



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Business Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste Muire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	College Road Ennis Co Clare
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	61930Q
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	14/03/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	24/04/2024

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# 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"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</li></ol>

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

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# Subject inspection

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	13 and 14 March 2024
<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, including focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Coláiste Muire is an all-girls post-primary school which operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). At the time of the evaluation there were 998 students enrolled. As well as the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and of learning observed was very good with excellent practice observed in some lessons.
- Highly effective use of digital technology to support the student learning experience was observed in all lessons.
- Subject provision and whole-school support was very good.
- There was very good uptake of business subjects at senior cycle with the provision of Accounting, Business and Economics.
- The overall quality of subject planning within the business department was good.
- Teachers had engaged actively in a range of professional learning opportunities and were members of their subject association.

### Recommendations

- Business teachers should develop and embed a department-wide approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work.
- To broaden the student experience of business, the subject department should review its provision for enterprise education to facilitate student learning in other aspects of business education.
- Teachers' collective reflections should inform the development of an action plan to identify and document 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 of learning observed was very good with excellent practice observed in some lessons. Teachers demonstrated very high levels of knowledge, competency and skill in their subject area.
- Learners were supported by lessons that were well planned and prepared using materials that were current, relevant and tailored to the students' experience. Effective group and pair work was present in the lessons observed, which allowed students to work successfully in a collaborative manner, impacting positively on the learning environment. Students who participated in the focus group, which was held as part of this evaluation, reported that active teaching methodologies allowed them to become involved and engaged in their learning.
- Very good use of every day real-life exemplars engaged students and allowed them to make meaningful links between school and the business world outside the classroom. In one highly effective lesson on International Trade, students researched products of their choice and located their country of origin on a world map, while in another lesson the teacher used a news website to highlight topical consumer issues.
- In keeping with good assessment practice, the learning intentions were shared with students in lessons. Teachers ensured that learning intentions were developed in a way which described what students should know, understand and be able to do. Teachers also assessed students' attainment of the learning intentions through a range of appropriate strategies which included questioning and reflective tasks. This highly effective practice of revisiting and assessing the intended learning informed the planning for subsequent lessons.
- There was highly effective use of digital technology to support the student learning experience in all lessons observed. Teachers uploaded homework and lesson resource materials to the shared online platform. This highly effective practice allowed students to access the lesson content outside the classroom environment and to revisit the learning at their own pace. Other examples of its effective use included the provision of a QR code for students to access an exit strategy and where students shared and displayed their online research findings with peers.
- In all lessons observed, there was an emphasis on the development of students' business literacy and numeracy skills, particularly with regard to students' understanding of all key words/terms on any support materials used in lessons. Key words were highlighted, explained and displayed in classrooms to support student understanding and aid those who required additional support.
- Teachers provided one-to-one support to students, including oral feedback where appropriate. Homework was assigned in the lessons observed. While there was evidence of formal checking of students' homework, there were very few written formative feedback comments in students' copybooks reviewed. It is recommended that teachers develop and embed a department-wide approach to the provision of written feedback for improvement to students on their work. Providing students with high-quality written formative feedback is a key strategy for developing students' learning.
- An appropriate balance of differentiated, global and targeted questioning was observed. In some lessons, very effective practice was noted when higher-order questioning strategies were used which had the beneficial impact of developing and deepening students' understanding.
- A stimulating learning environment that included colourful displays of student-generated work was evident in the classrooms visited. The identification and affirmation of good quality work completed by students is key to preparing them for self-assessment and provides another way to help students prepare for their classroom-based assessments (CBAs).

