

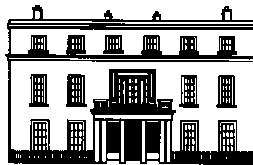
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Geography  
REPORT**

**Catholic University School  
Leeson Street, Dublin  
Roll number: 60540V**

**Dates of inspection: 23 March 2015**



**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>Date of inspection</b>	23 March 2015
<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, deputy-principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Overall, teaching and learning were of good quality with some elements of very good practice evident.
- Learning took place in a very positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated but students were too passive especially in senior classes.
- Good progress has been made in the effective integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning of Geography but Powerpoint presentations are over-used in some senior lessons.
- Subject planning for Geography has led to common schemes of work and common examinations but the geography plan is too content driven.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The balance between teacher input and student activity needs to be redressed in favour of more active participation of students.
  - Questioning of students during lessons should be targeted more towards individuals.
  - More consistent departmental practices should be established in relation to the provision of supportive written comments on students' written work.
  - Subject planning should be based on learning outcomes, active methodologies and improvements in teaching and learning.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Catholic University School is a boys' secondary school that is located centrally in Dublin city. The current enrolment numbers 442 students. Transition Year (TY) is optional for students. All junior cycle students study Geography and uptake at senior cycle level is high.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Overall, teaching and learning were of good quality and some very good practice was evident in the lessons observed. Teacher instruction was clear, accurate and relevant. Key concepts and key ideas were well explained in all lessons.
- Learning took place in a very affirming, positive and well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated. There was good rapport between teachers and students. However, the balance of teacher talk and student engagement was very much in favour of teacher talk in most of the lessons visited. This balance needs to be redressed.
- Lesson outcomes were usually stated formally or informally at the beginning of lessons and were returned to at the end. These learning outcomes and the varied methodologies to be employed should form the basis of future lesson planning.
- Teaching methodologies were quite effective but they were mostly teacher-led and traditional. Teachers were good communicators. Whole-class teaching predominated. Some pair work was used. Seating arrangements in all lessons visited were not conducive to development of more active methodologies.
- There was no evidence of group work or team teaching being used in the lessons observed. The use of both these strategies would lead to more collaborative work being undertaken by both teachers and students.
- Questioning strategies were effective in some cases and were one of the main ways in which students were asked to contribute to lessons but in a number of lessons questions should be more targeted towards individuals.
- Good progress has been made by the teachers of Geography in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning as was evidenced by the good use made of data projectors, video clips and visual digital images. However, Powerpoint presentations were overused especially in senior classes.
- Some progress has also been made in relation to the promotion of literacy and numeracy in the subject within the context of the School's Improvement Plan. There was some effective use made of key word strategies within the context of a pilot project. The drawing of and analysis of graphs were used effectively to promote numeracy.
- Displays of map and charts were evident in some classrooms visited. These should be augmented and used regularly in classroom teaching. Student work should also be displayed on a much more consistent basis.
- There was good use made of the local area especially Dublin city during a number of lessons. A project undertaken on the growth of world cities is praiseworthy and could provide useful model for more regular project work.
- Homework is regularly given and students' written work is monitored. However, there is a need for much more supportive written comments towards improvement and formative

feedback to students by teachers. Requirements of good written work should be outlined to students and included in their copybooks. The fulfilment of these requirements by students should be rewarded in term reports.

- Common geography examinations for the respective year groups are set in junior cycle. Regular class tests take place at the conclusion of the study of topics. They help to focus students and to track their progress. Some effective peer correcting was observed during the evaluation.
- There are a number of well organised whole-school co-curricular activities that support the aims and learning and teaching objectives of Geography such as the Gaisce awards, outings, exchanges and trips. Work on a development project in India is also commended. Further involvement of the geography teaching team in these type of activities is encouraged.

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

- The teaching and learning of Geography take place mostly in teacher-based classrooms that facilitate the gathering and display of resources but student work needs to be displayed more consistently.
- The timetabled allocation and distribution of the geography lesson periods are supportive of the teaching and study of the subject. Junior cycle students have three geography lesson periods each week and Leaving Certificate geography students have six periods.
- The subject is well resourced and additional resources are provided on a needs basis. Teachers are facilitated and encouraged by school management to attend relevant professional development courses.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning is actively promoted by management.
- The school's Junior and Leaving Certificate examination results in Geography are collated annually by management and by the geography teaching team. The numbers doing and achieving higher level in the subject is impressive. Realistic goals and targets need to be set in relation to students' attainment in the subject taking into account school context factors.
- The commitment to field work by management and staff in senior cycle is evident but this needs to be developed more in junior cycle in relation to project planning preparation and delivery.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Considerable effort has gone into the development of subject planning for Geography and the development of a department subject plan for Geography.
- The subject planning folder outlines relevant content, aims and objectives of the Geography syllabus but teacher planning needs to focus more on planning for improvement and for the embedding of the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) especially in relation to the development of more active teaching methodologies and more formative feedback.
- Department meetings are held regularly. Meetings should focus more on action planning and on what is working well and areas for development within the subject. The meetings

should also focus on how further improvements in teaching, learning and assessment can be achieved.

- The subject is well co-ordinated. The position is rotated regularly. This rotation arrangement is working well.
- There is a willingness by both management and the teachers of Geography to review subject planning and delivery in line with the findings and recommendations in this report.

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 board of management of the school 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.

# **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 welcomes the inspection report of geography undertaken in the school. It notes the positive comments about the quality of teaching and learning, the positive well-disciplined environment and the effective information and communications technology in the teaching and learning of geography.

### **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 Board of Management has asked the Principal to take up with the geography department the recommendations outlined in the inspection.