

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Business and Economics
REPORT**

**Our Lady's School,
Terenure, Dublin 6W
Roll number: 60860Q**

Date of inspection: 20 November 2012



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	20 November 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods, one double and three single lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- A high standard of teaching was observed.
- Learning activities ensured that students were engaged in their learning, attained good business knowledge and developed key skills.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are very good.
- The uptake of Business and Economics in Leaving Certificate is good, considering that Business Studies is not provided in junior cycle.
- The planning and collaborative practices of the business subjects department are very good, and can be further enhanced.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To enhance the high standard of teaching and learning, the visual learning environment in business classrooms and the use of evaluative comments on students' work should be further developed.
 - The addition of homework modes in the Economics curricular plan would allow it to serve as a template for all business subjects plans.
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INTRODUCTION

Our Lady's School is a voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 744 female post-primary students. Business education is a core module in the compulsory Transition Year programme (TY). Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate Students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teaching and learning observed in business education was of a high standard. Enthusiastic teachers encouraged their students to deepen business acumen and develop their key skills.
- Good examples of activity-based methodologies and the promotion of student self-directed learning were observed. In all lessons co-operative learning such as group or pair work was effectively used. In a Business lesson, students presented their enterprise projects in a "Dragon's Den" format while their peers critically evaluated and gave reasoned judgements on the project's calibre. It was noted that students regularly take part in debates and on occasion teach their peers.
- All lessons were well prepared and followed a logical sequence of activities. Learning outcomes were communicated to students at the outset of lessons and as the lesson concluded these were recapped by students and teachers.
- Targeted questioning that was effectively differentiated allowed students to apply critical thinking skills and deepen their learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in all lessons as a constructive teaching and learning tool. In most lessons good video resources gave a dynamic real-life focus to business education. From a review of a sample of student copybooks there was evidence that students regularly conduct internet research as part of projects and homework assignments.
- In one lesson there was an instance of note-taking that was not the best use of class time. An alternative such as transfer of class notes electronically or student note-making outside of class time should be pursued.
- In lessons teachers used graphic organisers and additional paper-based resources such as handouts that contained up-to-date information and supplemented student learning.
- In all lessons there was a very clear focus on development of literacy skills. Teachers involved students in deciphering keywords and unfamiliar business terminology. In most lessons students compiled their own lists of keywords and definitions. This is good practice as students do not have the opportunity to take Business Studies at junior cycle.
- In the majority of lessons there was very good linkage to prior learning and integration with other topics on the syllabus. Students are encouraged to partake in co-curricular and cross-curricular activities to support their learning.
- The TY business module is delivered in an explorative manner befitting the programme's ethos and aims.
- The good teaching, rapport and classroom management practices created a positive and affirming learning environment for students.
- Students were encouraged to enhance and deepen their own subject knowledge through internet research assignments and keeping abreast of current media coverage of

happenings in the economy. It was admirable that in some lessons time was devoted to students sharing their knowledge of topical events.

- A sample of students' copybooks and journals was viewed in each lesson. Students regularly receive homework that is varied and engaging. Good practice was observed in a lesson where students were given a worksheet to fill in from memory and then consulted textbooks to validate their answer. Homework was well monitored and in some copybooks guiding and evaluative comments were noted on students' work. This good practice should be expanded.
- Student uptake of Business and Economics at higher level in state examinations is very good, as are the subsequent outcomes.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business Studies is not on the school's junior cycle curriculum. However, all TY students can avail of business education. It is praiseworthy that, despite the non-availability of Business Studies in junior cycle, there is good uptake of Business and Economics in Leaving Certificate. The introduction of the new junior cycle curriculum will create an opportunity to revisit the option of introducing Business Studies.
- Business teachers have their own base classrooms. There are some good examples of how visual learning environments have been developed in these rooms. The potential to create a visual learning environment in all classrooms and in the school environs should be further exploited by all business teachers.
- All business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. Business teachers regularly attend subject association events and have availed of subject-related professional development courses.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Each business subject has its own co-ordinator, and a very good informal collaborative and supportive relationship was observed in practice. However, it is advisable to appoint an overall business subjects department co-ordinator and to have a common meeting which can have a separate section for subject related discussions. The position of co-ordinator should rotate within the department.
- The focus of many of the regular business subject department planning meetings is how best students learn and how this learning can be developed and supported. This is praiseworthy and a very effective use of meeting time.
- The business subjects plan is very good and contains all the elements of good planning. Good links were evident with the Special Educational Needs department as strategies and advice for teachers on specific learning needs was documented in the plan. As evidenced from minutes of subject department meetings, business teachers regularly evaluate their practice and are willing to develop it if necessary.
- As evidenced in minutes of meetings, Business teachers are keenly aware of the importance of the development of student literacy and numeracy skills. It is advisable that the agreed strategies be documented in the overall plan for business education and that the business subjects department liaise formally with the mathematics department to ensure that there are similar approaches to mathematical computations.

- There is considerable expertise and experience in the business subjects department which can be shared and formalised through the further development of each curricular plan. The layout and content of the curricular plan for fifth-year Economics is very good. The addition of samples of homework assignments to each topic would make it a suitable template for each business subject.
- Business teachers are in the process of developing an ICT resource folder and an application that will enable the sharing of electronic resources and information between teachers and students.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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