Subject Inspection of Geography
REPORT

Kildare Community School
Kildare County Kildare
Roll number: 91530S

Dates of inspection: 30 September 2013
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GEOGRAPHY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>30 September 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods involving five of the six teachers of Geography in the school</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>- Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>- Feedback to principal, deputy-principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interaction with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, teaching and learning were of very good quality with some excellent practice evident.
- Learning took place in a positive, well-disciplined environment in all lessons evaluated.
- Good progress has been made in the effective integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning by some teachers while others need further training in this area.
- Geography subject planning needs further development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater use should be made of the Kildare area especially in relation to project work, town studies and map work.
- Greater use should be made by the geography department of the analysis of students’ attainment in Geography in the certificate examinations in order to set targets for improvement.
- Geography subject planning should focus more on active methodologies, assessment for learning strategies, on literacy and numeracy development and on the establishment of consistent departmental practices in relation to the correction of students’ written work.

INTRODUCTION

Kildare Community School is a new post-primary school in Kildare Town which was formed from the amalgamation of three pre-existing schools. The current enrolment numbers 666 students. They come mainly from the locality. The school offers the Junior Certificate and the full range of Leaving Certificate programmes. Transition Year (TY) is optional for students. All junior cycle students study Geography. All classes visited during the inspection were junior cycle geography lessons.
TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, teaching and learning were of very good quality and some excellent practice was also evident in the lessons observed. Teacher instruction was clear and relevant. Key concepts and key ideas were well explained in all lessons. Key word strategies were used effectively.

- Learning took place in a positive and well-disciplined environment in all lessons evaluated. There was very good rapport between teachers and students.

- Lesson outcomes were stated at the beginning of lessons and were returned to at the end.

- Instruction was clear and concise and the varied methodologies used included well thought out and effective group work. Seating arrangements in most classes facilitated the good group work observed. Questioning strategies were effective in most cases but in a small number of lessons they needed to be more targeted. In one lesson the teacher used the students’ own experience of migration effectively. The sharing of learners’ own experiences is excellent practice.

- Good progress has been made by some geography teachers in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning as was evidenced by the use made of data projectors, and digital images. An excellent example of this was an interactive lesson on primary, secondary and tertiary industries. However, a number of teachers need further training in this area.

- A print-rich environment, which included displays of maps, charts and students’ work, was evident in all classrooms visited and some of these were used to support learning during lessons.

- The Kildare area was used as a resource in TY and in the geographical investigation in Senior Cycle. However, insufficient use of the local area of Kildare as a resource for the teaching and learning of Geography in relation to both map work, town studies and project work during the lessons observed. Greater use of the Kildare area should be made in teaching and learning and in the design of locally based projects. Such projects, especially at junior cycle level, have both motivational and promotional benefits for the subject and also promote cross-curricular learning and teaching.

- Homework is regularly given and students’ written work which includes note making and note taking is well monitored.

- Effective peer correcting was undertaken.

- While some supportive comments were evident, more written comments towards improvement should be provided on students’ copy work. Credit for copy work should be given in the school’s assessments and term reports.

- Regular class tests take place at the conclusion of topics which help to focus students and to track their progress.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Geography teaching and learning take place in teacher-based classrooms that facilitate the gathering, storage and display of resources.

- There are two social studies rooms which act as repositories of resources such as rock samples, maps and photographs for both History and Geography.
• The timetabled allocation and distribution of the geography lesson periods are supportive of the teaching and study of the subject. There are three periods a week for Geography in junior cycle and five periods, which includes one double period, at senior cycle.

• 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 and to engage in further study.

• 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 by management and by the geography teaching team. However, analysis of results is insufficient. There should be greater analysis of these results in order to set targets for improvement in student results.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The geography department met only once last year due to the retirement of the previous co-ordinator and other school-based issues. There are plans to have more regular meetings this year. Department meetings need to be more reflective and strategic than heretofore. They should focus more on action planning and on what is working well and not working well within the subject. These meetings should also focus on how improvements in teaching, learning and assessment can be achieved.

• Two subject co-ordinators are in place this year. This sharing arrangement is working well.

• Considerable effort has gone into the development of subject planning for Geography. The planning folder outlines relevant content, aims, objectives, concepts and key skills. It contains a detailed scheme of work. More detailed target setting in the areas of literacy and numeracy should be an integral part of the self-evaluation process within the subject.

• Long-term planning at subject level is collaborative but is too content driven. It should be more reflective and more focussed on continuous improvement. Planning for Geography should concentrate more on active methodologies and the integration of Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies in teaching and learning.

• There is 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 revised planning documents should also include strategies that have been agreed by the geography department to ensure the implementation of more consistent practice in relation to the correction of students’ written work.

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.

Published April 2014