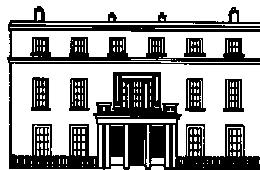


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Kylemore College,**  
**Ballyfermot,**  
**Dublin 20**  
**Roll number: 70240P**

**Dates of inspection: 19 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**

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| <b>Date of inspection</b>   | 19 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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning was of excellent quality in the lessons observed.
- The geography teaching was relevant, creative and innovative with a wide variety of teaching methodologies being used effectively.
- Learning took place in a very positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated.
- Very good use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Greater use should be made of the local area to further stimulate and motivate students in junior cycle
- There is a need to build on the use of written comments that promote improvement on students' copybooks.
- Geography planning should continue to place emphasis on the use of active methodologies and should promote engagement in more local studies at junior cycle.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Kylemore College is a co-educational college in Ballyfermot in West Dublin with a current enrolment of 246 students in the post-primary sector. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in our Schools (DEIS) programme and offers all Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. All junior cycle students study Geography and uptake at senior cycle is very strong. There is one teacher currently teaching Geography to students in the post-primary sector, and another teaching Geography to adult students pursuing post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses in the college. The teachers co-operate very well in subject planning. The lessons for students in the PLC sector were not visited as part of this evaluation.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning was of excellent quality in the lessons observed.
- Teacher instruction was clear, relevant, interesting and concise. Key concepts and ideas were very well explained during all lessons in creative and innovative ways. For example, the lesson on tourism involved students designing their own passports and grappling with holiday and work visa issues. The lesson on rock types involved presentation of material in a vivid and interesting manner that included the use of rock samples projected with the use of a visualizer.
- A variety of effective teaching and learning methodologies was observed. Pair work was used in a number of lessons to promote student engagement and to give opportunities for students to help and to learn from each other. Show-me-boards and effective questioning strategies were used in lessons to assist in the explanation of concepts and in monitoring of learning. The use of named lollipop sticks to distribute teacher questions and student answers more evenly was effective.
- The focus on knowledge and skill development, learning outcomes, assessment for learning strategies (AfL) and the explicit focus on literacy and numeracy development is affirmed.
- Learning took place in a positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated. There was very good rapport evident between teacher and students.
- Learning intentions were clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and were reviewed at the end. Strong links were made with prior learning where appropriate.
- The revision work for term tests that was undertaken during the evaluation was effective and was appropriate for the time of year.
- Very good use was made of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. This included the effective use of data projectors, electronic white boards, digital images and video clips.
- Key word strategies were used effectively to enhance the development of students' literacy skills. Brainstorming of key words and concepts was used effectively in lessons.
- A print-rich environment, which included the display of maps, charts and students' work, was evident in all classrooms visited. The display of students' work in Geography in classrooms is commended. An updated geography notice board is well maintained.
- The TY projects on Ballyfermot displayed in the classroom are impressive. There is a need for greater use of the local area as a resource for the teaching and learning of

Geography at junior cycle. This focus on Ballyfermot and Dublin generally would have both promotional and motivational advantages for students and teachers of Geography.

- The well planned first-year farm study is commended. The investigative study for senior cycle is conducted in fifth year and is well executed. It focusses generally on river studies in Wicklow.
- Homework is regularly given. Students' written work is well monitored and affirmed frequently. Written comments on students' work that promote and guide improvement were evident in some of the samples of students' copy books but there is a need to build on and extend this practice.

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

- The teaching and study of Geography take place in a well-resourced, teacher-based classroom that facilitates the gathering, display and storage of resources.
- The use of one hour classes is working well in relation to Geography and timetabling arrangements for the teaching and study of the subject are good.
- Regular class tests take place in the subject and across the school which help to focus students and to track their progress.
- Continuous Professional Development opportunities are provided for teachers of Geography, for example, in the areas of fieldwork, literacy and numeracy integration and AfL.
- The regular and routine use of ICT in the teaching and learning is actively promoted by management and is very well delivered at classroom level within the subject.
- Participation in activities such as orienteering and cross-curricular outdoor trips are very supportive of the aims and content of the geography syllabuses.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The two teachers of Geography meet formally six or seven times a year and informally on a more regular basis. Minutes of geography department meetings are recorded. Forward planning for improvement features regularly in subject meetings and subject documentation. This is commended. The teachers of Geography are committed to continually reviewing and improving their work.
- The co-ordination of Geography is rotated regularly. This system is working well.
- The quality of individual teacher planning for the lessons observed was very good especially in relation to clearly identifying learning outcomes, promoting active methodologies and ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between teacher input and student activity.
- The two teachers of Geography (one of whom teaches in the VTOS sector, and the other teaches in the post-primary sector) share resources on line and in hard copy. They have developed some common programmes of work and some common tests and they differentiate in the design of examinations and tests for students of varying ability. They also co-operate on fieldwork planning especially on the Wicklow-based Leaving Certificate project.

- The results in Geography are very well analysed by management and by the geography teaching team and are used to set realistic targets for improvement in the context of whole-school DEIS planning.
- Considerable effort has gone into the development and revision of the subject plan for Geography. This is commended. The extensive planning folder includes detailed schemes of work and course plans. The focus in planning documents and in schemes of work on skill and knowledge development, learning outcomes, assessment for learning (AfL) strategies and the explicit focus on literacy and numeracy development is affirmed.
- Geography planning has a focus on reflection and on improvement which is commended. Geography planning should continue to place emphasis on the use of active methodologies and should promote engagement in more local studies at junior cycle.
- Literacy and numeracy planning within the subject is well advanced within the context of DEIS planning as evidenced by the minutes of team meetings and subject plans. There is also recognition of the importance of a focus on cultural diversity within the subject where the student cohort comprises students of different nationalities.
- Planning for TY includes important geography-related modules. Themes covered include population studies, fair trade studies and local area projects.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the two 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, Principal and Geography teachers welcome this very positive report, and consider it to be an accurate evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching in Geography in Kylemore College.

We are delighted that the excellent quality of teaching and learning, along with the very high standard of student behaviour, student engagement and classroom management were commended.

The Board of Management and Principal wish to commend the Geography Department for their hard work and commitment to their students and the school.

**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 geography teachers have welcomed the recommendations of the inspector and have noted the increased emphasis on the use of the local area for fieldwork.

Greater detail will be provided in the use of written comments/feedback to students that promotes improvement.