

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Geography
REPORT

Coláiste an Chroí Naofa
Carraig na bhFear, County Cork
Roll number: 62130M

Date of inspection: 19 February 2013



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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	19 February 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in all geography lessons observed.
- The geography teachers are significantly advanced in their integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in lessons.
- The variety of stimulus materials utilised created engaging geography lessons that facilitated the active participation of students at all levels.
- Uptake of Geography and outcomes for students in relation to classroom experiences and certificate examinations are positive.
- Individual teacher planning for Geography is particularly good and collaborative planning is advancing.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A detailed collaborative plan for Transition Year (TY) geography should be developed.
 - Geography teachers should begin the process of linking the learning intention of lessons with intended learning outcomes, as currently specified in the subject plan, in order to inform planning for assessment.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste an Chroí Naofa is a co-educational voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 494 students. The school is managed under the trusteeship of CEIST – Catholic Education an Irish Schools’ Trust. Students are offered Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). An optional TY programme that provides a module of Geography is also available to students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in all the geography lessons observed. The learning intention was clear in all lessons. In one case, a detailed learning intention was shared with students and reviewed as the lesson progressed through questioning and discussion leading finally to assessment of that learning. This process represented very good practice and should be considered to add further coherence to students’ learning in all geography lessons.
- Activity, engagement and participation were the key characteristics of the very good quality geography lessons observed. Strategies that had been very effectively planned and prepared to engage students actively in their own learning were in evidence. Activities included: responding to the teacher’s development of the learning point through discussion and by both posing and responding to questions; engaging with peers in groups and pairs to discuss issues; and responding to visual images that related to specific syllabus points. In all cases, the focus on active engagement and participation was obvious and effective.
- The successful integration of very appropriate digital-video clips, projected using a data-projector, complemented the range of active engagements for students. The visual impact of contrasting population pyramids facilitated students to question and to understand complex demographic patterns in different socio-economic settings. A very short animation relating to plate tectonics facilitated the revision of key learning points and terminology relating to geomorphic process and landforms. A very well chosen short video on glaciation allowed students to visualise this and associated processes. A second viewing of this video clip was accompanied by a series of questions on a worksheet to focus and scaffold students’ viewing and their learning. In each of these lessons, geographical processes were discussed, explained and interrogated by the interactive nature of classroom discussion based on these video clips, and through teacher and textbook explanations.
- An appropriate literacy focus was evident in the geography lessons observed. Reading from the textbook by the teacher featured in some lessons. Key terms were then identified and recorded. Silent reading of short extracts by students could also be considered as a strategy to develop both reading skills and comprehension. There was appropriate attention to spelling and the composition of key statements in junior cycle lessons and to the development of significant relevant points (SRPs) in senior cycle revision.
- Opportunities to integrate numeracy were less evident. Effective practice was observed in one lesson when students were required to make calculations relating to dependency ratios for particular populations. Other opportunities to develop and integrate numeracy into pedagogy in Geography should be explored where appropriate, in line with whole-school strategies in this area.

- Students and teachers in examination classes were engaged in very useful revision focusing on key points that reflected the structure and demands of examination questions. In one lesson, a very effective thematic approach was used with third-year students while sixth-year students were challenged with key terms to scaffold independent research towards understanding of the concept of a region.
- Geography lessons reflected a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. Students were courteous and respectful towards their peers and teachers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for Geography reflects normal practice in terms of timetable allocation and an open subject-choice process for senior cycle. Geography is a core subject in junior cycle and is a compulsory module in TY with an allocation of two single class-periods per week. Uptake at senior cycle is strong as is achievement in Geography in both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- School management has established a subject department structure that includes a position for a subject convenor. A subject department budget allocation is in place and the systematic recording of key discussion points and actions planned at subject department meetings is established practice. Such procedures are very positive as they facilitate the ongoing collaborative development of the subject.
- Teacher-based classrooms have been allocated in recent years and this development has coincided with the provision of very good quality ICT infrastructure in each of the classrooms visited. Teachers have used these base rooms to develop a visual learning environment for students to support their engagement with Geography. The ongoing development of these classrooms is encouraged.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Collaborative planning for Geography has been advanced. However, to effectively link collaborative planning to pedagogy, the geography teachers should now embed the practice of sharing the learning intention with students in lessons. Learning intentions should arise from the intended learning outcomes that are in the process of development in the subject plan. The sharing of detailed and specific learning intentions with students in lessons could then be used to inform assessment criteria for class tests, term tests or end-of-year assessments.
- Planning for TY geography requires attention. A comprehensive, flexible and agreed programme plan should be developed that is skills-based, referencing local settings, as appropriate, but designed to provide an effective link between the experience of Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate geography for students.
- The very good quality of individual planning by teachers was exemplified by the high quality teaching and learning observed in lessons and by the resulting active engagement of students.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.