

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Geography  
REPORT**

**Cross and Passion College  
Kilcullen, County Kildare  
Roll number 61690W:**

**Date of inspection: 23 May 2012**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GEOGRAPHY**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	23 May 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning were of good quality in all classes visited and of very good quality in a number of classes.
- Teaching and learning took place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and very good rapport was evident between students and teachers.
- Geography classes are taught in a purposeful and disciplined environment.
- The appropriate use of information and communications technology (ICT) and data projectors in particular, is on the increase and is a major stimulus to the teaching and learning of Geography.
- The geography teachers work well as a team and are ably led by an experienced and committed co-ordinator of the subject.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Much greater use should be made of the local area, especially of Kilcullen and its environs, in the teaching and learning of Geography at all levels.
  - Every effort should be made to maximise the numbers doing higher-level Geography in the Junior Certificate examinations.
  - The geography subject plan, yearly plans and schemes of work should be less content driven and more oriented towards improvement. They should also focus more on learning outcomes, assessment modes and varied methodologies.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Cross and Passion College is a large co-educational voluntary secondary school located in the centre of Kilmullen. The school is under the trusteeship of Le Chéile, A Catholic Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Certificate and the established Leaving Certificate as well as a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme. The current enrolment is 671. Students come from a wide catchment area and from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. All students study Geography in junior cycle while approximately 50% study Geography in senior cycle.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning were of good quality in all classes visited and of very good quality in a number of classes. Instruction was clear, focussed and relevant. Key themes and concepts were well explained. Students were focussed on learning and demonstrated a good knowledge of the subject in both their written and oral work.
- Teaching and learning took place in a respectful atmosphere and very good rapport was evident between students and teachers. Geography classes are taught in a purposeful and disciplined environment.
- A great effort is being made to integrate ICT into teaching and learning. Up to date resource material, case studies and exemplars from the internet enhanced teaching and learning.
- The lesson intention was well outlined at the start of lessons and very good directed questioning strategies were used.
- Homework copies and hardback notebooks, in particular, are well maintained by students and regularly monitored by teachers. More written comments from teachers that affirm and highlight ways of improving student work are recommended.
- Literacy and numeracy skills were supported in the lessons observed by clear explanations of key terms and concepts, by differentiated questioning, by the use of key word strategies and by good individual attention being given to students.
- Well planned and targeted revision was a major focus of the work with examination classes. The focus on revision was appropriate in the context of the timing of the evaluation. An engaging and innovative quiz was used to good effect to aid revision in one particular class.
- Team teaching was very effective in one of the classes observed and the complementary skills and empathy of a learning support teacher were very effective with less able learners.
- Some of the topics taught during the evaluation did not lend themselves to local exemplars. The local area however, was under-used as a resource for the teaching and learning of Geography. Locally based projects would act as a stimulus for the subject and would provide motivation for students.
- Examination results in Geography are strong at both junior and senior cycle and these results are collated and analysed each year at both school and subject levels. The numbers attempting higher level in the Junior Certificate are lower than expected. Every effort should be made to maximise the numbers doing higher-level Geography in the Junior Certificate examinations. Some targets for improvement in the numbers doing higher

level in the Junior Certificate in Geography have been set. The achievement of these targets should be a focus of future planning for the subject.

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

- There is very good whole-school support for the teaching and learning of Geography.
- Geography is a well-established subject in the school. Geography is compulsory at junior cycle and there is a strong up-take of the subject at senior cycle.
- There are three periods a week allocated to Geography in junior cycle and five periods, including one double period at senior cycle, which is in line with syllabus requirements.
- The geography department is allocated an annual budget. The purchase of wall maps, and charts to enhance teaching and learning is commended.
- All the geography teachers are members of the Association of Geography Teachers Ireland (AGTI).
- Teachers are encouraged by school management to attend relevant in-career development courses including subject-specific courses.
- Effective use of data projectors was evident in most classes observed. Teachers have been provided with relevant in-career development for their use.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A detailed subject plan for Geography has been developed. This plan outlines the aims, objectives and content of the geography programme and it will provide a useful starting point for improvement-oriented planning.
  - Formal subject department meetings are held once a term and minutes of these meetings are maintained in the geography folder. Geography teachers meet formally and informally to share perspectives and ideas.
  - The geography department is characterised by effective teamwork and is well led by an experienced and dedicated co-ordinator.
  - Subject planning is mainly content driven and needs to focus more on review and future planning. Yearly plans and schemes of work are prepared for each year group. These should be less focussed on content and should concentrate more on learning outcomes, modes of assessment and methodologies.
  - Individual teachers plan well for the use of resources but there is a need to take a more focussed approach to the use of local resources in the teaching and learning of Geography.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and 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.

*Published November 2012*

# 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 wishes to acknowledge this report its recommendations and its findings. It commends the professional and courteous manner with which the inspection was undertaken, particularly because of its timing in the last week of term, in May 2012.

The Board welcomes the report's affirmation of the commitment of our Geography Department and that of the quality of teaching and learning taking place in a purposeful and disciplined environment. Acknowledgement of the mutual respect between students and teachers as cited is also appreciated.

#### **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 school is addressing the recommendations of the report with a particular commitment to and focus on:

- Improving the use of the local area in the learning and teaching of key aspects of the subject.
- Implementing strategies to increase students' uptake of 'Higher Level' at Junior Certificate, and
- Revising the Geography Subject Plan with greater emphasis on learning outcomes and varied methodologies.