

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

**Subject Inspection in Business Studies and Accounting**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	Ashbourne Community School
<b>School address</b>	Deerpark Ashbourne County Meath
<b>Roll number</b>	91495T

**Date of Inspection: 07-03-2018**



## **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, Business Studies, Economics and Accounting under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning 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.

The board of management 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.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date of inspection</b>	07-03-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning in Business Studies, Business, Economics and Accounting during six class periods: four doubles and two singles</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, three deputy principals and relevant business teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Ashbourne Community School is a co-educational post-primary school which operates under the joint patronage of Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has an enrolment of 1035 students in the current school year. The school offers a broad programme: in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, it offers an optional Transition Year programme (TY), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the evaluation was good with some very good practice evident in a small number of lessons.
- The learning intentions were displayed visually and shared with students in all lessons; this approach was highly effective in framing the lesson and focusing students' attention.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good with appropriate provision made for the subject in all relevant curriculum programmes.
- Enterprise education is strong within the school with local enterprise and academic awards from Maynooth University visibly promoted in displays and notices throughout the school.
- A highly effective action plan has been created which sets out clear goals for the business department to work on over the coming academic year aimed at improving teaching and learning.

#### Recommendations

- The very good practice of revisiting the learning intentions should be extended through the use of an exit strategy where teachers would assess students' understanding of the lesson.
- It would be helpful to balance the heavy emphasis that was seen to be placed on note taking with the more challenging practice of encouraging the students to summarise and phrase key points in their own language; this skill would enhance their understanding of the subject area and develop students' capacity in becoming independent learners.
- Modelling of students' work should be developed further; the use of a visualiser would provide opportunities to view exemplars of students' work and engage in constructive feedback, assessment and peer assessment.
- There is scope to introduce a more structured TY module to incorporate all business subjects; this arrangement would help students to make an informed subject choice on entering senior cycle.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the evaluation was good with some very good practice evident in a small number of lessons.
- In all lessons observed the learning intentions were displayed visually and shared with the students. This approach was most effective when teachers revisited the learning intentions in order to assess students' knowledge and understanding. By extending this practice further through the use of an exit strategy teachers would get a good picture of the students' understanding of the lesson.
- The lesson content was revisited very well and summarised; this strategy contributed well to reinforcing learning. Students were also made aware of material that would be covered in future lessons; this was a good approach to providing a continuum in learning.
- Very useful assessment-for-learning (AFL) sheets were available with teacher and student predictions of results as well as actual results shown. Formative feedback with a grade descriptor was also included. This very good practice of providing formative feedback should be considered for use in students' copybooks.
- Literacy development was evident across all business lessons with the focus on identifying and using the language and terminology for Business; this work was developed through key word journals at junior cycle. By continuing to develop a key-word financial dictionary in senior cycle, business and accounting teachers would assist students' literacy development of specific fiscal terminology further.
- The pace and structure of the lessons were very good. Students engaged well with the learning, and interactions between teachers and students were respectful at all times.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) resources were varied, well selected and well used. The range of media clips, presentations and excel sheets used enhanced the quality of teaching and learning.
- There were some examples of note making but a heavy emphasis was being placed on note taking. By phrasing key points in their own language, students' understanding of the subject area would increase.
- Students' participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers and good circulation among the students improved participation levels. Teachers provided one-to-one support to students when needed.
- Modelling of students' work should be developed further; this strategy would allow students to view a piece of work and engage in active constructive feedback. Identifying and affirming students' good-quality work are key to preparing students for self-assessment. The use of a visualiser would provide opportunities to view exemplars of students' work and engage in constructive feedback, assessment and peer assessment.
- A vibrant print-rich environment was evident in the subject-based classrooms with good displays of the students' own work. Examining and sharing students' work with the class group would be a very helpful approach to embedding junior-cycle key skills and would help students in preparing for classroom-based assessments (CBAs).
- Very effective group and peer work was observed in all lessons. The students worked very successfully in a collaborative manner and this had a positive effect on learning.

- Homework was assigned in all lessons observed and is corrected regularly with date stamps and teacher initials evident in learners' copybooks.

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

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good with appropriate provision made for the subject area in all relevant curriculum programmes.
- Business Studies is offered prior to entry into the school and there are currently four first year business studies classes. At senior cycle, students have an open option to study three subjects—Accounting, Business and Economics—and subject options are generated around student choice.
- Students have the opportunity to study Enterprise in the optional TY programme. There is scope to introduce a more structured TY module to incorporate all business subjects. This arrangement would afford students the opportunity to make a more informed subject choice on entering senior cycle.
- Student attainment for the business subjects in the certificate examinations is good. Attainment is reviewed annually against national norms. Junior and senior cycle uptake is high.
- Enterprise education is strong with local enterprise and academic awards from Maynooth University visible throughout the school. It is very good practice that students are supported and encouraged to participate in such initiatives. This success should help to encourage a wider uptake in the subject.
- A shared learning platform is in use that facilitates teachers to collaborate and share resources. This positive development promotes collaboration across the department.
- All business teachers are active members of their subject association, the Business Studies Teachers Association of Ireland (BSTAI).

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and preparation within the business department is very good. However, the TY plan should be developed further in order to inform teaching of the programme.
- Very detailed schemes of work have been created for junior cycle and Leaving Certificate business subjects. These documents are all hyperlinked to teacher resources and are very much a living document which is reflected in an exemplary evaluation section at the end of each topic.
- A highly effective action plan has been created which sets out clear goals aimed at improving teaching and learning for the business department to work on over the coming academic year.
- The business department should agree a strategy for trialling methodologies in class that teachers have been exposed to in attending continuing professional development (CPD) activities. The further development of peer observation through the *Droichead* model and *Teaching and Learning in the Twenty First Century (TL21)* initiative should be extended to develop practice among experienced teachers as they teach the new specification for the first time.
- Business teachers hold regular formal meetings, with clear agendas and minutes maintained.
- The position of business department co-ordinator has been undertaken by one member of the department for a considerable period of time. Going forward, consideration should be

given to rotating this position more often in order to build capacity among the seven other department members; at the time of the evaluation, there were moves evident in this direction as it was planned that a second teacher would assist the co-ordinator in planning for junior-cycle business studies.

- A member of the business department has been identified to co-ordinate and lead subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings in the school. During the evaluation, teachers presented students with a very useful booklet as an aid to carrying out CBAs.

#### **4. CHILD PROTECTION**

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, three deputy principals and the subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

## **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 of Ashbourne Community School welcomes the inspection of Business Studies and Accounting and the subsequent report.

The main findings were very positive, including:-

- The overall quality of teaching and learning with instances of very good practice.
- The highly effective sharing of the learning intentions in all lessons.
- The very good quality of subject provision.
- The strength of Enterprise Education in the school especially our links to local enterprises.
- The highly effective action plan that has been created by the business department which sets out clear goals to work on over the coming years to improve teaching and learning.

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

The Board welcomes the recommendations in the report and commits to the implementation as follows:-

The subject department has agreed to develop its very good practices in the areas of student self-evaluation, student note-making and the modelling of students' work.

The subject department in conjunction with School management are evaluating and reviewing the TY programme to incorporate all business subjects.



## 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

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