

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Seamount College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kinvara County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63050T

Date of Inspection: 22-01-2020



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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. 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; a response was not received from the board.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	21 & 22 January 2020
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 four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Seamount College, Kinvara is a co-educational voluntary post-primary school operated under the trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Galway. It has an enrolment of 528 students. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with highly effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Active methodologies were facilitated in all lessons where students worked successfully in a collaborative manner.
- Formal monitoring of students' homework was evident, with some written formative feedback for improvement provided to students.
- Teachers introduced lessons with a general overview of the content to be covered and made good use of everyday real-life examples which engaged students.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; there is very good uptake of business at junior and senior cycle, with Business and Accounting offered at senior cycle.
- Subject planning is good with effective plans and schemes of work available for junior and senior cycle; reflective practice is an area for further development.

Recommendations

- The provision of written formative feedback to students should be further developed by all business teachers.
- Teachers should adopt a common approach to the use of learning intentions, which will clearly articulate what they want students to know, understand and be able to do in all lessons across the business department.
- A collaborative approach to subject planning should be progressed by using teachers' reflections to support the development of an action plan with short, medium and long-term goals for the business department.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good, with highly effective practice observed in some lessons. Teachers demonstrated a high level of pedagogical knowledge.
- Good use of everyday real-life examples engaged students and allowed them to make meaningful links between school and the business world. Students were supported by well-planned and well-prepared lessons. The materials used were current, relevant and tailored to the students' experience and local context.
- Active and collaborative methodologies allow students to take ownership of their learning; this highly effective practice was noted when students worked in groups and provided oral feedback to the class on the completed task. Opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning should be incorporated into all lessons. Teachers also need to be mindful that all collaborative tasks should be clearly structured and have a focused outcome.
- Peer-assessment practices are well advanced within the department. This commendable practice was observed in the majority of lessons and allows students to view and assess each other's work so that they develop their understanding of success criteria and how to achieve success in their own work.
- Good-quality targeted questioning was evident in all lessons and this ensured that students were actively involved in learning. The use of higher-order and lower-order questioning was appropriately employed for differentiation to occur in the mixed-ability lessons.
- Teachers used a range of differentiation strategies to support learners, such as providing additional support material to students, appropriate visual aids on slides and posters along with the use of open-ended tasks. This focus on differentiation is promoted and supported in the business department plan.
- A strong emphasis was placed on the development of student business literacy in all lessons observed and was evident in many of the learning activities where key words were highlighted, clearly explained and recorded.
- In most lessons, teachers provided students with a general overview of the lesson, with a focus on the content to be covered. It is recommended that teachers clearly articulate what they want students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities. Clear learning intentions help students focus on the activity taking place and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the lesson.
- Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning, with reflective exercises completed after in-class summative examinations. Reflective activities were incorporated in most of the lessons observed where students were asked to reflect on what they had learned during the lesson and share with their peers. This highly effective practice encourages students to become independent learners while also providing good preparation for their classroom-based assessments (CBAs) and assessment task (AT).
- While there was evidence of formal checking of students' homework, there were very few written formative feedback comments noted in students' copies. It is recommended that teachers provide more developmental written feedback to students, as it is a key strategy for developing students' learning.
- In all lessons observed, the interactions between students and teachers were very respectful and this facilitated a positive learning environment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good. School management is very supportive of the subject and an appropriate time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle. Timetabling for the subject is good across all years with the option bands for junior and senior cycle based on student choice.
- Business Studies is an optional subject at junior cycle. Students select the subject prior to entering the school in first year. Thereafter, flexibility is provided to students who wish to transfer to or from other subjects.
- There is very good uptake of the subject at junior and senior cycle. Business and Accounting are offered at senior cycle, with sampling modules provided as part of the TY Business/Enterprise module. Consideration should now be given to including a sampling module in Economics, with a view to broadening the student experience of business subjects at senior cycle.
- The business department has access to digital learning technologies. The use of such technologies is promoted actively by senior management. The school is introducing presently a shared online platform which will facilitate and promote the sharing of resources within the subject department and with students.
- School management facilitates the engagement of business students in a range of valuable co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that encourage innovation, enterprise and creativity.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good.
- The coordination of the subject is undertaken by one member of the subject department and this role is rotated which allows for capacity building. Collaboration is strong across the business department with formal subject department meetings held regularly and minutes recorded.
- Discussions at business department meetings generally focus on organisational matters. It is recommended that deliberations on the effective use of teaching methodologies and assessment strategies that will further enrich student learning experiences be included going forward. While such discussions are reported to occur informally, a formal record of these discussions should become part of the subject planning documentation.
- Effective plans and schemes of work are available for junior and senior cycle. The teacher reflections are completed individually by teachers currently. The introduction of a shared online platform for departmental planning will support the efficient development of collaborative and collective reflection after each unit of learning.
- There is scope to develop the TY business plan and scheme of work using the same approach used in senior cycle to ensure that all teaching and learning activities taking place in the TY business programme currently are documented and recorded.
- A collaborative approach to subject planning should be progressed by using teachers' reflections to support the development of an action plan with short, medium and long-term goals for the business department. This action plan should be linked with the review of student attainment in certificate examinations, which takes place annually within the business department, and the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.

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.

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
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;