

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Accounting and Business
REPORT**

**F.C.J. Secondary School
Bunclody, County Wexford
Roll number: 63550Q**

Date of inspection: 28 September 2011



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28 September
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• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall standard of teaching and learning in Business and Accounting was very good.
- Students took ownership of their own learning but in a small number of lessons the transcription of notes was an ineffective use of class time.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are good.
- There is a mix of approaches among business teachers regarding the type of homework assigned and its correction.
- Classrooms are student based and this limits the provision of a print-rich environment.
- Planning practices are good; a few additions to the business subjects plan and an expansion of subject curricular plans would enhance them.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be encouraged to generate their own notes outside of formal class time and this could form part of the assessment process.
 - There should be agreement among the teachers regarding the type and quality of homework assigned to students, and its correction.
 - The provision of at least one specialist business room should be considered by senior management.
 - Curricular plans should be sufficiently detailed to record the good teaching practices and to serve as a manual for the provision of business education in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

F.C.J. Secondary School, a co-educational voluntary secondary school, offers Business Studies in junior cycle, and Accounting, Business and Economics as optional subjects in Leaving Certificate. Business education is provided in the school's optional Transition Year (TY). The school has a current enrolment of 795 students. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the inspection; the board chose to accept the report without response.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall standard of teaching and learning in Business and Accounting was very good. However there is scope in a small number of lessons to change practices that do not make best use of class time.
- The learning activities in lessons ensured that students took ownership of their own learning, acquired good up-to-date business knowledge, worked co-operatively with their peers and developed key skills.
- In Accounting lessons there was good integration of book-keeping practice with theoretical knowledge. A good step-by-step approach with an emphasis on teaching for understanding was adopted by teachers and this enabled students to become familiar with concepts and practice.
- All lessons were well structured and prepared, and followed a logical sequence of activities. However, in some lessons there were instances of students transcribing notes that were accessible in textbooks and this was not the best use of lesson time.
- Additional resources such as overhead projectors, handouts, worksheets and physical items were used appropriately to support teaching and learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in many lessons. It was an effective teaching and learning tool that allowed business education to attain a dynamic real-life focus. In lessons teachers accessed relevant clips from news and television programmes. In some lessons teachers encouraged students to conduct research on the internet as part of assigned homework.
- In some lessons there was exemplary use of graphic organisers and mind maps.
- Teachers and students used business language and terminology well in all lessons. In a business lesson, the teacher shared with students an excellent knowledge of entrepreneurs, business organisations and topical business issues. This helped to develop students' knowledge, understanding and applied business skills.
- In some lessons teachers created good cross-curricular links between business subjects and other curricular subjects.
- In a visit to a TY lesson it was evident that the programme is delivered in a way that befits its ethos and aims.
- Classrooms are mainly student-based. Nevertheless, there were some examples of business-related materials in classrooms. Business teachers maintain a notice board and a display case in the main school corridor to display business-related awards and information.

- Students were encouraged to be active participants in lessons and to be supportive to their peers.
- While all business teachers regularly assign homework, there is a mix of approaches among the team in the type of work assigned. This merits a review to ensure that all students experience a similar and consistent approach.
- There was evidence of formal checking of students' homework by teachers. In some lessons teachers noted comments on students' work as to how they could improve their performance.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential and to take business subjects at higher level in certificate examinations, wherein outcomes are good.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The majority of students who have taken Business Studies at junior cycle retain at least one of the business options at Leaving Certificate. A number of students new to business education choose a business subject option for Leaving Certificate, having experienced it in TY.
- In addressing the needs of students with special educational needs, business teachers liaise with the learning-support team and apply required learning strategies.
- As most classrooms are student-based the potential to develop visual learning environments is diminished. Teachers in the organisation of lessons ensured that a variety of resources were used. However, the time taken to set up ICT equipment and OHP could be an impediment to their use. The provision of at least one specialist business area should be considered by senior management.
- The business subjects department has access to good storage facilities for paper and multi media resources. It has no annual budget but can request additional resources from senior management on a needs basis.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. They are members of their subject association and have attended in-service relating to their subjects. As part of whole-school professional development teachers have engaged with broader educational themes.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers in the business subjects department have a good working relationship and meet in a formal capacity twice a year.
- The business subjects plan is comprehensive and contains all the elements of good planning. As evidenced from minutes of subject department meetings, business teachers evaluate their practice and are willing to develop it if necessary.
- Business teachers are aware of the importance of the development of student literacy and numeracy skills. They have developed a list of commonly-used business terms and keywords and their explanations for use in learning support.
- The business subjects department should liaise formally with the mathematics department to ensure that there are similar approaches to mathematical computations, and should note the agreed practice in planning documentation along with keywords and terms.

- The aligning of learning outcomes to class content in each curricular plan is good. The addition of the specific resources, the range of teaching methodologies available, differentiation strategies and modes of homework would enhance plans.
- Activities in TY and the Leaving Certification Vocational Programme are well planned and co-ordinated to ensure that co-curricular educational opportunities are maximised.
- In planning documentation there is a guideline as to the amount of time that students should spend on business homework. It is desirable that there is agreement among the teachers regarding the type and quality of homework, so that all students may expect to experience a similar level of homework.

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

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