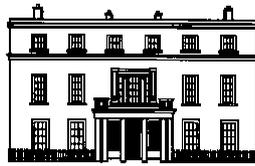


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Business Subjects  
REPORT**

**Meánscoil na mBráithre Criostaí  
Kilkenny  
Roll number: 61550G**

**Date of inspection: 3 February 2015**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS SUBJECTS**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	2 and 3 February 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods: two double and five single lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching ranged from good to very good.
- Students were highly engaged in their learning, attained good business knowledge and further developed key learning skills.
- Students have opportunities to further their business insight through participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Senior management is supportive of business education, which has a good profile on the school's curriculum.
- The planning, organisation and professionalism of the business department are of a very high quality; a developmental focus on the learning needs of students is central to the work of business teachers.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To further enhance the learning experience for all students the very good teaching and learning practices observed and described in this report should be deployed in all lessons.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Meánscoil na mBráithre Criostaí is a voluntary secondary school, with an enrolment of 669 male post-primary students. Business Studies is a core subject in first year and a choice subject thereafter. Business education is compulsory in the highly-subscribed optional Transition Year programme (TY). Accounting, Business and Economics are offered to Leaving Certificate students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching in lessons ranged from good to very good and was of a high standard overall. There were elements of exemplary practice in all lessons. Teachers were passionate in their delivery of business education.
- Students were highly engaged in lessons observed. The good range of varied methodologies in double lessons helped to sustain students' interest in learning.
- In all lessons, teachers effectively used information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching aid. In some lessons, the use of ICT was exemplary as it allowed students to deepen and encapsulate their understanding of subject material through well-selected video resources and students' own research findings. The use of ICT for the collection of student assignments and the sharing of resources used in lessons ensures that students have on-going access to material and that lesson time is effectively used.
- In almost all lessons, students were afforded good opportunities to work co-operatively. In one lesson, students' use of show me boards while working in pairs was an efficient way of evaluating student knowledge. The very good group task in a TY lesson expanded student learning. It is advisable to extend the use of this methodology to Leaving Certificate.
- The very good student-teacher discussions and questioning techniques helped develop students' communication skills. Questioning strategies were often higher-order and sought to further develop students' critical thinking skills.
- The use of good, relevant and topical exemplars made lessons interesting and afforded students many opportunities to develop and embed their understanding of business knowledge.
- TY students experience business education in an explorative manner. Students take responsibility for all aspects of the school's tuck shop, the school bank and mini-company and this helps to embed an ethos of financial accountability and enterprise. Student preparation of projects for an electronic portfolio, which they present to their peers and on which they are subsequently assessed, further develops their key skills.
- Lessons were well planned. There was a consistent focus on writing learning outcomes and the key vocabulary of each lesson on the board. At the conclusion of almost all lessons, there was a very good recap and recall of learning through student targeted questions which were often higher-order.
- Student copybooks viewed in each lesson were found to be neat, well labelled, dated and included some graphic organisers that summarised the main points of topics. The regular assigned homework was monitored. Most teachers had noted some written affirming and guiding comments on students' work. To further support student learning, it is advisable that more detailed formative feedback be given on longer assignments.

- In all lessons there was a consistent focus on implementation of the school's agreed literacy strategies as part of the school's self-evaluation processes.
- Students of business subjects are encouraged to aim for high standards and to take subjects at the highest possible level in the certificate examinations. Student attainment is very good.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Senior management is highly supportive of business education in terms of access for all students and curricular provision.
- All first-year students are provided with a taster of Business Studies. Currently the provision of two class periods per week for first-year students is less than normal. Commendably senior management is currently exploring ways to increase provision while not compromising the value of the taster programme. The uptake of the optional subject Business Studies in second year is good.
- The majority of students who have taken Business Studies at junior cycle retain at least one of the options at Leaving Certificate. In recent years, the number of students opting for Accounting has been declining and management is to be commended for its commitment to increasing participation.
- The organisation of a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for business students such as guest speakers, enterprise days and trips by teachers is praiseworthy.
- The school's link with the Quinn School of Business through the provision of a bursary for students from the Tony O'Brien Scholarship Awards scheme is laudable and is indicative of the school's commitment to business education.
- The visual learning environment is good in each business classroom. Notice boards displayed current and relevant business related newspaper articles. Of particular merit are the colourful and informative student-generated posters. In some classrooms, seating is configured to facilitate co-operative learning activities.
- All teachers of the business subjects are subject specialists and are up to date with their subject knowledge. Business teachers attend events organised by their subject association and on their return to the school they give a report of the activity. Senior management is proactive in the provision of whole school continuing professional development (CPD) that is focussed on the learning needs of students. The process of embedding the recently attained CPD in teachers' practice was evident in lessons.
- The business department is aware of the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. There is good communication between the school's special education department and the business department with regard to the educational needs of students. The timetabling of a resource teacher with a business qualification in the learning support department is praiseworthy.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The business subjects department is highly organised and works in a collaborative, supportive and professional manner. The department willingly shares best practice and

resources to ensure that business education of a high standard is consistently provided for students.

- Planning documentation is indicative of the very high standards that are maintained within the business subjects department. The business subject plan is comprehensive and is a very good reference document on how business education is enacted in the school. Of particular merit is the detailing of teaching techniques for students with additional learning needs and the individual student learning plans.
- The curriculum plans for each business subject are developed to a very high standard. The linking of learning outcomes, resources, and the methodologies to be employed in the delivery of each business topic in the classroom is very good practice as it provides a coherent manual for the delivery of business education in the classroom.
- The sequencing of topics in junior cycle could be reviewed. Year three of the cycle is heavily weighted towards book-keeping topics. It is advisable to incorporate book-keeping elements throughout the three-year cycle.
- Good tangible cross-curricular links are maintained between business lessons and the link modules of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.
- The well-organised electronic resource folder is accessible to all business teachers on the subject department's server. The resources and subject-related information are regularly updated.

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

The board of management of the school 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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of C.B.S. Kilkenny welcomes the very positive Subject Inspection report on Business Subjects completed by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. The Board welcomes the many positive findings, particularly in terms of the consistently high standards of teaching and learning and the very high quality of planning, organisation and professionalism observed by the Inspectorate.

### **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The Business department is committed to building on the very high standards as observed by the Inspectorate and outlined in the findings of this very positive report.