

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Business**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	Saint Oliver Post Primary School
<b>School address</b>	Cavan Road, Oldcastle, County Meath.
<b>Roll number</b>	71990R

**Date of Inspection: 09-03-2017**



## **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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date of inspection</b>	09-03-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons: one double-period lesson and two single-period lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Oliver Post Primary School operates under the auspices of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board. It caters for a total of 549 students and offers the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; individual lesson quality ranged from good to satisfactory and there was need to promote more active learning.
- Enterprise education is very strong within the school; it is good that students are encouraged and supported to participate in enterprise activities.
- The business department, as part of the whole-school approach to school self-evaluation (SSE), has engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of assessment-for-learning (AFL) strategies; the lessons visited showed that teachers are incorporating these strategies into their everyday teaching of the subject.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning of business subjects is actively promoted; students were seen to engage well with the use of a game-based learning platform to assess prior knowledge.
- Too many teaching strategies were used at times and transitions from one stage of the lesson to the next were uneven as a result.
- The uptake of Business Studies among first-year students has shown a decline in recent years.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should develop their use of classroom methodologies that place a greater focus on co-operative learning so as to allow the students to engage more actively in learning.
- Smoother transitions should be managed from one stage to the next in the lesson in order to enhance the learning experience; further reflection and clarity is needed in particular around the use of the 'Pose, Pause, Pounce and Bounce' strategy that the business department has developed.
- The business department should undertake an analysis and review of factors influencing subject choice among first-year students and share the findings with senior management; the provision of a subject-sampling programme in first year should be considered.

## **1. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; individual lesson quality ranged from good to satisfactory and there was need to promote more active learning.
- The language register of Business was very well addressed in all lessons observed and students were familiar with it and were guided well on using it correctly.
- ICT resources were well selected, varied and used well; some multimedia clips were seen to consolidate learning.
- Business teachers have the required professional qualifications and have engaged in a range of CPD activities. They are active members of their subject association body.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. It is advisable that learning intentions be reframed and introduced in terms of what the students should know and could know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. The planned learning intentions should also be revisited in order to assess students' learning, affirm progress and clarify points of information.
- AFL strategies were used very effectively in the lessons and dovetailed very well with the whole-school improvement plan on classroom strategies.
- In a minority of the lessons observed too many teaching strategies were used; this led to students becoming confused in relation to the topic. It is recommended that teaching strategies are used in a more measured way throughout the lesson.
- A stimulating learning environment which included print-rich displays was provided in the business classroom; there was a focus on the appropriate highlighting of Junior Cycle key skills and statements of learning.
- Group and peer work was observed in lessons to a certain degree; teachers need to increase the opportunities for students to work collaboratively in order to enhance student learning.
- Minutes of subject department meetings included detailed discussion on pedagogy and classroom approaches; this good practice needs to be explored further and put into action in a classroom setting.
- The lessons observed would have benefited from smoother transitions from one stage to the next; further reflection and clarity are needed in particular around the use of the "Pose, Pause, Pounce and Bounce" strategy that the business department has developed.
- The interactions between teachers and students were respectful at all times; teachers were affirming of students' efforts, they circulated well throughout the lessons, provided support to students and checked their progress.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Timetable provision for the subjects is good within the school, across all years and programmes.
- Teachers and students have developed high-quality enterprise products and services and there has been a high level of participation over a number of years in enterprise competitions; this provides an excellent experience of the business world for students.
- Uptake rates for Business Studies as an optional subject on the junior-cycle curriculum are well below the national norm. An analysis and review of factors influencing subject choice among first-year students should be conducted by the business department and shared with senior management. A strategy should be implemented to increase uptake rates. The provision of a subject-sampling programme in first year should be considered.
- The TY business module is well designed. All TY students are studying Business currently; this new initiative will increase the possibility of a greater uptake of the subject at senior cycle.

- A learning selection needs to be made for the new junior-cycle course, students at present are relying on a workbook from the old syllabus along with note taking and teacher handouts to study the course; this needs to be reviewed.
- Student attainment in the subject at junior and senior cycle has improved in recent years.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of both long-term and short-term planning within the business department was very good.
- The business department plan showed very good reflective practices and included a detailed action plan for each of the year groups studying the subject.
- The subject coordinator role is rotated on an annual basis, this provides all members of the business department with an opportunity to actively lead the subject.
- The subject plan clearly identifies the learning outcomes for students in each year of the course; much reflection and collaboration have gone into creating this document. The introduction of an assessment section into this plan would be a useful initiative.
- Short-term planning showed very helpful resources had been prepared and were used to good effect to enhance learning in the class setting.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and two 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 St Oliver Post Primary School has reviewed the inspection report on the Business Inspection conducted in March 2017 by the Department of Education and Skills. The board welcomes the observations made in the report and is pleased that the work undertaken by the business department was observed and reported on. The report highlighted the whole-school approach to enterprise education; SSE; CPD; and the use of ICT.

The report noted the good timetable provision for the subject across all years.

Equally, the efforts of the Business department in terms of teaching and learning; discussion on pedagogy and classroom approaches; subject planning; action planning; and reflective practice, were commended.

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

In our commitment to excellence, the Board of Management, teaching, administrative and support staff have responded to the recommendations for further development in the school and will continue to do so. The Board is pleased to report that a number of follow up actions will be put in place.

Senior Management and staff will continue to focus upon developing classroom methodologies as part of SSE and CPD – co-operative learning will form a part of this upskilling.

The business department will conduct a review around the 'Pose, Pause, Pounce and Bounce' strategy.

Senior Management intend to survey all current 1<sup>st</sup> years 2016-2017, and our incoming 1<sup>st</sup> years 2017-2018 around the area of subject choice. As part of this, the possibility of a subject sampling programme in 1<sup>st</sup> year will be considered.

## 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	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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	<b>Good</b> 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	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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	<b>Fair</b> 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	<b>Weak</b> 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;