

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Geography
REPORT

Killinarden Community School
Tallaght, Dublin 24
Roll number: 91337B

Dates of inspection: 14th May 2013



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(s) of inspection	13 and 14 May 2013
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 good quality with some very good practice evident.
- Learning took place in a positive and well-disciplined environment in all lessons evaluated.
- Substantial progress has been made in the effective integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning.
- Timetabling arrangements for the subject are very good with four periods a week in junior cycle and five periods a week in senior cycle.
- Geography subject planning is based on the syllabus content, aims and objectives, key concepts and skills.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater use should be made of the Tallaght area at all levels especially in relation to project and map work.
- Greater use should be made by the geography department of the analysis of exam results for target setting for improvement.
- Geography planning should focus more on active methodologies, assessment for learning strategies, on literacy and numeracy development and on correcting students' written work for improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Killinarden Community School is a post-primary school in Killinarden, Tallaght. The current enrolment numbers 447 students. Students come mainly from the locality. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate, Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA). It does not offer the Transition Year (TY) programme or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The majority of junior cycle students study Geography and a minority of students study Geography as part of Environmental and Social Studies. There is one class group in both fifth year and sixth year studying the subject.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning were of good quality and some very good practice was evident in the lessons observed. Teacher instruction was clear and key concepts and ideas were well explained in all lessons.
- Learning took place in a positive and well-disciplined environment in all lessons evaluated. 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.
- Varied methodologies were used including effective group work. Questioning strategies were effective in most cases but in a small number of classes they needed to be more targeted. The compilation of class dictionaries by one class which contained basic explanations of key terms is affirmed.
- The revision work with examination classes was appropriate for the time of year and two of the lessons involved lively and interactive quizzes as a means of recalling information for revision purposes.
- Very good progress has been made in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning as evidenced by the use made of data projectors, and digital images. The use of recent satellite imagery in one lesson was particularly effective.
- In the lessons evaluated there was insufficient use of the local area as a resource for the teaching and learning of Geography in relation to both map work and project work. Greater use of the Tallaght area should be made in teaching and learning and in the design of locally based projects at all levels. Such projects have both motivational and promotional benefits for the subject and also promote cross-curricular learning and teaching.
- There is an involvement in field work at senior cycle especially in the area of river studies. A well planned and well executed leaving certificate investigative river study that had been undertaken by the students was the theme of two of the senior lessons evaluated. These lessons involved the effective application of practical geographical skills in the context of a river study. The project work of first and second-year students was prominently displayed in classrooms and in the library.
- Homework is regularly given and students' written work which includes note making and note taking is well monitored. Some effective peer correcting was also undertaken. Some supportive comments were evident but more written comments towards improvement

should be provided on students' copy work. Credit for copy work should be given in the school's monthly assessments and term reports.

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. A print-rich environment which includes the display of maps, charts and students' work was evident in all classrooms visited.
- Timetabling arrangements for the teaching of Geography are very good. There are four periods a week for Geography in junior cycle and five periods at senior cycle.
- Formal school assessments take place twice yearly. Monthly class tests also takes place which help to focus students and to track their progress.
- 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. Two of the teachers of Geography are facilitators for courses for newly qualified teachers which is very beneficial.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning is regular and routine and is actively promoted by management.
- The school's Junior and Leaving Certificate examination results in Geography compare well with national norms. These results are analysed by management and by the geography teaching team but these results should form the basis of more focussed target setting for improvement.
- Co-curricular and cross-curricular activities such as orienteering and outdoor hikes are sanctioned by management and organised by members of the geography department.

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 on the school development planning template. The formal meetings 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.
- Two subject co-ordinators are in place, one for junior cycle and one for senior cycle. This sharing arrangement is working well but needs to be kept under review. The geography teachers share resources and they have developed common programmes of work and common tests. The geography department should move towards greater storage of and sharing of resources electronically. They also co-operate on project and fieldwork development.
- 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 for each year group. 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 should also be less content driven, more

reflective and more focussed on continuous improvement. Planning for geography should concentrate more on active methodologies and the integration of AfL in teaching and learning.

- The quality of individual teacher planning is good but the format used varies from teacher to teacher. The very good practice that has been adopted in short-term lesson planning by some teachers should be used by the whole department. The planning templates used by some teachers have a greater focus on learning outcomes, varied methodologies and assessment for learning strategies. Planning needs to be revised in order to place a greater focus on literacy and numeracy development.
- There is a willingness to review the subject planning and delivery in line with the findings and recommendations in this report. The revised planning documents should also include strategies in relation to the consistent 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.