

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Geography

REPORT

**Luttrellstown Community College
Porterstown Road
Clonsilla
Dublin 15**

Roll number: 76130P

Dates of inspection: 10 December 2014

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	10 December 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning were of very good quality with some excellent practice evident in the lessons observed.
- Learning took place in a positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated.
- Very good use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning.
- The geography teachers are able, dedicated and committed.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need for increased use of supportive written comments by teachers in students' copybooks.
- There should be more use of the local area to stimulate and motivate students and to provide exemplars for more general themes.
- Geography planning should continue to focus on the use of active teaching and learning methodologies in classrooms and on planning for improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Luttrellstown Community College is a co-educational post primary school in West Dublin with a current enrolment of 567 students. The school offers all Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. All junior cycle students study Geography. There are four teachers currently teaching Geography in the school, three of whom were visited during the inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning was of very good quality with some excellent practice evident in the lessons observed. The geography teachers are able, dedicated and committed.
- Teacher instruction was clear, relevant and concise. Key concepts and ideas were well explained during all lessons.
- A variety of effective teaching and learning methodologies were observed. Group 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 traffic light strategies were in place in a number of lessons to assist in the monitoring of learning and teaching.
- The focus on skill and knowledge development, learning outcomes, assessment for learning strategies (AfL) and the explicit focus on literacy and numeracy development is affirmed.
- Teacher talk predominated in a minority of the lessons observed. Greater use of strategies to reduce this was required in these cases. Short term plans that provided an appropriate balance for teacher talk and student activity for some lessons are commended.
- Learning took place in a positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated. There was very good rapport evident between teachers 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.
- There was effective teaching of map work and the integration of map work, based on both physical and economic geography topics in a number of the lessons observed.
- Questioning strategies were effective but in some cases questions needed to be targeted more towards individuals.
- 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 and digital images. The roll out and use of tablets in first year and TY is being closely evaluated at both subject and whole school levels.
- Key word strategies were used effectively to enhance literacy. Brainstorming of key words and concepts was used effectively in most lessons.
- There was very good focus during lessons on current affairs related to Geography.

- 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 and corridors is commended.
- There was a need for greater use of the local area as a resource for the teaching and learning of Geography. The planned local land use survey for TY is commended.
- Homework is given regularly and students' written work is monitored well. Supportive written comments by teachers on students' written work were evident in some of the samples of students' copy books but there is a need to build on and extend this practice within the geography department.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The teaching and study of Geography take place in teacher-based classrooms that facilitate the gathering and display of resources. Seating arrangements that facilitate group work were evident in a number of lessons.
- All geography lessons are taught in a mixed-ability setting which is commended.
- Timetabling arrangements for the teaching and study of Geography are good. Junior cycle students have three geography lesson periods per week and Leaving Certificate Geography students have three single lessons and one double lesson each week. Approximately one third of students study Geography for the Leaving Certificate.
- Regular class tests take place which help to focus students and to track their progress.
- The subject is well resourced by school management. The regular and routine use of ICT in the teaching and learning is actively promoted by management.
- The school's participation in the Gaisce Awards and the Green Schools initiative are very supportive of the aims and content of the geography syllabuses.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The geography department meets formally at least once a term and informally on a more regular basis. Minutes of geography department meetings are recorded. Forward planning for improvement on a termly basis features consistently in subject meetings and subject documentation. This is commended. The teachers of Geography are committed to continually reviewing and improving their work.
- The co-ordinator is very well organised, committed and provides very good leadership.
- The quality of individual teacher planning for the lessons observed was very good.
- The geography teachers share resources on line and in hard copy. They have developed common programmes of work and common tests. They also co-operate on fieldwork planning especially on a 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 targets for improvement.
- A comprehensive geography plan is in place for the current academic year. 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, AfL strategies and the explicit focus on literacy and numeracy development is affirmed. Important developmental work is underway in the context of AfL with the use of comment only marking and the use of success criteria when correcting extended pieces of written work.

- 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 teaching and learning methodologies.
- Literacy and numeracy planning within the subject is well advanced 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 and where students from a wide range of different nationalities are involved.
- Planning for TY includes important geography-related modules on a half-yearly basis. Themes covered include place and location and global responsibility in relation to the environment.

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.
