An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Business Studies and Accounting

REPORT

School name	Patrician High School
School address	Carrickmacross Co. Monaghan
Roll number	64750G

Date of Inspection: 03-03-2020

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 Studies, Business 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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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

Date of inspection	03-03-2020
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	**Inspection activities undertaken** • Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Patrician High School is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 474 boys. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.
- Learning intentions were presented at the outset of all lessons either orally or displayed on the board; this provided students with a clear overview for the lesson.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons, and some examples of highly effective written formative feedback were evident in students' copies although this was not universal practice.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; school management is supportive of the subject and a good time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle for the subject.
- The overall quality of planning was good with some areas for improvement.

Recommendations

- The highly effective practice of guiding students' learning by providing them with formative feedback in their copies should be extended across the business department.
- Senior cycle planning for the business subjects needs to reviewed and developed.
- The subject department should collectively reflect on its strengths and areas for improvement and then develop an action plan identifying short, medium and long term goals for the business department.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Learning intentions were presented at the outset of all lessons either orally or displayed on the board. In some lessons highly effective use of learning intentions was noted. In these lessons, time was taken to discuss the intentions and progress reviewed. When the intentions were suitably differentiated, students were challenged to go beyond the tasks set for the class. Revisiting these learning intentions should be a more consistent part of the learning experience.
- Highly effective learning was noted when teachers provided a variety of teaching and assessment strategies to meet the individual needs of students. These strategies supported appropriate expectations and challenge for learners across the ability range. However, this practice was not evident in all lessons.
- There was evidence in most lessons of teachers placing a strong emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills in relation to business. This was outlined in some of the planning documents and demonstrated by teachers identifying key words and taking appropriate opportunities to identify and promote financial literacy.
- Learners were supported in lessons that were well planned and well prepared. In all lessons the materials used were current, relevant and tailored to the students' needs.
- Student participation in classroom activities was monitored closely by teachers. Good circulation by teachers among the students improved the students' levels of engagement. Teachers provided one-to-one support to students when necessary which facilitated oral feedback being provided where appropriate.
- Oral questioning was the dominant assessment strategy observed. A greater use of higher order questions with appropriate wait time would further develop learner experience and create more challenging opportunities for students. It would also encourage independent thinking and increase student voice, while further engaging students in sharing in the responsibility for their learning.
- The use of digital learning technologies (DLT) was observed in some lessons, most frequently as a tool for teachers to present material. Teachers should extend the use of digital technologies to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to appeal to the various needs of learners. In one lesson, good practice was noted in the use of Visual Learning Environment (VLE) to enable teachers and students to collaborate and share work. The further development of DLT to include a greater use of resources such as media clips, anticipation exercises and online assessment tools to develop and enhance teaching, learning and assessment practices would facilitate greater student engagement in lessons. The school's digital learning team is leading developments in the creative use of DLT.
- Effective group work was observed in almost all lessons where students worked in a collaborative manner and this had a positive impact on their learning.
- Student learning experiences were positive when teachers used active methodologies which allowed students to take ownership of their learning. Teachers identified and affirmed good quality student work and this was key to preparing the learners to self-assess. Teachers should incorporate opportunities for students to examine exemplars of their work and engage in feedback. This highly effective practice should be developed across the department.
- Student attendance was very good throughout the evaluation. Teachers had high expectations for student achievement in lessons. Classroom interactions were at all times

respectful and a very positive teacher-student rapport was evident. Students were affirmed and encouraged for their efforts and a positive learning atmosphere was evident.

- Homework was assigned in all lessons during the evaluation and there was evidence from student journals that homework is allocated regularly. As many class groups are mixed ability, teachers should give consideration to providing differentiated homework.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good. School management is supportive of the subject and a good time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle for the subject.
- Patrician High School offers Business Studies as a sampling subject in first year after which students then make an informed subject choice from an open option. There is a high uptake of the subject at Junior Cycle. TY is optional in the school with all students studying Accounting, Economics and Enterprise. At the time of the evaluation TY students were on work experience. All three business subjects. Accounting, Business and Economics, are offered at senior cycle, with a good level of student uptake in each.
- Enterprise education is strongly supported within the school. Students have the opportunity to participate in numerous enterprise activities and close links have been developed with local entrepreneurs and financial institutions. To celebrate this success, a business display board and achievement wall is in place to showcase student achievement with numerous students being recognised for excellence in State Examination Commission (SEC) examinations by the Business Teachers Association of Ireland (BSTAI), Maynooth University and from the local enterprise board. This display helps to raise the subject profile across the school.
- To increase parents' and students' understanding of the assessment framework that supports junior cycle Business Studies, the school has amended its reporting template to reflect the descriptors used for classroom-based assessments and certificate examinations. This highly effective practice should be extended into student copies in relation to formative feedback to guide students' learning.
- The business department has full access to a computer room and bank of mobile digital devices. The use of such resources is actively promoted by senior management.
- Business teachers have actively engaged in recent subject specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and all teachers are active members of their subject organisation, the BSTAI. It is recommended that teachers engage with the CPD for the recently introduced Economics specification.
- Data regarding the number of students taking business subjects in the State examinations and student attainment are reviewed annually by the deputy principal. It would be beneficial for members of the subject department team to collectively review students' attainment annually and analyse it against national norms and report these attainment figures for Business subjects to the senior management. This analysis of attainment should then be used to inform teaching and learning practices across the department. Very good work has started in this academic year on tracking at whole school level.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning was good.
- Junior cycle planning was good. The department plans at junior cycle were based on learning outcomes and intentions, which is good practice. However, senior cycle planning documentation was out of date and requires significant development.
- A shared learning platform is in use that allows teachers to collaborate and share resources with one another. Collaboration is reported as being very strong across the business department.
- The coordination of the subject is undertaken by the senior business teachers. Formal subject department meetings are regularly held with agendas prepared and minutes recorded.
- Professional time is provided to every teacher in the department and the deployment of all teachers is in-line with their qualifications, skills, knowledge and interest.
- Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend continuing professional development (CPD) courses. However, currently, there is no system in place for teachers to share new learning from attendance at CPD events with colleagues. Following attendance at in-service, the business department should agree a strategy for sharing professional learning and trialling new methodologies in classes.
- The Business Department needs to gather evidence in relation to what is working well and what are its areas for improvement. Following collective reflection on these areas, it should develop an action plan for improvement which would tie in with the whole school approach to School Self-Evaluation (SSE).

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and four 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 *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;