

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

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Geography**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Náisiúnta Gleann Coimhád
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ballybofey County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	17575W

**Date of inspection: 04-02-2020**



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Department of  
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## **WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?**

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). 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. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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; a response was not received from the board.

## **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.

## Curriculum Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	04-02-2020
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Gleann Coimhád is a rural primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry. The staff comprises four mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher who is based in the school. Eighty-seven pupils are enrolled from infants to sixth class.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning in Geography is good; pupils demonstrate motivation and enjoyment as they gainfully participate in their lessons and learning.
- The quality of learning experiences provided for pupils is good; all lessons observed during the evaluation were purposeful, appropriately challenging and meaningful to pupils' interests.
- The teaching of Geography is good; teachers skilfully provide opportunities for pupils to create contextual links with previous learning and other subjects of the curriculum.
- The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory; while assessment for learning strategies (AfL) are utilised successfully in individual classrooms, a strategic approach to the assessment and monitoring of specific learning outcomes and pupil progress is yet to be established.
- School planning is good in the school; teachers prepare suitable planning and resources in advance of lessons.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school and systematic approach to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' learning outcomes across the various strands of the Geography curriculum should be agreed and implemented.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

Learning is good overall. Pupils demonstrate motivation and enjoyment as they gainfully participate in their lessons and learning. Talk and discussion features strongly during lessons, pupils are motivated to learn and they are expected to achieve as learners. They have a well-developed sense of place and space as well as a good knowledge of their local environment.

Pupils engage in regular opportunities to undertake collaborative work in Geography. Pupils can apply their learning in Geography with confidence to other areas of the curriculum such as English, Mathematics, History, Science, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Visual Arts. While some appropriate work samples are maintained in relation to pupils' work in the subject, there is scope to develop displays of their work in Geography across the school and in the local community where possible.

In the junior classes, pupils demonstrate very good ability to engage in a purposeful way during group-work activities which supports and promotes autonomy in their learning. They demonstrate good ability to articulate and justify their thinking processes during discussions related to the lesson content and previous learning. Pupils are developing appropriate skills in using and applying map symbols and conventions effectively in the middle classes. In senior classes pupils' interests and preferences are incorporated very successfully into their learning experiences which engenders very positive dispositions and eager participation in their activities in Geography. They demonstrate a very strong curiosity about their local and global environment.

Pupils are working towards the achievement of their second award in the Green School's initiative which is focused on energy and water, this is a regular theme in the experiences created and provided for pupils. During the pupil focus-group interview as part of the inspection, pupils reported that they enjoy their lessons in Geography. In particular, they enjoy the opportunities to participate in purposeful collaborative work with their peers. Pupils listed the many benefits of engaging in collaborative work in developing their understanding of particular concepts and topics in the subject. All pupils agreed that they would like to use Digital Learning Technologies (DLT) in the course of their investigative and presentation work related to their learning in Geography. This aspect of provision could be included as part of the recently developed plan supporting the embedding the Digital Learning Framework in the school.

## **2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE**

The overall learning experiences provided for pupils are good. All lessons observed during the evaluation were purposeful, appropriately challenging and meaningful to pupils' interests. Lessons are appropriately structured and paced, they provide for a variety of learning approaches which facilitate purposeful pupil participation and collaboration. The school has created very good experiences for pupils using the local environment, such as excursions to local farms and visits from experts in agricultural matters, beekeeping and healthcare. Pupils are guided effectively by teachers in outlining the intentions and success criteria linked to their various activities. Greater clarity in the provision of visual references of the learning intentions and success criteria would further strengthen the learning experiences provided for all pupils.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers skilfully create opportunities for pupils to make contextual links with previous learning and other subjects of the curriculum. Teachers demonstrate very good classroom management skills governed by the principles of mutual respect and constructive dialogue. Teachers demonstrate great ambition for pupils' learning. Lesson content is relevant to the interest of pupils and teachers provide very successfully for pupils' interests in their planning for future lessons. A range of suitable resources which include concrete materials, role-play resources, photographs and maps, are prepared in advance of lessons to ensure that the

experiences provided for pupils are interesting and supportive of the full range of ability in each class.

The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory. Very good practice was observed where assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were embedded very successfully as part of the classroom culture. Teachers use a very good range of open-ended questions in eliciting, affirming and extending good quality responses from pupils. To further enhance this aspect of provision, teachers should now agree and implement a whole-school approach to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' outcomes across the strands of the Geography curriculum, including the meaningful use of peer and self-assessment.

### **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING**

Planning is good overall. The whole-school plan for Geography includes a cyclical approach to the teaching of curricular content and appropriate reference to areas of local and geographical interest. Teachers prepare suitable short-term and long-term plans and some individual teachers include the language relating to the learning of Geography in their planning. The subject-specific vocabulary to be taught during lessons needs to be developed and implemented in a more systematic way across the school. During the upcoming review of the whole-school plan for Geography, particular care should be given to the provision of clearer guidance for individual teachers in the progression and development of pupils' skills and subject-specific vocabulary to be taught at each class level in further enhancing teachers' forward-planning and assessment practices.

The principal successfully promotes collaborative practice which ensures high quality provision and a culture of improvement. Teachers' engagement in professional dialogue in sharing good practice and exploring future learning experiences is highly commendable.

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