An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Business Subjects
REPORT

East Glendalough School
Wicklow, County Wicklow
Roll number: 81016V

Date of inspection: 6 March 2015

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN BUSINESS SUBJECTS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	5 and 6 March 2015
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods; two double and four single lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching was of good quality in the majority of lessons and of very good quality in a significant minority of lessons.
- In many lessons the range and quality of activities ensured that the learning experience for students was enjoyable and engaging.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning resource was exemplary.
- Student uptake of Business Studies at junior cycle is very good, with the majority of students retaining a business subject in Leaving Certificate.
- Business teachers are diligent in ensuring that their subject knowledge and expertise are up to date.
- There are some very good planning practices within the business department but there is scope to further develop subject plans.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further enhance student's learning, teachers should apply a consistent focus on assessment for learning strategies that challenge students, access their learning styles and develop key skills.
- The sequencing of topics for the teaching of Business Studies should be re-configured so that students' understanding of business concepts is incremental.
- The content of the Transition Year (TY) module should be re-designed with an emphasis on the development of students' key skills.

INTRODUCTION

East Glendalough School is a co-educational comprehensive day school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. Business Studies is an optional subject in junior cycle. In the compulsory TY programme business education is a core module and at Leaving Certificate students can take Accounting, Business and Economics. The school has a current enrolment of 392 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was of good quality in the majority of lessons and of very good quality in a significant minority of lessons Teachers used methodologies that successfully involved students in their learning and provided a supportive environment while maintaining high expectations of students.
- A very good blend of methodologies that included pair work, role play, charades and discussions was observed throughout the evaluation. In many lessons the range of activities ensured that the learning experience for students was enjoyable and engaging.
- Students worked in pairs in almost all lessons. In one lesson, students worked in pairs which rotated within the classroom providing them with opportunities to work with almost all students in the class. This facilitated a good sharing of knowledge.
- In each lesson, learning activities were well planned. Learning objectives were clearly stated at the beginning of most lessons. Very good practice was observed at the end of one lesson where students had to recall the key points. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool was very good. In two business studies lessons students had to identify advertising types from video clips, and in another lesson students integrated keyboarding skills as they compiled a letter of complaint. In a business lesson a video clip of an Irish multinational company formed the basis for students' discussion that expanded and deepened their learning.
- ICT as learning resource for business students in the school is exemplary. The use of an electronic sharing platform to set and collect homework is a very good development. Business teachers have developed a website on which they have uploaded resources that are available to the general public.
- Effective questioning strategies were used in lessons to assess student knowledge and to encourage interaction and engagement. In most lessons higher-order questions were directed to named students and sufficient time was given to students to articulate their answers.
- In all lessons, concepts were well explained and business theory was linked to current business and economic issues. It is advisable that students, particularly in senior cycle, are encouraged to expand their own awareness of topical, business and economic related events through media resources.
- Students were regularly assigned homework. In many non-examination class groups there was a tendency to assign questions from past certificate examination papers. Teachers should broaden the range of student homework and assessment tools so as to further develop students' learning.

- In some lessons the noting of evaluative comments on students' work enriched their learning. This very good practice should be expanded for all students particularly in Leaving Certificate. The trialling of students' self-evaluation of their work in one class group is praiseworthy and merits further development and expansion in business education.
- Students are encouraged to achieve to their highest potential. Uptake of business subjects at higher level is very good as are the subsequent outcomes in certificate examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Business subjects have a good profile on the curriculum. All first-year students have the opportunity to sample Business Studies in a short taster programme. The uptake of the optional Business Studies is very good as is the uptake of Leaving Certificate business subjects.
- A number of students choose to take an eighth Leaving Certificate subject. Where resources allow, school management provides some timetable support this. Currently, Economics is being supported in this way and this maximises student choice.
- Most business teachers have their own base classrooms. There were some good exhibits of business learning resources in most classrooms. The potential to further develop a visual learning environment in all business classrooms should be further exploited.
- All teachers of the business subjects are subject specialists and are diligent in ensuring that they are up to date in their knowledge. At least one member of the business department attends subject association meetings, conferences and subject related continuing professional development (CPD). Of particular merit is the sharing of information among the team. For example, a report from CPD events is recorded and relevant content presented to the subject team within the school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well established. Business teachers meet in a formal capacity once a term. The number of teachers teaching other subjects in addition to Business has led to a situation where the full team is not always available for subject planning meetings. It is advisable that senior management arrange meetings so that the full complement of the subject department can meet formally.
- Good subject plans have been developed for all business subjects. The inclusion of an agreed business department strategy to progress the school's numeracy and literacy improvement targets would further enhance the plan.
- Currently, first-year students do not use a text book. Students maintain notes and homework copybooks which are supplemented by handouts and worksheets. Business teachers should consider the compilation of a booklet or electronic resource for students' use that contains the necessary and relevant information and worksheets. This should reduce the need for note taking.
- Subject curriculum plans for each business subject are well developed. Of particular merit is the linking of learning outcomes and the hyper-linking of resources. General strategies for the delivery of each business topic in the classroom are also listed. The addition of a

blend of more specific teaching methodologies relevant to each topic would further enhance the plans.

- All Business Studies teachers follow a commonly agreed programme of work. The sequencing of topics in junior cycle should be reviewed to ensure that students' understanding of business concepts is incremental and that throughout the three-year cycle there is integration of theory and book-keeping elements.
- One aspect of the subject plan that requires review is the TY programme. Business teachers are advised to review the modules and re-design them with an emphasis on the development of applied skills through self-directed learning opportunities.

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 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.

Published September 2015

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- Recommendation relating to the sequencing of topics has already been addressed.
- Recommendation relating to the content of TY was scheduled for review, has been reviewed and will be updated.