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good. School management was very supportive of the subject.
- Business Studies was a compulsory subject at junior cycle. Timetabling of the subject across all years and programmes was very good, with the option bands for senior cycle based on students' choices. There was very good uptake of business subjects at senior cycle with the provision of Accounting, Business and Economics.
- Enterprise education was strongly supported within the school. It was a core element of the TY business programme and was the CBA1 option, *Enterprise in Action* for junior cycle Business Studies. It is recommended that this provision be reviewed. Options could include the reduction of the enterprise aspect in the TY programme with larger sampling of Accounting, Business and Economics. Alternatively, the CBA1 options of *Finance in Action* and *Economics in Action* could be explored at junior cycle. This review should broaden the student experience of business across the curriculum.
- All teachers and students in Coláiste Muire had digital devices which supported a positive and productive teaching and learning experience. The use of digital learning technologies was actively promoted by senior management and was evident in the comprehensive range of technologies used to support teaching and learning during the evaluation.
- Senior management encouraged and supported various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that promoted innovation, enterprise and creativity. These activities included trips and links with local businesses and social enterprises. Focus group participants spoke of how they enjoyed the opportunities to engage with the business world outside the classroom and would welcome additional opportunities beyond the TY programme.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of subject planning within the business department was good.
- A shared online platform was used for departmental planning and supported the sharing of resources within the business department and with students.
- There was effective planning for junior and senior cycle business subjects. To further develop subject planning, all teachers in the department should firstly record their reflections, as appropriate, on all schemes of work. Secondly, the business studies teachers at junior cycle should develop units of learning collaboratively, which link learning outcomes from across the three strands of the Business Studies specification. The recording of teacher reflections after the completion of each unit of learning will aid this approach to planning, as teachers can then structure and plan the teaching and learning based on local contextual factors going forward.
- The TY scheme of work needs to be developed and restructured to ensure that all the existing learning and assessment activities taking place in the TY business programme are documented and recorded.
- The subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings associated with the CBAs provide an additional opportunity to reflect on student learning and skill development. The SLAR facilitator reports were part of the business department plan. This was good practice as it supported future planning for the CBA process and capacity building for business teachers.
- Teachers had engaged actively in a range of professional learning opportunities and were members of their subject association. There was no formal system in place for teachers to share new learning from attendance at courses. The business department should agree a formal strategy for sharing their learning from professional learning courses and trialling new methodologies, where appropriate. This will provide another method for capacity building within the subject department.
- Teachers' collective reflections should inform the development of an action plan to identify and document short, medium and long-term goals for the business department. This action plan should be linked with key existing activities including the annual review of student attainment in certificate examinations and the school self-evaluation (SSE) action planning 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.



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## A summary report for the students of Coláiste Muire about their learning in Business 14/03/2024

### What kind of inspection did your school have?



Recently, an inspector called to your school to carry out a subject inspection. The inspector visited some classes and had a talk with the principal and teachers. They also met with a focus group of students who study Business. The inspector wanted to hear what the focus group of students had to say about their learning experience in that subject.

### What were the main findings of the inspection?



The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- The overall quality of teaching and of learning observed was very good.
- There was very effective use of technology to support students with their learning.
- A large number of students chose to study one or more of the three business subjects at senior cycle.

### What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Business?



- Teachers should ensure students receive more written feedback on their work.
- Other topics of Business teaching, along with enterprise education should be explored.
- Planning for the subject of Business should now include an action plan.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this report.  
A special thank you to the students who participated in the focus  
group.**

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board welcomes the findings of the Business Inspection Report and the recommendations and guidance of the inspectorate in relation to further development.

The Board particularly acknowledges —

- The excellent quality of teaching and learning
- The highly effective use of digital teaching to support student learning
- The very good subject provision and whole-school support,
- The good quality of subject planning and collaboration
- The active engagement of teachers in preferred learning opportunities
- The up-take of business subject at Senior Cycle very good with the provision of Accountancy, Business and Economics.

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

The Board of Management welcomes the recommendations and guidance given by the inspectorate in relation to further development. Coláiste Muire is currently undertaking or will undertake the following steps to address the recommendations of the Inspectorate.

- The development of a department wide approach to written feedback.
- In order to broaden the student exposure of business and to facilitate student learning in other aspects of Business a review of provision of Enterprise Education.
- In order to further enhance the Business plan, the business department will continue to work collaboratively on identifying short, medium and long-term goals.



## 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	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective