



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Business Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Gort Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Gort Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91498C
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	28-09-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	14/11/2022

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. 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 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.

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

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	28 and 29 September 2022
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">• Student focus-group interview• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Gort Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 962 students. As well as the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school has an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and of learning observed was good with highly effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Student learning experiences were most positive when teachers used active learning methodologies which facilitated students to take ownership of their learning.
- Effective use of digital technology to support the student learning experience was observed in all lessons.
- Subject provision and whole-school support is very good; there is good uptake of business at junior cycle with Accounting and Business offered at senior cycle.
- Enterprise education is strongly supported within the school; students have the opportunity to participate in numerous enterprise activities and experiences.
- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good; collaboration is reported by teachers as being very good across the business department with formal subject department meetings held regularly and minutes recorded.

Recommendations

- Teachers should revisit and assess achievement of the intended learning at the end of lessons. The use of appropriate strategies to assess students' understanding of the intended learning needs to be embedded across the business department.
- At junior cycle, teachers need to plan units of learning which link learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification with additional detail for all year groups.
- The TY business programme should be reviewed by the teachers in the business department, with a view to broadening the students' experience of the three business subjects at senior cycle.

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.
- Positive learner experiences were supported by lessons that were well planned and prepared. In all lessons observed the interactions between students and teachers were very respectful, thus promoting a positive learning atmosphere.
- Active and collaborative methodologies allow students to take ownership of their learning and facilitate opportunities for students to affirm good quality work. This highly effective practice was noted when students worked in groups and provided oral feedback to the class on the completed work. Students who participated in the focus group, which was held as part of this inspection, reported that active methodologies allow them to become involved and engaged in their learning. In some lessons, there were opportunities for greater engagement of students in their learning. Teachers should include appropriate opportunities for students to engage actively in their learning during all lessons, thereby supporting them to take ownership of their learning and become independent learners.
- Teacher questioning was good in all lessons observed. There was a mix of oral and written questions, with oral questions well dispersed in all lessons. The appropriate use of higher-order and lower-order questioning supported differentiation in the mixed-ability lessons.
- In keeping with good practice, the learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. In highly effective lessons, the teachers revisited the intended learning at the end of the lesson to assess students' understanding fully. The main exit strategy used to assess student understanding was teacher questioning and observation. In all lessons, teachers should ensure student understanding is fully assessed through the use of a range of appropriate exit strategies. Revisiting and assessing learning intentions, when used effectively, inform the planning for subsequent lessons; it is recommended that this practice is embedded across the business department.
- Effective use of digital technology to support the student learning experience was observed in all lessons. In one lesson, the teacher annotated the question displayed and uploaded the completed work onto the shared online platform for students, while in another lesson, an infographic on the national budget was uploaded for students' own reference. This effective practice facilitates students to access the lesson content outside the classroom environment and revisit the learning at their own pace. Students in the focus group valued this use of digital technology, as it supported their learning and engagement beyond the classroom.
- Peer assessment practices are well advanced within the business department. This highly effective practice was observed in the majority of lessons and allowed 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.
- Homework was assigned in all the lessons and included a range of formats including written and learning tasks. Some written feedback for improvement was evident in students' copies. It is recommended that this highly effective practice is extended and embedded across the business department. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students' learning.
- A stimulating learning environment that included colourful displays of student generated work was evident in the subject-specific classrooms visited. Identifying and affirming students' work that is of good quality is key to preparing them for self-assessment and provides another way to help students prepare for their classroom-based assessments. Also noteworthy was the '*News in the Business World*' noticeboards observed during visits to classrooms.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. School management is very supportive of the subject and an appropriate time allocation is provided across junior and senior cycle with option bands formulated 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.
- The number of students taking Business Studies at junior cycle needs to be monitored going forward with a view to increasing participation through the implementation of appropriate strategies which will seek to increase student uptake.
- There is good uptake of the subject at senior cycle with Accounting and Business provided.
- Enterprise education is strongly supported within the school. Students have the opportunity to participate in numerous enterprise activities and experiences with external organisations.
- Digital resources appropriate to supporting positive learning experiences are available, and access to them is facilitated and supported by the school self-evaluation process.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning within the business department is good. Teaching resources are shared using an online platform.
- Collaboration is reported by teachers as being very good across the business department with formal subject department meetings held regularly and minutes recorded. To promote greater collaboration within the department, the appointment of a single co-ordinator for the subject is recommended to replace the current arrangement of three coordinators..
- Effective planning is present for junior and senior cycle business subjects. At junior cycle, it is recommended that teachers plan units of learning collaboratively using a common approach for the three years, which links learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification. Additional detail is recommended for the junior cycle scheme of work and this should also be continued in the senior cycle schemes of work.
- There is scope to develop the TY business plan and scheme of work to ensure that activities taking place in the TY business programme presently are documented and recorded. The range of topics in the programme should also be reviewed and extended to include a greater emphasis on Accounting and Economics with a view to further increasing students' participation and experience of business subjects at senior cycle.
- Teachers have engaged actively in subject-specific continuous professional development.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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 principal briefed the Bom on the Preliminary Report.

It acknowledged the engagement and support and cooperation given to the inspector by the principal and the teachers of the Business Department.

It welcomed and was encouraged by the positive findings contained in the report under the headings inspected.

The principal also advised the Board that The Business Department are drafting a plan to address the recommendations contained in the Report and will keep the Bom appraised with regard to the implementation of same.

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

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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 of the school's provision of each area.

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