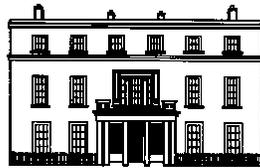


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Geography
REPORT

Coláiste Chríost Rí
Capwell Road,
Cork
Roll number: 625600

Date of inspection: 17 November 2015



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	16 and 17 November
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed in geography lessons was uniformly very good.
- The provision of very good quality formative feedback to students on their work is a key strength of geography teachers' classroom practice.
- Outcomes for students in certificate examinations are strong and uptake of higher level is advancing.
- Recent changes in timetable provision for Geography at junior cycle, and the current positioning of class periods across the weekly timetable for students, present a challenge for geography teachers both in the context of continuity of students' learning and the completion of the prescribed syllabus.
- Collaborative planning is well established and is responsive to recent changes in provision, while individual teacher's planning is of a high standard and is informing classroom practice.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The geography department should, within an action-planning cycle, identify and progress a number of key developmental priorities that should include questioning and cooperative-learning strategies, and a data-informed focus on uptake and achievement patterns in certificate examinations, particularly at junior cycle.
- The geography teachers should maximise the integration of more overt literacy and numeracy strategies into geography lessons.
- School management should prioritise an appropriate spread of geography lessons throughout the week when developing the school timetable.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Chríost Rí is a voluntary secondary school for boys. The school is managed under the auspices of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST) and is set in a residential area within the inner suburbs on the south side of Cork city. The 656 students enrolled are offered Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and both the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning of very good quality was observed in lessons. All lessons were underpinned by a very positive classroom atmosphere and by mutually respectful relationships. Students were challenged by their teachers to actively engage with lesson topics at a pace that reflected the mixed-ability nature of the class groups.
- All lessons observed arose from a coherent plan that linked and developed from previous learning towards the achievement of identifiable learning intentions. Strategies to engage students included clear and appropriate tasks, the use of visual stimulus materials, class discussion and questioning. These discussions and questioning sessions illustrated teachers' clear understanding of the geography syllabus and of the detail of geographical understanding and thinking to be encouraged and developed in their students. A particular focus on targeted and differentiated questioning, to include all students in these mixed-ability classroom settings, should be considered within the context of these very effective discussions.
- Lessons had an appropriate examination focus that was particularly evident in the attention placed on students' thinking in the context of structuring homework questions and supporting students in developing their written answers and diagrams. The emphasis on channelling students' understanding and thinking, in the context of identifying significant relevant points (SRPs), was also fully appropriate for students who were preparing for Christmas and pre-certificate examinations at junior and senior cycle. The provision of very good quality formative feedback to students on their work is a key strength of geography teachers' classroom practice.
- Practical and skills-based tasks were included in lessons. These created an appropriate and context-based balance between teacher inputs and opportunities for students to respond and engage with the topic. This strategy also facilitated teachers to support individual students within the mixed-ability classroom contexts.
- Opportunities to further engage with, and to develop, co-operative learning strategies should be advanced and shared by geography teachers as a development planning priority. Similarly, further collaborative engagement and exploration of teaching and learning frameworks, including assessment for learning and instructional leadership, would be very beneficial in further developing and sustaining current very good classroom practices.
- Local settings and current events were used very effectively in lessons to contextualise particular learning points. Lessons that focused on tourism, industrial location and local rock types used local settings that were familiar to the students to develop their understanding. Geographical skills, particularly the use of ordnance survey (OS) maps in combination with aerial photographs, were also very effectively practised and applied in lessons in the context of location and settlement.

- It was clear that whole-school literacy and numeracy strategies, and the translation of these into classroom strategies, is advancing within the geography department. The department should now maximise the use of more overt approaches to the integration of literacy, particularly in the context of reading and comprehension. Teachers should also focus on identifying areas within which students' numeracy can be further developed.
- Students demonstrated their learning in lessons through their responses to questions, through their contribution to discussions, and through the quality of their completed homework tasks. Assessment of students' learning in lessons could however be further developed by the outlining of more specific and focused learning intentions. The review of learning achieved with students, to identify levels of understanding and to consolidate learning, is an area that requires further attention in some lessons.
- Patterns of uptake of higher level geography, and levels of achievement at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate geography, are strong and reflect the high expectations of teachers for their students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A number of positive developments in whole-school provision have benefitted the students' experience of Geography. Information and communications technology (ICT) developments, including the provision of a digital platform that facilitates and encourages collaboration between teachers and with students, are very positive. All members of the geography teaching team are encouraged to engage with these developments and expand their skills and competencies, as appropriate. The use of a seismograph, situated in a basement room, and links established between the geography department and the recently established horticulture project in the school grounds, are further positive developments.
- The establishment of teacher-based classrooms has resulted in the creation of very good quality visual-learning environments for students in these classrooms. The gradual change to mixed-ability class group configurations in junior cycle is also a very positive development and should stimulate further engagement with differentiated and active teaching and learning strategies.
- The reduction of one class period per week, rotating on an annual basis with History, is an area of concern for geography teachers, as is the positioning on the timetable of the remaining two class periods for Geography, for some class groups. The optimal positioning of these class periods for Geography should be prioritised as the timetable is being created.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual teacher planning and preparation is of a high standard and is informing classroom practice to the benefit of the geography students.
- Collaborative planning is well established and it is clear that the geography teachers have adjusted their curricular plan in an attempt to compensate for the reduction in class periods available at junior cycle.
- A very appropriate TY plan is in place that is skills based, and is centred on the local Cork city area. This plan reflects an appropriate experience of Geography for TY students

to facilitate their subject choice in advance of progression to Leaving Certificate Geography. The plan also maximises the potential provided by the local environment in the context of local studies and urban fieldwork.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.