

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Kinsale Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kinsale Co Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91499E

Date of Inspection: 25-10-2016



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. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	24 and 25-10-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Kinsale Community School is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 910 students. The school provides post-primary education for students in Kinsale and the surrounding hinterland. In addition to the established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (LCA) and Post-Leaving Certificate courses.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- Lessons were well planned and structured, and geography teachers made appropriate links to previous learning through homework activities or through appropriate questioning.
- In all lessons, students were actively engaged in their learning, and were developing a wide range of geographical skills in mixed-ability groups.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used appropriately in the lessons observed.
- The department has engaged in a self-evaluation process and has prioritised a number of short-term and long-term objectives for teaching and learning in the subject, which includes a review of the Transition Year (TY) programme in Geography.
- Both individual and collaborative planning are of a high quality across the department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The department and school management should review the content and time allocated to the TY geography programme to ensure that TY students have an appropriate skill-set, knowledge-base and enthusiasm for the subject which would bridge the study of Geography between junior cycle and senior cycle levels.
- Geography teachers should now develop a vision for information and communication technology (ICT) within the department and extend the subject plan to include planning for the use of ICT.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed. Learning intentions were shared with students at the beginning of lessons, and best practice was observed when students had time to reflect on their learning at the end of a lesson.
- Lessons were well planned and structured, and geography teachers made appropriate links to previous learning through homework activities or through appropriate questioning.
- Teachers regularly used local examples and case-studies in their geography teaching which contributed to a deeper student understanding of the application of geographical concepts and content to their everyday lives.
- In all lessons, students were actively engaged in their learning and were developing a wide range of geographical skills in mixed-ability groups.
- Strategies for differentiation were outlined in the department plan and were used effectively in the lessons observed. The department has developed strong links with the special educational needs (SEN) department at the school.
- Teachers used praise effectively to create a positive learning atmosphere. Students were actively engaged in their learning and were comfortable and enthusiastic when opportunities to work together in groups were presented. Students were also challenged and motivated in their learning.
- Opportunities for literacy and numeracy development were identified by teachers in their lesson planning and were implemented during the lessons observed.
- A number of teachers from the school have attended continuing professional development (CPD) in the area of Instructional Leadership. Collaborative strategies, which were apparent in geography classrooms, reflected this involvement and teachers should continue to explore the potential for student collaboration as part of their classroom experience.
- The department has an agreed homework policy and homework is regularly set and monitored. Teachers could identify opportunities where students would be engaged in a process of note-making as opposed to note-taking, in the context of a wider focus on students' development of 'learning-to-learn' skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used appropriately in the lessons observed. The department should continue to develop its use of the *Scoilnet maps* resource for teaching and learning in Geography. The department is already advancing its use of ICT through various classroom applications which encourage student collaboration, communication and engagement in their learning. In order to build on this good practice, geography teachers should now develop a vision for ICT within the department and extend the subject plan for geography to include planning for the use of ICT to both support teaching and learning in the subject and to consolidate the resources currently available.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography in the school is good. Subject provision and timetabling for Geography is in line with syllabus recommendations. Geography is offered as a core subject at junior cycle and is taught in mixed-ability classes. Geography in Transition Year (TY) is a core subject with an allocation of one period per week for most students, with four periods per week for a smaller group. At senior cycle, student uptake in

the subject has been lower in recent years. It was suggested that a recent change to the number of subjects which are chosen by senior cycle students may have contributed to this trend. Levels of achievement in Geography in certificate examinations are good. The department and school management should review the content and time allocation for the TY geography programme to ensure that TY students have an appropriate skill-set, knowledge-base and enthusiasm for the subject which would bridge the study of Geography between junior cycle and senior cycle levels.

- As part of a whole-school initiative, the department has engaged in the self-evaluation process, and has prioritised a number of short-term and long-term objectives for teaching and learning in the subject. The department has already identified Transition Year, fieldwork and promotion of the subject as key priorities for the future.
- There is a good support network for new staff and for Professional Masters in Education (PME) student teachers in the department. Staff are affiliated to the local branch of the professional subject association. The school actively supports the attendance of geography teachers at relevant CPD opportunities. There is a culture of sharing resources and expertise among geography teachers at the school. The school has developed its own programme of professional development for teachers called *Féilte Beaga*. This innovative programme allows teachers to engage in professional conversations around areas of learning and teaching which impact on their own practice. The school also organises *TeachMeet* sessions for teachers where they can share information about resources, innovative ideas and classroom tools.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Both individual and collaborative planning are of a high quality across the department. The subject planning template is comprised of syllabus content and learning outcomes. The geography plan could be developed by adding sections which relate to literacy and numeracy in Geography, resources used, skills developed and opportunities for review. A digitised version of the department plan would facilitate regular revision based on classroom experience, and make the plan more dynamic and effective as a tool in support of collaboration, teaching and learning in the subject.
- Formal subject meetings are held regularly and focus on a range of administrative and pedagogic areas. The subject co-ordinator's role is wide-ranging and includes department administration, resource identification and communication with school management. Certificate examination results are analysed by the department and this analysis feeds into subject planning. The department has created an *Action Plan* which identifies task, timeframe, resources and desired outcomes. Geography teachers also have regular professional contact with each other through informal meetings throughout the school year.
- Fieldwork is formally organised for Leaving Certificate students and is organised for other year groups as opportunities arise throughout the school year. The department is encouraged to develop local opportunities for fieldwork across all geography classes and levels. In this way, fieldwork could be planned to support the learning objectives specific to geographical study at all levels. Collaborative and local fieldwork opportunities could be developed in conjunction with other subject departments. This fieldwork programme could also form part of an overall department strategy to raise the profile of the subject among students and the wider school community.

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. 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.

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 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 very good 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management met on May 16th 2017 to consider the content of the report. The Board is satisfied with the content as it affirms the best practice which the Geography Department observe.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

- The Geography Department will review the content of the TY geography programme to ensure that TY students will have an appropriate skill set, knowledge base and enthusiasm for the subject which will bridge the study of Geography between junior cycle and senior cycle. School management will review the time allocated to the teaching of Geography in line with a review of the time allocated to each one of the subject option subjects.
- While the geography plan does include planning in respect of ICT, the Geography Department will further develop their vision for the use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching.