

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Monaghan Collegiate School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Corlatt Monaghan County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64830E

Date of Inspection: 19-04-2018



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

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 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	19 and 20 April 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspection activities undertaken• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Monaghan Collegiate School is a co-educational, fee-charging, post-primary school with a current enrolment of 267 students: 145 boys and 122 girls. The following educational programmes are provided: the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good; there was scope to develop some areas of practice in relation to planning for learning, differentiation to challenge all abilities, and storing of students' written tasks.
- All teachers had prepared high-quality resources to engage learners; there was scope to use them more effectively in lessons.
- Overall provision and whole-school support for Geography are good.
- Collaborative subject department planning is of a high standard.
- The quality of the schemes of work are good; however, the schemes in both junior and senior cycles lack a clear time frame and insufficient time has been allocated to the teaching of some topics.
- Geographical skills are taught currently as a distinct unit of work in both junior and senior cycle; this practice limits students' potential to develop and practise key skills in a developmental manner.

Recommendations

- All lessons should include clear learning intentions that provide sufficient challenge and a range of student-centred activities to actively engage learners.
- The geography teachers should implement a system for storing students' work to ensure they have adequate written material to aid their learning.
- The current time allocated, in both junior and senior cycle schemes of work, for teaching topics should be reviewed and amended in line with the syllabus guidelines.
- The teachers should plan collaboratively for a more integrated geographical skill-based approach for all year groups.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed was good. There was scope to develop some areas of practice in relation to planning for learning, differentiation to challenge all abilities and storing of students' written tasks.
- Highly effective learning occurred in lessons where students engaged with the content through a variety of well-planned individual and collaborative activities. A topical video clip on the fodder crisis was used to generate discussion on a peripheral farming region. This approach engaged students with the topic and subsequent pair work allowed students to contrast socio-economic regions.
- Critical thinking and development of geographical connections were facilitated in a lesson on overpopulation. Very effective higher-order questions facilitated students to explore the topic, think independently, and discuss and present their opinions with supporting evidence.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in all lessons to display visuals and to deliver short summaries of key learning points to students. Video clips and photographs were used well to explain content and to support learning.
- Highly effective questioning was used in the majority of lessons. Teachers used a good blend of lower and higher-order questions to challenge students. In some instances, there was scope to challenge students further with higher-order questions.
- The pastoral approach of teachers was evident in all lessons. Teachers were very supportive and affirming of students' efforts. Individual support was provided to students who experienced difficulty with tasks.
- The development of literacy and numeracy was incorporated effectively into lessons. Students developed geographical terminology by focusing on key words in context. Numeracy skills were developed when students were asked to estimate population size and compare the length of modern trawlers to road distance between local towns, for example.
- Learning was observed to be less effective when students were not given sufficient opportunity to engage independently or collaboratively with the content. Too much material covered, a lack of a clear learning plan and over-reliance on teacher input were contributory factors. All lessons should include clear learning intentions that provide sufficient challenge and a range of student-centred activities to actively engage learners.
- The quantity of written work in students' copies and folders varied across and within those lessons observed. In a few instances, detailed written tasks with constructive feedback that helped to progress learning were noted. However, in most lessons, while it was clear that sufficient material had been covered, a significant number of students' copies and folders did not contain an appropriate amount of material for the stage of the year. The geography teachers should implement a system for storing students' work to ensure they have sufficient written material to aid their learning. Teachers should also extend their use of formative feedback on longer written tasks.
- In the lessons observed, the same content and material were provided to all students. In a few instances, there was insufficient challenge in tasks for some students. When planning lessons teachers should ensure that content and assessment tasks are included to challenge all abilities.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography is good overall. Geography is a core subject in the junior cycle and optional in the senior cycle. Uptake of Geography in the senior cycle is good.
- All rooms have suitable ICT. One teacher has access to a base classroom with a wide variety of visual resources. Two teachers teach in various classrooms with no visual resources. Efforts should be made to ensure that teachers have access to visual materials to enhance learners' experience of Geography.
- Senior management is supportive of teachers' engagement with continuous professional development (CPD). In-school CPD on a range of teaching, learning and assessment topics is provided by the principal; this is commendable practice. Senior management should review the impact of this CPD on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the classroom.
- Geography is compulsory within TY and, commendably, takes a skill-based approach to teaching and learning. A wide variety of modes of assessment, which encourage critical thinking and develop research skills, is incorporated into the planning and teaching of Geography in TY. However, the TY scheme of work is overly focused on Leaving Certificate content. The scheme should be reviewed and more varied content should be included.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Collaborative subject department planning is of a high quality. The geography teachers meet monthly for formal department meetings to discuss and review teaching and learning, plan for the implementation of the new junior-cycle specification and devise opportunities for extra-curricular activities to promote Geography within the school.
- The geography department has developed an action plan to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the subject; this is very good practice.
- The quality of the schemes of work is good. Schemes of work follow a common template which link learning outcomes to methodologies and resources; however, the schemes in both junior and senior cycle lack a clear time frame and allocate insufficient time to the teaching of some topics at present. The current time allocated in both junior and senior cycles should be reviewed and amended in line with the syllabus guidelines.
- Commendably, the department has begun planning units of work for the introduction of the new junior-cycle specification. The unit of work planned to date is of a high standard and is developed on a shared electronic folder which allows the geography teachers to amend and add up-to-date resources as they become available.
- The geography department encourages students to become active citizens through work on the *Energy Awareness* initiative and the annual international day to celebrate world cultures. Students are encouraged to look for items of geographical interest in the media and to post articles or photos on the geography noticeboard.
- Geographical skills are taught as a distinct unit of work currently in both the junior and senior cycles. This current practice limits students' potential to develop and practice key skills, and to make geographical connections in a developmental manner. Teachers should plan for a more integrated skill-based approach for all year groups.
- Fieldwork is undertaken currently as part of the compulsory element in senior cycle and as a unit of work in TY. The geography department should provide opportunities for students in all year groups to engage in field work to support the development of their practical skills.

Additionally, local field work opportunities should be integrated into the planning for the new junior-cycle geography programme.

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.

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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;