

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

Subject Inspection in Business Subjects

REPORT

School name	Jesus And Mary College
School address	Our Lady's Grove Goatstown Road Dublin 14
Roll number	60891E

Date of Inspection: 04-10-2016

Date of issue of report: 15-02-2017



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 evaluated learning and teaching in Business subjects under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	03/4-10-2016
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 3 double class lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Jesus and Mary College is a voluntary secondary school which offers Business Studies in junior cycle. Business education is provided in the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, while Accounting and Economics are offered as optional subjects in Leaving Certificate. The school has a current enrolment of 331 female students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Teaching was of a very high quality with exemplary elements in many lessons while a few areas for improvement existed in small number of lessons.
- Enthusiastic teachers provided a highly student-centred enabling learning environment.
- Highly effective student assessment practices are embedded in teacher's pedagogical practice.
- Whole school support for business education is very good.
- The organisational, planning and collaborative team spirit within the business department is highly commended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the small number of areas where scope for improvement was identified, student learning should be assisted through the increased use of co-operative learning strategies and better provision of opportunities for students to verbalise their knowledge and opinions on topical matters.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was of a very high quality with exemplary elements in many lessons, while a few areas for improvement existed in small number of lessons.
- Enthusiastic teachers provided a highly student-centred environment. Teachers ensured that student learning experiences were enabling and enjoyable. It is praiseworthy that students and teachers are engaging very well with the new Business Studies specification as students are provided with opportunities to develop subject-specific skills.
- Each lesson had a good structure and pace. Teachers' use of well-chosen teaching methodologies supported students' attainment of lesson learning intentions. As most lessons concluded, students reflected on their learning and shared relevant knowledge with their peers.
- In all lessons, very good differentiation techniques were used to challenge and support students in their learning through the use of questioning techniques, varied tasks and very good one-to-one student support. Questioning strategies were of a very high standard as students were encouraged to critique their answers having positively engaged with lesson content.
- In most lessons, the student voice was a strong feature as students had opportunities to present their homework and outcomes of co-operative learning activities. In a small number of lessons the student voice could be strengthened.
- In lessons that had an accounting focus, a very good step-by-step approach was underpinned by a teaching for understanding approach that helped ensure that students' attainment of concepts was scaffolded.
- Students worked in pairs in most lessons. The think pair share methodology, when used, was enjoyed by students. Co-operative learning tasks were well planned and helped ensure there was very good dialogue between students. In a small number of lessons, students' learning would have benefited from the use of this methodology.
- In many lessons information and communications technology (ICT) was effectively used to access information and generate mind maps. Teachers' use of a learning platform to send resources to students is a good development. Teachers should consider the further development of ICT as a tool to expand students' knowledge and interest in topical business matters by accessing relevant excerpts of news programmes and video resources during lessons.
- Teachers are commended for their organisation of a very good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as enterprise, guest speakers, workshops and trips to industrial and professional enterprises. These activities seek to expand students' learning experiences by making meaningful and authentic connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in other contexts.
- In all lessons, the positive and respectful interactions among students and between students and teachers were conducive to a sense of student well-being in a productive learning environment.
- Highly effective assessment practices were embedded in teacher's pedagogical practice. Students regularly receive constructive oral and written feedback on the quality of their work.
- It is praiseworthy that students are encouraged to take ownership of their own work as they reflect and evaluate its quality and indicate where they could make further improvements.

Students' use of graphic organisers and mind maps to organise information provided a good aid for preparation of summative assessments.

- Students of business subjects are encouraged to aim for high academic standards and to take business subjects at higher level in the certificate examinations. Student attainment levels are very good.
- Agreed targets as part of the school self-evaluation (SSE) process were very well integrated into teachers' classroom practice. Literacy and numeracy practices, such as the contextualisation of keywords, the use of correct syntax, spellings and encouragement of students to make mental calculations were integrated into lessons. Business teachers used very clear strategies to progress the SSE target of helping students to become reflective learners while ensuring students were building their capacity to be responsible learners.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole school support and subject provision for business education is very good. The good provision of business subjects and support of co-curricular and extra-curricular related activities by management helps to foster a culture in which learning in business education flourishes.
- The uptake of Business Studies is good and is increasing. Most students continue with business education from junior cycle, as do a number of students who have experienced business education in TY.
- Commendably, the school's assessment policy is underpinned by assessment for learning practices which were visible in all lessons visited.
- All business teachers are skilled specialists and are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge is current. Business teachers are regular attendees of conferences and workshops and have availed of relevant and varied continuing professional development courses in order to further enrich the learning experiences of their students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is a very good organisational, planning and collaborative team spirit within the business department. The process of planning is one that is focused on providing positive learning experiences and key skill development for students.
- The regular business department meetings include discussions that directly relate to student learning such as assessment practices and literacy and numeracy development. It is evident from minutes of meetings and planning documentation that teachers use formal meeting and planning time to reflect on and evaluate their work in the school.
- Very high quality subject plans are developed for business subjects. The good layout and detailed curriculum plans for delivery of each business subject exemplifies teachers' enthusiasm for business education in the school.
- It is praiseworthy that the business subject plans outline how the yearly school improvement targets in literacy, numeracy and student reflective practice are incorporated into teaching and learning in business education.

- The electronic business subject folder is very well organised. Business teachers routinely include their prepared notes, presentations, and other resources in the folder for all business teachers to access and use.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management is cognisant and appreciative of the high quality of teaching within our Business Subjects Departments. The pursuit of excellence in the various domains of both teaching and learning is at the heart of our Mission Statement and we are pleased that this is reflected in the Inspection Report. We intend to focus on embedding these principles.

Thanks to the Inspectorate, for the Evaluation and the Report.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We will work on the suggested recommendation to target increasingly effective practice.

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 the school's provision of 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;