

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Geography
REPORT**

**Coláiste Bríde
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 60122D**

Dates of inspection: 14th May 2014



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GEOGRAPHY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	14 th May 2014
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, teaching and learning were of very good quality with excellent practice also evident in many of the lessons observed.
- Learning took place in a positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is effectively integrated in the teaching and learning of Geography.
- Timetabling arrangements for the subject are good with three periods a week in junior cycle and five periods a week in senior cycle.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Junior and Leaving Certificate examination results in Geography are collated and analysed to some extent but the outcomes of the analysis should be more clearly stated and used for target setting for improvement especially in relation to the uptake of higher-level Geography among junior cycle students and student attainment at this level in the Junior Certificate Geography examination.
 - More written comments towards improvement should be written on students' copy work.
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INTRODUCTION

Colaiste Bhríde is an all-girls school with the current enrolment numbering 949 students. Students come from the locality and from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The school offers the Junior Certificate and the full range of Leaving Certificate programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Student uptake of Leaving Certificate Geography is strong. There are three geography class groups in fifth year and two in sixth year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, teaching and learning were of very good quality with excellent practice also evident in many of the lessons observed. One lesson on deserts was presented in a very engaging and lively manner. Rock samples were also used very effectively in one lesson. Another lesson on volcanoes was presented in an active and engaging way. Teacher instruction was very clear and key concepts and ideas were well explained during all lessons. .
- Learning took place within a positive, well-disciplined environment. There was good rapport evident between teachers and students.
- Lesson outcomes were clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and were returned to at the end.
- A wide range of active methodologies was used effectively including group and pair work to support and consolidate learning. Questioning strategies were effective in most cases but in a small number of lessons they need to be more targeted.
- Revision work with examination classes was appropriate for the time of year. One of the lessons involved a lively and interactive quiz which was an effective way of recalling information for revision purposes.
- ICT is extensively integrated in the teaching and learning of Geography by both students and staff as was evidenced by the range of student presentations, software packages and digital images that were used in the lessons observed.
- Very good use was made of the Clondalkin area in the teaching and learning of Geography in the classes observed especially in relation to the citing of local examples. The use of local case studies and locally based projects is impressive. This local emphasis has both motivational and promotional benefits for the subject and also promotes cross-curricular learning and teaching.
- A river study that had been undertaken by the students was the theme of two of the senior cycle lessons evaluated. These lessons involved the effective use of practical geographical skills.
- A print-rich environment which includes the display of maps, charts and students' work was evident in all classrooms visited. Examples of student's geography projects were prominently displayed in classrooms.
- The geography teachers regularly assign and monitor students' written homework. Some effective peer correcting was also observed. Some supportive comments from teachers were evident but more written comments towards improvement should be written on students' copy work. More credit for copy work should be given in the school's assessments and term reports. Planning documents should also include strategies for teachers in relation to the consistent correction of students' written work.

- Opportunities were taken effectively to develop student's literacy and numeracy skills in the lessons observed. These included the effective use of keyword strategies and the interpretation of graphs, where appropriate.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Geography teaching and learning take place in teacher-based classrooms, which facilitate the gathering, storage and display of resources.
- Timetabling arrangements for the teaching and study of Geography are good. There are three periods a week for Geography in junior cycle and five periods at senior cycle.
- Formal school assessments take place twice yearly. Regular testing takes place which helps to focus students and to track their progress. Target setting in the areas of literacy and numeracy is an important whole-school strategy and is an integral part of the self-evaluation process for all subjects.
- The subject is well resourced and resources are provided on a needs basis. The geography teachers, as is the case for all members of the teaching staff, are facilitated and encouraged by school management to attend relevant professional development courses and to engage in further study.
- The regular and routine use of ICT in teaching and learning is actively promoted by management.
- Co-curricular and cross-curricular activities such as Green Schools and involvement in Active School Week, which was underway during the evaluation, are organised with the assistance of members of the geography department. These activities are commended and are indicative of the whole-school support for environmental issues and activity based learning.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The geography department meets formally at least once a term and informally on a more regular basis. The minutes of geography department meetings are recorded. The formal meetings and the resultant minutes need to be more reflective and strategic. They should focus more on what is working well and not working well within the subject and on how improvements in teaching, learning and assessment can be achieved.
- A very able and hardworking subject co-ordinator is in place and she is in her first year in the role. The geography teachers share resources and they have developed common programmes of work and common tests. They also co-operate on project and fieldwork development.
- The Junior and Leaving Certificate examination results in Geography are collated and analysed to some extent but the outcomes of the analysis should be more clearly stated and used for target setting for improvement especially in relation to the uptake of higher-level Geography among junior cycle students and student attainment at this level in the Junior Certificate Geography examination.
- Considerable effort has gone into the development of subject planning for Geography. Long-term planning at subject level is reflective and focuses on improvement which is commended. The planning folder outlines relevant content, aims, objectives and key

skills. It contains a detailed scheme of work for each year group. Learning outcomes to be achieved in lessons are incorporated into the subject plans.

- The TY plan for Geography includes a relevant module on natural disasters and an appropriate focus on locational geography.
- The quality of individual teacher planning is very good.
- There is a willingness to review the 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 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 subject inspection report of Geography and is delighted to see it is consistent with and reflects the high standards set by previous inspections. The report highlights the hard working team in the geography department.

The usage of ICT facilities is a central element in the teaching and learning of Geography in Coláiste Bríde. We are one of three schools in Ireland using award winning technology which is highly effective in delivering a deep rooted understanding of geographical concepts and offers real-world content/simulations to spark enthusiasm for the subject among students.

The geography department has previously identified the area of correction for improvement as one of their targets in their subject action plan and subject department plan. Comments on work in the Geography hard back copies are included on school reports to keep parents and students updated on progress. It was noted that the observation relating to correction of homework by teachers raises the issue of consistency.

The Board of Management welcomes the very positive outcomes for the school in relation to subject provision and whole school support which highlights the extent that co-curricular and cross curricular activities support the learning within the classroom.

The Board congratulates the geography department on the excellent findings regarding planning and preparation which is “reflective and focuses on improvement”.

The Geography department are very proud of their links within the local Clondalkin community and work at sustaining and developing these relationships.

The Board of Management wishes to thank the Inspector for their positive engagement with staff.

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 recommendation re extending the analysis of state exams in Geography to set targets for improvement re the uptake of higher level Geography has been enacted and the Geography Department has met to set targets. Indeed this recommendation has been shared by the Principal and the Geography Department with all other subject departments at a staff meeting and time was allocated to all subject areas for developing their exam statistical analysis to raise attainment and uptake at higher level.

Follow up actions planned will include raising the issue of consistent correction of students’ written work and feedback for improvement to students through our assessment for learning focus.

The Geography Department has, since the inspection, completed its End of Year Report for submission to the Board of Management and Trustees, CEIST which further builds on the reflective element required by all subject departments in Coláiste Bríde.