



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Geography Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Aireagail
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballyhale Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	70570N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19/01/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	11/04/2024

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 Geography 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> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.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.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	19/01/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including a focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Aireagail is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of the Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board. The school had an enrolment of 193 students at the time of the inspection. The school offered the Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate (LC) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good with a small number of areas for improvement identified.
- It was good that all lessons placed students at the centre of the learning experience and meaningful learning tasks chosen by teachers allowed all students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was good with Geography timetabled as a core subject in first year; however, at the time of the inspection the subject was not timetabled for fifth year students.
- Individual teachers produced a range of high-quality subject-specific resources to support learning.
- All teachers were competent in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and used a wide-range of engaging online sources to enhance the student experience in lessons.
- The quality of subject department planning was good with some areas for improvement in planning the JC and TY programmes.

Recommendations

- While opportunities for student self-reflection were present, in the majority of lessons these were underdeveloped; the subject department should agree and implement a range of consistent self-reflection strategies to allow students to track their progress and identify gaps in their learning.
- To build capacity within the subject department all Geography teachers should experience teaching both the junior and senior cycle programmes where the timetable allows.
- To enhance students experience of Geography the JC units of learning should be amended to include local examples which may be familiar to students. A review of the TY module plan is recommended to broaden students experience of the subject beyond the JC and LC specifications.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good with a small number of areas for improvement identified.
- It was good that teachers outlined the learning intentions at the beginning of each lesson and revisited them again at the end of the lesson. In all lessons the majority of students had a good sense of ownership of their learning and took pride in their work. To maximise the impact on student learning teachers should link learning intentions to success criteria allowing students to effectively track and identify their progress.
- Commendably, action verbs were explicitly used effectively when introducing the learning intentions to support students' understanding and to encourage deeper engagement with the subject content.
- In all lessons, there was good use of targeted and open questions which enabled teachers to assess prior knowledge and link the new learning to content covered in previous lessons. Open questions were used very effectively in most lessons to encourage discussion allowing students to share opinions, ideas and experiences with their peers and create a more meaningful learning experience.
- All teachers demonstrated good subject and pedagogical knowledge and designed lessons to support student inclusion. In one JC lesson the teacher was particularly supportive of a number of students with English as an additional language needs, employing a range of supports including the use of live translation software.
- Excellent classroom management was observed in all lessons with an emphasis on developing positive student-teacher relationships. Teachers were supportive and encouraging and set high expectations for all students. Students were confident when answering questions and frequently shared their learning with their peers in a positive learning environment.
- In most lessons, teachers made good use of visual aids to engage students and help maintain student focus. These included photographs, graphs and in some instances, maps relating to the content being taught. It was very good that in all instances where video clips were used they included a specific focus which progressed learning for students.
- In the majority of lessons students demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of difficult concepts and used appropriate geographical terms to describe subject-related features.
- In the student written work reviewed during the inspection there was evidence of good formative feedback to progress learning.
- Summative assessment was evident in most lessons, usually in the form of short, written exercises which allowed teachers to assess student understanding and help prepare students for state examinations.
- Students spoke positively about Geography in the focus group. Almost all students believed that the subject was relevant to their lives and helped them to better understand major world events. Participants in the student focus group stated that they felt supported by their teachers and the majority said that they particularly enjoyed the active learning tasks their teachers set in class.
- It is good that appropriate homework was set in all lessons which was linked to class content and, in most cases, contained a research element to extend the learning beyond the classroom.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was good overall. Geography was a core subject for first-year students following the JC programme.
- Timetable provision was in line with syllabus and specification guidelines.
- All lessons were taught by qualified Geography teachers. To build capacity within the subject department all Geography teachers should experience teaching both the junior and senior cycle programmes where the timetable allows.
- The subject department stated that they felt supported by the senior management team in terms of provision of teaching resources and the allocation of classrooms. Commendably, where possible teachers had a base classroom which gave them easy access to the resources to support teaching and learning.
- All teachers had engaged in a very good range of relevant professional development, a practice that was encouraged by the senior management team. The school had a digital platform which allowed teachers to share notes and resources effectively with students. The appropriate provision of ICT in all classrooms enabled Geography teachers to use a wide-range of engaging online resources to enhance the student experience in lessons.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning for Geography was good.
- A comprehensive subject plan outlining the department's objectives and policies in relation to assessment, literacy and numeracy, cross-curricular links, communication with parents and fieldtrips had been well-developed and was aligned to the overall school planning strategy.
- Individual teacher planning for the lessons observed was good with very good use of high-quality, teacher-created resources to enhance the student's experience and support their learning. Units of learning had been effectively developed and schemes of work were available for each of the programmes offered at the school. The JC units of learning should be reviewed and amended to include local examples, to which students can relate, and will enhance their experience of Geography.
- The school had an optional TY programme. The scheme of work contained many areas covered in the JC and LC specifications, therefore a review of planning for the TY Geography module is recommended to allow students to experience the breadth of the subject outside of these specifications.
- The subject department met regularly, formally and informally, to share ideas, experiences and resources. It was good that a record of the formal meetings was available on the school's digital platform outlining the decisions made and actions agreed.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the 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 Scoil Aireagail welcomes the very positive and affirmative findings of the recent Geography subject inspection. It is commendable that the main findings of the report are very positive including: -

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was observed to be very good.
- Students had a good sense of ownership and took pride in their work.
- Excellent classroom management observed in all lessons with an emphasis on developing positive student teacher relationships.
- Teachers were supportive and encouraging and set high expectations for students.
- A comprehensive subject plan outlining the Geography department's objectives and policies in relation to assessment, literacy and numeracy, cross-curricular links, communication with parents and fieldtrips had been well-developed and was aligned to the overall school planning strategy.

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

There will be provision made for whole-school professional development in the area of student self-reflection to agree and implement a range of consistent self-reflection strategies to enable students to track their progress and identify gaps in their knowledge.

To build capacity in the subject, it is the intention that all Geography teachers will be given the opportunity to experience teaching both the junior and senior cycle programmes where the timetable allows.

Junior Cycle units of learning will be amended to include the local examples that are taught in Geography lessons. The TY module plan has been updated to broaden students experience of the subject beyond the JC and LC specifications.

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
Excellent	Provision that is excellent 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
Very good	Provision that is very good 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
Good	Provision that is good 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
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard 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
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard 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