

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Geography  
REPORT**

**Meán Scoil Mhuire,  
Longford, County Longford  
Roll number: 63760E**

**Date of inspection: 12 May 2011**



**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>	11 and 12 May 2011
<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 eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- All teachers of Geography are qualified in the subject area and they displayed a high level of competence and dedication during the evaluation.
- Teaching and learning take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and very good rapport was evident between students and teachers.
- Geography lessons are taught mainly in student-based classrooms. The geography room is a repository of a range of up-to-date, relevant visual resources which are well used.
- The appropriate use of information and communication technology (ICT) is on the increase and is a major stimulus to the teaching and learning of Geography.
- The challenge of teaching Geography in the mixed-ability setting in all classes is being well met.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The role of subject co-ordinator, currently rotated every year, should be rotated every two or three years to allow for more shared leadership and greater continuity in subject planning.
  - The valuable ICT-based resources gathered by individual geography teachers should be shared amongst the geography teaching team and placed on the central server to facilitate shared access.
  - Much greater use should be made of the local area, especially of Longford town and its environs, in the teaching and learning of Geography at all levels.
  - The Geography plan, yearly plans and schemes of work should be less content driven and more oriented towards improvement. They should focus more on learning outcomes, assessment modes and varied methodologies.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Meán Scoil Mhuire, Longford is a girls-only voluntary secondary school located in the centre of Longford town. The school is under the trusteeship of Catholic Education Irish Schools (CEIST). The school offers the junior certificate programme and the three leaving certificate programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The current enrolment is 614 and students come from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds. 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.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning was of good quality in all classes visited and of very good quality in a number of classes. Instruction was clear, focussed, and relevant and key themes and concepts were well explained.
- Homework copies and note books are well maintained by students and regularly monitored by teachers but more written comments from teachers that affirm and highlight ways of improving students' work are necessary.
- Focussed revision and an emphasis on examination strategies were very evident in examination classes as the evaluation took place in the weeks leading up to state examinations. Care should be taken that the focus on examination papers and marking schemes does not over-influence teaching and learning throughout the year.
- A well-structured tourism module is the main focus of the TY Geography programme. This is delivered in an innovative, engaging and creative way using national and international exemplars and projects.
- The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is being supported by clear explanations of key terms and concepts, by differentiated questioning and by good individual attention being given to students.
- The local area is under-used as a resource for the teaching and learning of Geography. Locally-based projects would act as a stimulus for the subject and would provide motivation and greater relevance for students. More use of locally based exemplars would also benefit the teaching of photograph and map interpretation. The use of Scoilnet maps and Google Earth maps is recommended to assist in the provision of locally-based map and photographic resources.
- Examination results are strong at both junior and senior cycle and these results are collated and analysed each year at both school and subject levels.

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

- There is good whole-school support for the teaching and learning of Geography.
- Geography is a well-established subject with a strong up take at senior cycle. There are three periods a week allocated to Geography in second and third year and five periods at senior cycle which is in line with syllabus requirements.

- Access to and appropriate use of data projectors is on the increase and teachers have been provided with relevant in-career development.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject-department planning is well advanced. Subject department meetings are held once a term and records are kept of the meetings.
- The geography department is characterised by a spirit of collegiality and co-operation but it would benefit from the co-ordinator spending a number of years in the role rather than being rotated every year.
- Subject planning is mainly content driven and needs to be revised to focus more on action oriented improvement. The Transition Year plan for Geography is well developed and is implemented in an innovative and flexible manner.
- Yearly plans and schemes of work are prepared for each year group but these should be less focussed on content and should concentrate more on learning outcomes and methodologies.
- Teachers plan well for the use of resources. Most of these resources are stored and displayed in the geography room and in individual classrooms. Better planning for the use of the geography room, especially for senior classes, has rightly been identified by the team as a priority.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

# **Appendix**

## **SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

### **Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

**Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

- 1. Subject Co-Ordinator being rotated every two years**
- 2. Greater use by all teachers of ICT resources and equipment**
- 3. Greater use of local area for field trips and indeed for general instruction**