with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), highly effective practice was noted in a few lessons when it enabled teachers and students to collaborate and share work. This practice should be extended across the Business department.
- Appropriately, homework was assigned in all the lessons observed. When reviewed, there was no evidence of written feedback for improvement in student copybooks. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students' learning. It is recommended that this highly effective practice is developed and embedded across the business department.
- In most lessons teachers placed a strong emphasis on the development of students' vocabulary through the identification of key words. To reinforce this learning in class, students should be encouraged to record key words in their copybooks. This would further support the development of students' financial literacy. The business department should identify and implement strategies to continue to support literacy for Business.
- Highly effective learning was noted in a few lessons when teachers varied their teaching to cater for the individual needs of students. These strategies supported appropriate expectations and challenge for learners across the ability range. This practice should be used in all lessons.
- In most lessons there was a tendency for teaching and learning to be guided by a chapter based approach instead of focussing on the learning outcomes set by the specification. When planning to meet the individual needs of students and to provide greater challenge for students across the ability range, teachers should first unpack the

learning outcomes across the strands within the specifications. This type of approach provides for a greater variety of teaching and assessment strategies.

- There was good use of questioning in all lessons. In many lessons, well dispersed questioning enhanced the learner experience and appropriately challenged students. It encouraged independent thinking and increased student participation, while further engaging students in sharing the responsibility for their own learning. Very effective practice was noted when appropriate wait-time was provided and higher-order questioning strategies were used.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good. School management was very supportive of the subject and an appropriate time allocation was provided across junior and senior cycle with option bands based on student choice.
- All students took Business Studies at junior cycle, however the numbers taking the suite of business subjects at senior cycle were low. With the aim of increasing participation at senior cycle teachers should monitor uptake and consider how to develop student interest from junior cycle into senior cycle.
- There was a very good uptake relating to enterprise education which was strongly supported within the school. Students across all year groups had the opportunity to participate in numerous enterprise activities and experiences with external organisations.
- To increase parents' and students' understanding of the assessment framework that supports junior cycle business studies, the school amended its reporting template to reflect the descriptors used for classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations. This highly effective practice should be extended to students' copies and the provision of written formative feedback to guide students' learning.
- The business department had full access to a bank of mobile digital devices. The use of such resources was actively promoted by senior management.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning for the subject was good.
- Effective planning was present for junior and senior cycle business subjects. To further enhance the effectiveness of this planning at junior cycle, it is recommended that teachers plan units of learning collaboratively using a common approach for the three years to link learning outcomes from across the three strands of the business studies specification.
- The breadth of business related activities for students in TY was not adequately reflected in the TY business plan. The plan should be adapted to ensure that activities taking place in TY are documented and recorded. The range of topics in the programme should also be reviewed and extended to include a greater emphasis on Accounting and Business with a view to further increasing students' participation and experience of business subjects at senior cycle.
- Formal subject department meetings were held regularly and minutes recorded appropriately. To promote greater collaborative practice across the department, consideration should be given to having a single co-ordinator which then rotates instead of the current arrangement where all teachers coordinate jointly.
- An analysis of attainment data was reviewed annually against the national norms for the subject and was compared at whole school level, as part of the DEIS action planning. It is recommended that the business teachers engage in action planning for improvement by looking at what is working well and by identifying priority areas for development. Following collective reflection on these areas, an action plan for improvement aligned to the whole school approach to DEIS planning should be developed.

- Extensive opportunities for continuing professional development have been facilitated by school management and availed of by teachers. It was very positive that some of the business teachers are members of the Business Studies Teachers Association (BSTAI). Following attendance at in-service, the business department should agree a strategy for sharing professional learning and trialling new methodologies in lessons.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and four 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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;