Subject Inspection in Geography

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Largy College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Analore Road Clones County Monaghan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>72171J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 08-05-2018
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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>08 and 09 May 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School context
Largy College is a co-educational post-primary school which operates under the auspices of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 374 students: 179 boys and 195 girls. In addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school provides the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings
• Teaching, learning and assessment were observed to be good in the main; in a significant minority of lessons, there was scope to further challenge and more actively engage students.
• Detailed valuable formative feedback to progress learning was evident on the tests and copybooks reviewed.
• Provision and whole school-support for Geography are good overall.
• Geography is not provided in the current TY but is planned for next year’s TY programme; this will help to promote better informed senior-cycle subject choice.
• The majority of classes are taught currently by a Professional Master of Education (PME) teacher and a recently qualified teacher; in the context of their new roles, additional guidance would be beneficial in relation to teaching Geography in senior cycle.
• Teachers’ collaborative planning and preparation are good and high-quality schemes of work have been developed to inform teaching and learning.

Recommendations
• Further opportunities for students to actively engage in the learning should be provided.
• Teachers’ should use questioning strategies which provide sufficient challenge and are inclusive of all students.
• Additional support and guidance should be provided to support PME and newly qualified teachers in teaching Geography in senior cycle.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching, learning and assessment were observed to be good in the main. In a significant minority of lessons, there was scope to further challenge and more actively engage students.

- Very effective learning occurred when students had opportunities to actively engage in purposeful individual or collaborative work. Students deepened their understanding and consolidated their learning through such activities. Examples of high levels of student engagement were observed when students worked collaboratively to identify factors effecting migration, for example.

- Skill acquisition was incorporated effectively in a few lessons. Experiential learning on Ordnance Survey maps challenged students and motivated them to learn. Students’ locational geography was enhanced through the use of a geological map.

- In a significant minority of lessons, learning was observed to be adequate. In these instances, it was found that teacher-directed instruction and student note-taking limited the opportunity for engagement and consolidation of learning. Teachers should plan lessons to allow opportunities for students to actively engage with the learning.

- Very respectful interactions were observed in all lessons. Students’ contributions were affirmed. Teachers provided valuable individual support to students experiencing difficulty.

- In half of the lessons, questioning was observed to be effective. In one lesson, higher-order questions were incorporated effectively throughout the lesson to challenge students and elicit detailed responses. In other lessons, the use of lower-order global questioning provided insufficient challenge and led to chorus answering from a few students. Teachers should use questioning strategies which provide sufficient challenge and are inclusive of all.

- Assessment of students’ written work was good. Teachers’ detailed formative feedback to students was evident on the tests and copybooks reviewed.

- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively to deliver short summary points, display videos, maps and diagrams. This use of resources enhanced the quality of the learner experience.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography are good overall. Timetabling is in line with syllabus guidelines in both junior and senior cycle. Worthwhile continuing professional development (CPD) is provided for teachers to enhance teaching and learning.

- In the past two years, due to circumstances beyond the school’s control, a number of classes have experienced changes in teachers. It was evident that the transition process to manage mid-cycle teacher change needs a more formal structure. The senior management team, in consultation with the geography department, should ensure that additional structures are in place to support teachers when changes occur.

- The majority of classes are taught by a PME teacher and a recently qualified teacher; additional support and guidance should be provided to support PME and newly qualified teachers in teaching Geography in senior cycle.
All rooms are suitably equipped with ICT to support teaching and learning. Commendably, senior management is moving towards a whole-school collaborative approach to planning and sharing resources through an electronic shared platform.

Geography is optional in both junior and senior cycle. In junior cycle, students choose between History and Geography before entering first year. In senior cycle, students are provided with an open choice on the basis of which subject blocks are created. Uptake of Geography has fluctuated over the years. Geography is not provided in the current TY. However, to promote better informed senior-cycle subject choice, it is good that it is planned for next year’s TY programme.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Planning and preparation are good. Teacher collaborative planning is effective with good-quality schemes of work in place to inform teaching and learning. Although there is no Geography in TY at present, there is an existing TY scheme which outlines the plan of work to be provided. This scheme is of a very good standard and incorporates a skill-based approach and varying assessment strategies to enhance learner experience. Evidence indicates that the current fifth and sixth-year students had covered the leaving certificate geography core units in TY previously. In preparation for the reintroduction of Geography in TY, the emphasis on completing core units should be reviewed to ensure that TY geography students receive a broad geographical experience.

The subject plan is good overall. Some aspects of the plan in relation to literacy and numeracy are in need of review to better reflect the school’s DEIS targets and strategies.

Field work, as the compulsory core unit in senior cycle, takes place in sixth year at present. Going forward, teachers should plan collectively to integrate, where appropriate, opportunities for field work into all year groups to develop students’ practical skills and broaden their geographical experience.

The geographical skills of map and photograph interpretation are taught as full units in both junior and senior cycle. When planning for the introduction of the new junior-cycle specification, teachers should take a more integrated approach to teaching these skills. Similarly, the senior-cycle schemes should be amended to incorporate these skills in order to afford students further opportunity to develop their geographical skills across all years of the curriculum programmes.

Commendably, as part of a whole-school initiative, teachers are planning collectively through a shared electronic platform for the introduction of the new junior-cycle specification and to develop and share resources.

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.
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

(Blank)

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

Recommendation 3

“Additional support and guidance should be provided to support PME and newly qualified teachers in teaching Geography in senior cycle”.

- Largy College is now registered for the Droichead 2018-2019 PST training. It is intended that this will commence with training for 4 staff members in September 2018.
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td>Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The 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.</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>