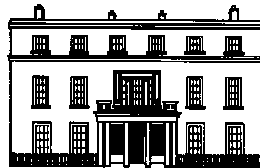


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Geography**  
**REPORT**

**Pobalscoil Na Trionóide,**  
**Youghal, County Cork**  
**Roll number: 91513S**

**Date of inspection: 15 May 2015**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	14 and 15 May 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 and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- Lessons took place in a very positive, cooperative atmosphere which facilitated and motivated student learning.
- Homework was set and checked regularly, and was often used as a bridge to previous learning.
- Geography is taught in mixed-ability classes and the department has a dedicated geography room which is well equipped and acts as a focus area for Geography at the school.
- Teachers in the geography department work well together as a team.
- The quality of individual and department planning is good with agreed schemes of work developed for each year group.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The department should re-examine the course content followed in the 'taster' block for first-year students and consider the potential benefit of focusing the twelve introductory lessons on local fieldwork opportunities, of various types, which exist in close proximity to the school.
- The department should review the content and time allocated to the Transition Year (TY) geography programme to ensure that TY students have an appropriate skill-set and knowledge-base with which to bridge the study of Geography at junior cycle and at senior cycle levels.
- The department should formally define the role of the co-ordinator for Geography, especially in the context of anticipated, future changes at junior cycle in the subject.
- The department should increase the number of formal meetings it organises each year and should routinely include a teaching and learning agenda point at each meeting.

## INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil na Tríonóide is a co-educational, post-primary school with a current enrolment of 868 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate programme, the established Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). In addition, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered to students. The school also has an Ionad lán Ghaeilge where *Tíreolas* is taught as a curricular subject.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed. Classes were well prepared and learning intentions were clear to students at the beginning of each lesson. Best practice was observed when learning intentions were consolidated at the end of a lesson. A variety of questioning techniques was used by geography teachers and these techniques were effective both in measuring student learning and in supporting students in their future learning. Students were on-task in their lessons and were engaged in their learning. Lessons took place in a very positive, cooperative atmosphere which facilitated and motivated student learning.
- Homework was set and checked regularly, and was often used as a bridge to previous learning. However, there is scope for making more use of formative teacher comments in order to consolidate learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used appropriately in the lessons observed. The geography room has an interactive board capability and the department has the use of two visualisers for classroom teaching. The department is already advanced in its use of ICT and geography teachers should now create an ICT plan for the subject which would consolidate the hardware and software resources currently available, and then focus on opportunities for communication and collaboration which would underpin student learning.

## SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Geography is taught in mixed-ability classes and the department has a dedicated geography room which is well equipped and acts as a focus area for Geography at the school. The department also has a topical and informative geography noticeboard in the foyer of the school entrance hall. Geography or *Tíreolas* is also taught in the Ionad lán Ghaeilge at the school and there are high levels of co-operation and collaboration between geography teachers in both sections. Uptake levels for Geography at senior cycle are relatively high with a slight decline in recent years, possibly due to subject choice options.
- Geography is optional at junior cycle level where first-year students can choose Geography as a junior certificate subject after a taster block of twelve lessons in the subject during the first semester. The department should re-examine the course content followed in that 'taster' block and consider the potential benefit of focusing the twelve introductory lessons on local fieldwork opportunities, of various types, which exist in close proximity to the school. In years two and three, students can choose Geography as a three-period per week core subject or as a four-period per week subject option, from a range of other options, timetabled at the same time. This arrangement offers flexibility to students but, at the same time, could be seen as being inequitable as the geography students in the option block have an extra lesson per week in the subject in years two and

three. The department and school management should explore ways of making the time allocation element for the subject more balanced across all geography classes, while maintaining the flexibility, for students who choose the subject, which the current system offers.

- Geography is compulsory in Transition Year (TY) and is allocated one lesson per week. The department should review the content and time allocated to the TY geography programme to ensure that TY students have an appropriate skill-set and knowledge-base with which to bridge the study of Geography at junior cycle and at senior cycle levels.
- In recent years, teachers in the department have had continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities in Literacy and ICT at a whole-school level. Senior management at the school regularly support geography teachers in their attendance at appropriate CPD opportunities outside the school. The department should arrange training around the *Scoilnet Maps* resource for use the geography classroom.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Teachers in the geography department work well together as a team. Teachers in the department share knowledge and expertise on a continual basis, especially in the area of certificate examination correction, as a number of geography teachers from the department act as correctors for the Leaving Certificate or the Junior Certificate examinations in Geography. New teachers are supported by an experienced teacher who acts as a mentor in the subject. Teachers can share resources on a common shared folder located on the school's ICT system. Anticipated developments in this area should facilitate even more collaboration between teachers. Co-ordination duties are rotated occasionally between colleagues. The department should formally define the role of the coordinator for Geography, especially in the context of anticipated, future changes in the subject at junior cycle.
- The quality of individual and department planning is good with agreed schemes of work developed for each year group. The first-year subject plan includes sections on learning outcomes and literacy while the third-year plan also makes reference to differentiation. The department should harmonise the planning template across all year groups and should include a 'review' section, which could be updated at regular department meetings or on a continuing basis by having a digitalised version of the plan.
- While there is a great deal of informal contact between geography teachers in the school, the department holds one formal meeting in August of every school year. This meeting usually focuses on textbook selection and certificate examination results. The department should increase the number of formal meetings it organises each year and should routinely include a teaching and learning agenda point at each meeting.

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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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