

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business and Accounting

REPORT

School name	Athboy Community School
School address	Athboy, County Meath.
Roll number	91517D

Date of Inspection: 11-12-2017



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 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.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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.

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11-12-2017
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 six one-hour class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Athboy Community School is a co-educational post-primary school catering for a current enrolment of 560 students. It offers the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Business Studies is offered to all first-year students for a five-week introductory period in the first term as part of the optional subjects sampling programme for Junior Cycle. The school offers a TY Enterprise class as well as all three senior-cycle subjects, Business, Accounting and Economics.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning observed in most of the lessons were good to very good; in a further small number of lessons the quality of teaching and learning was fair with areas for improvement noted.
- Team teaching was highly effective in the lesson observed with seamless transitions between the teachers' instruction; this highly effective practice should be extended across the business department.
- There were some examples of note making but a heavy emphasis is still being placed on note taking; there is a need to develop more independent learning.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; a shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources.
- The quality of planning and coordination of the subjects is very good; not all business teachers are engaged with the subject association for Business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be guided and encouraged to shift from note taking to note making; by phrasing key points in their own language, students' understanding of the subject area would increase.
- The business department should agree a strategy for trialling methodologies in class that they have explored in continuing professional development (CPD); the implementation of peer mentoring would assist in the development of the department's practice in this area.
- It is recommended that all teachers engage with their subject body, the Business Studies Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI).

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching and learning observed in most of the lessons were good to very good. Effective practice was evident where teachers facilitated a student-centred approach to learning. In a small number of lessons the quality of teaching and learning was fair with areas for improvement noted.
- Lessons were well prepared. The good practice was noted of sharing the learning intentions and revisiting them at a later point in order to consolidate students' learning. This was achieved effectively through the use of exit tickets and online assessment tools.
- The pace and structure of the lessons were good and students engaged well with the learning. Interactions between teachers and students were respectful. Teachers were affirming of students' efforts and circulated well in the classroom, providing support to students and checking their progress.
- Students are encouraged to be independent learners. This was apparent in the focus placed on group and peer work and well-planned methodologies in almost all lessons.
- There were some examples of note making but a heavy emphasis is still being placed on note taking. By phrasing key points in their own language, students' understanding of the subject area would increase.
- Team teaching was highly effective in the lesson observed with seamless transitions between the teachers' instruction. This highly effective practice should be further extended across the business department.
- Modelling of students' work within the department should be considered; it would allow students to view a piece of work in real time and engage in active constructive feedback. As identifying and affirming students' work are key in order to develop self-assessment skills, a visualizer could be used to view exemplars of students' work and develop modelling of practice and peer assessment.
- Most of the business teachers have engaged actively in CPD for their subjects with some teachers still to obtain junior cycle CPD.
- The learning environment in classrooms was business orientated and print rich. By developing this to include students' own work throughout the rooms, students would be provided with a sense of ownership and encouragement to develop as independent learners. This good practice should be developed with classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in mind.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources were well selected, varied and well used. The range of resources included media clips, presentations, a shared platform and assessment tools and these resources were seen to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers' questioning was good in the majority of lessons observed. There was a mix of oral and written questions which were well dispersed among students in the majority of lessons.
- On several occasions teachers referred to local successful businesses and entrepreneurs; such referencing shows students that becoming a successful entrepreneur is an achievable goal.

- Very-well prepared worksheets and an introductory booklet for first-year students were used throughout the evaluation.
- Homework is assigned regularly and corrected across the department. The lack of recording of homework in some students' journals is an area that teachers should address.
- Classroom management was exemplary in all lessons observed, with students' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning evident.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good.
- A shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources. This positive development promotes collaboration across the department.
- The number of students taking business subjects at all levels is good and student attainment has improved in recent years. Student attainment in the certificate examinations is reviewed annually against the national norms.
- School management is supportive of the subject and a very good time allocation is provided across all business subjects.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend CPD activities and to share good practice within the subject department.
- The business department's assessment procedures are in line with the whole-school assessment strategy. Tests are set at a common level and student progress is well tracked.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and coordination of the subjects is very good.
- The subject plan shows very good reflective practice and evidence had been gathered and collated on areas for improvement through the use of an evaluation section in the subject scheme of work.
- The business department should agree a strategy for trialling methodologies in class that they have explored in CPD. The implementation of peer mentoring would assist in the development of the department's practice in this area.
- Business teachers hold regular formal meetings and have detailed documented minutes throughout the year.
- Planning takes cognisance of students' additional educational needs. Support is provided, for example, to students whose first language is not English.
- Half of the teachers are active members of the professional subject body, the Business Studies Teachers' Association of Ireland (BSTAI). This proportion is less than optimal. It is recommended that all teachers engage with their subject body.

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.

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 Athboy Community School welcomes this report and its findings which acknowledge the quality of teaching and learning observed, the effective use of team teaching, the whole school support for the subjects, the very good planning and co-ordination, and the development of a shared learning platform to facilitate sharing of resources and encourage teacher collaboration.

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 notes the recommendations in the report and will promote a move from note-making to note-taking and the trialling of methodologies suggested in ongoing continuous professional development in the Business and Accounting areas. The Board will encourage further use and development of the current shared learning platform across all these and all subject areas.

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 very good 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;