

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

**Subject Inspection in Geography**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Loreto Community School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Milford County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91500J

**Date of Inspection: 15-05-2018**



## **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.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	15 and 16 May 2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Loreto Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with 772 students: 395 boys and 377 girls. It provides the Junior Certificate, optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational (LCVP) Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed were very good overall, with some examples of exemplary practice; teaching and learning in one lesson were observed to be less than satisfactory.
- Success criteria were used purposefully within the majority of lessons to guide and assess students' understanding and learning.
- The quality of the assessment of the reviewed written work varied from very good to fair across the lessons observed.
- In the majority of lessons, sufficient challenge was provided through differentiated activities, extension work and questioning; in a few instances, there was insufficient challenge provided.
- Overall provision and support for Geography are very good.
- Collaborative planning and preparation are good overall; however, the senior-cycle schemes of work are in need of review.

#### Recommendations

- All written work should be monitored regularly and teachers should extend the effective use of formative feedback.
- Individual or collaborative tasks that are sufficiently challenging should be provided, in accordance with students' prior knowledge and ability.
- The senior-cycle schemes of work should include clearer learning outcomes and timeframes, in order to better inform teaching and learning; skill development should be integrated within the schemes where appropriate.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed were very good overall. There were some examples of exemplary practice. In one lesson, the quality of teaching and learning was observed to be less than satisfactory.
- Success criteria were used purposefully within the majority of lessons to guide and assess students' understanding and learning.
- High levels of student engagement and very effective learning occurred in the majority of lessons through the facilitation of purposeful active learning tasks. Such tasks provided students with sufficient challenge and opportunities to consolidate their learning. In one lesson, limited progression was observed; there was scope for more purposeful activity and sufficiently challenging tasks to advance student learning.
- Experiential learning tasks were used very effectively in some instances to provide opportunities for students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning. For example, students gathered population data from their peers, constructed a population pyramid and analysed critically the implications of the data gathered. In another instance, students used items to prompt discussion and research to develop their own definition and understanding of economic inequality.
- Students developed their presentation skills and peer assessment skills in some lessons. For example, students worked collaboratively in pairs to design a presentation on tourism within a region, which was then delivered to the class, and peer assessed subsequently. Such activities motivated students and provided them with effective feedback to further their knowledge and understanding.
- Very effective questioning was evident in the majority of lessons. Teachers used a good blend of lower and higher-order questioning, varying their questioning strategies to include all students.
- In almost all instances, teachers prepared high-quality resources and integrated them in meaningful ways to challenge and advance student learning. In a few instances, the use of too many resources, which were not integrated sufficiently into the learning tasks, meant that students could not fully engage with the planned learning. A more purposeful approach to the use of learning resources should be adopted.
- Positive relationships were evident in all lessons. Teachers were supportive and affirming of students' contributions.
- The quality of the assessment of the reviewed written work varied from very good to fair. Very detailed constructive and affirming comments, and student reflection were evident on written task in some lessons. This high-quality feedback provided students with guidance for advancing their understanding and learning. In a significant minority of lessons, there was little evidence of teacher monitoring of students' written work. All written work should be monitored regularly and teachers should extend the effective use of formative feedback.
- Literacy and numeracy development was evident within some individual lessons. However, students would benefit from a more co-ordinated whole-school approach.
- Some good differentiation practices were noted in the lessons observed. One-to-one support was provided by teachers to assist students experiencing difficulty. In the majority of lessons, sufficient challenge was provided through the use of well-designed activities,

extension work and questioning. In a significant minority of lessons, however, there was insufficient scope within the lesson activity to appropriately challenge students. Individual or collaborative tasks that are sufficiently challenging should be planned and provided in accordance with students' prior knowledge and ability.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Provision and whole-school support for Geography are very good. Rooms are suitably equipped with information and communications technology (ICT) and teachers have access to resources in a dedicated geography room.
- There is good access to Geography. It is a core subject in junior cycle and taught in a mixed ability setting; this arrangement is working very well. Geography is optional in senior cycle. Students are given an open choice and from this option lines are created. The uptake of Geography in senior cycle is very good.
- TY students study an eleven-week module which takes a skill-based, practical approach with very good links to the local environment. There is scope to review the current allocation in TY and increase the time allocated.
- Senior management provides opportunities for, and is supportive of, geography teachers' engagement with continuing professional development (CPD).
- School self-evaluation (SSE) focuses currently on the use of success criteria to enhance teaching and learning. The senior management team plans to further integrate success criteria in subject department planning and embed the practice within the classroom to enhance the learner experience.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Collaborative planning and preparation are good. The geography department comprises a large team which meets regularly on an informal and formal basis. The teachers have worked well to develop a wide range of valuable resources to enhance the learner experience and are developing the use of an electronic platform currently to share resources.
- The subject plan is of a good standard. However, there is scope for further development of schemes of work in both junior and senior cycle. At present, they are based around broad content and lack clear timeframes and an integrated skill-development approach.
- Limited collaborative planning for implementing the new specification was evident. Teachers should plan collaboratively for implementing the new specification. Senior-cycle schemes should be reviewed to include clearer learning outcomes and timeframes so that they better inform teaching and learning. Skill development should be integrated within senior-cycle planning, where appropriate.
- Some individual geography teachers have integrated fieldwork activities into their individual lessons to develop students' practical skills. A more collaborative departmental approach to integrating practical skill development should be considered.
- Teachers have worked collaboratively to increase uptake of higher-level Geography, where appropriate, in state examinations. There is scope to use the available intake data when analysing results to inform future subject department actions with regard to attainment.
- Commendably, two of the Geography teachers are members of the school's teaching and learning committee. This committee provides valuable in-school CPD to staff.

## **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 welcomes the very positive report findings in particular the very good teaching and learning observed as well as the high levels of student engagement and the very positive relationships highlighted.

The Board commends the acknowledgement of CPD undertaken by the geography department in particular two members having completed masters in teaching and learning and the department's commitment to the activities of the teaching and learning committee in the school.

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

The effective use of success criteria and formative feedback has been extended as a whole-school target for the 2018/2019 academic year, this is partially on foot of the geography inspection feedback.

Professional time this year will be focused on subject planning and in particular the areas highlighted by the inspection report.

Peer observation will also form part of professional time activities leading to greater collaboration which will be reflected in subject plans and methodologies. Remaining members of the geography department will attend subject specific JCT training on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct 2018. A whole-school approach to manageable literacy and numeracy development is underway for the academic year 2018/2019.

A shared online folder of resources for the geography department continues to be expanded and was available during the inspection, this was not referenced during the inspection or report.

The field study aspect of the senior course will be based in the local area and will provide an opportunity to promote wellbeing and make connections with the local community.

## 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
<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;