

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

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**Geography**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Athleague National School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Athleague County Roscommon
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	15308M

**Date of inspection: 18-04-2018**



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agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?**

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

## **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Geography under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area. 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.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## Curriculum Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	18-04-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with acting principal</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to acting principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Athleague National School is a rural co-educational primary school located nine kilometres south of Roscommon town. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. Due to growing enrolments, a third mainstream class teacher was appointed in September 2017. Two part-time special education teachers (SETs) also support the school. Currently, there are sixty-one pupils enrolled.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good; pupils present as motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy their learning in Geography.
- Very effective learning experiences are provided; in particular, the project work observed during the evaluation was of a very high standard.
- The overall quality of teaching in Geography is very good; all teachers place very effective emphasis on teaching subject-specific vocabulary.
- Assessment practices are of a good quality overall; there is scope to further develop assessment-for-learning (AfL) strategies.
- The quality of school planning for Geography is good; however, the specific content to be taught at class levels is not currently documented systematically.
- The school is highly commended for its participation in many projects, and also, for facilitating presentations in Geography from external expert personnel.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To ensure good progression and breadth and balance in all strands of the curriculum, the content to be taught at class levels should be clearly outlined in the whole-school plan for Geography.
- To support pupils in reflecting on their learning in Geography more effectively, AfL strategies should be agreed and implemented at a whole-school level.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of learner outcomes in Geography is very good. Pupils display positive attitudes and are motivated to learn. Their understanding and knowledge of current and prior learning are very good. Pupils have a well-developed sense of place and can describe human and natural features of their local area successfully.

Environmental awareness and care is very evident in the school. Through participation in the Green Schools Programme and An Taisce's National Spring Clean, the pupils are enabled to develop personal and community responsibility for their environment. Pupils from senior classes are engaging currently in the Blue Star Programme, which supports pupils' learning about European countries. Further opportunities should be provided to present learning to others.

Overall, pupils' work is presented to a high standard in copybooks and in project activities. In the group discussion, pupils reported that they enjoy their learning in the subject and cited many examples of specific situations where they could apply their learning to real-life situations.

## **2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE**

Pupils are provided with very high-quality learning experiences in Geography. Pupils are enabled to use a broad range of resources to support their learning, including the use of the environment, photographs and information and communications technology (ICT). Project work observed during the evaluation was of a very good standard. Teachers plan collaboratively for whole-school learning experiences and try to ensure that learning is meaningful. Classroom and school environments support and reinforce geographical learning very effectively. Field trips, nature walks and trails are undertaken. Strong links have been developed within the community and with the parent body. Parents, local experts and guest speakers visit the school to share their knowledge and expertise.

The overall quality of teaching in Geography is very good. Teachers provide highly commendable learning activities, which facilitate individual and collaborative learning opportunities. All teachers place emphasis on teaching subject-specific vocabulary. Lesson content is integrated very successfully with other subject areas and curricular initiatives. These include the Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme, Junior Entrepreneur Programme and the Active School Flag. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is being implemented in the infant classroom, which integrates pupils' learning in Geography.

The overall quality of assessment is good. A range of assessment-of-learning strategies (AoL) was in evidence. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills through observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, quizzes, project work and samples of pupils' work in copybooks and profiles. However, there is scope to further develop AfL strategies. Opportunities should be provided for pupils to discuss and assess their own work and the work of others. The development of assessment checklists and rubrics would support pupils more effectively in middle and senior classes in reflecting on their learning in Geography.

## **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING**

The quality of school planning for Geography is good. Teachers prepare appropriate long and short-term plans to support their teaching. The whole-school plan provides for the three strands of the curriculum. It is praiseworthy that specific European locations and locations in other parts of the world have been identified on a cyclical basis. To ensure good progression and breadth and balance in all strands of the curriculum, the content to be taught at class levels should be delineated clearly. To enhance the effectiveness of school planning, a comprehensive audit of the local area should be undertaken to identify specific natural and human features to be investigated by pupils.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The board of Athleague N.S. welcomes this positive report. We are delighted that the good quality of the pupils learning and engagement with Geography has been affirmed, 'Very effective learning experiences are provided; in particular, the project work observed during the evaluation was of a very high standard. We are encouraged by the findings that, 'Pupils present as motivated, enthusiastic learners who enjoy learning in Geography,' also that, 'The overall quality of teaching in geography is very good; all teachers place very effective emphasis on teaching subject-specific vocabulary'. Athleague N.S. has seen changes in personnel in recent times and was a two teacher school up to this year. Despite this, we are happy to note that our school 'is highly commended for its participation in many projects, and also, for facilitating presentations in Geography from external expert personnel,' further reinforces the positive tone of this inspection report.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The findings and recommendations have been noted and will be used as the basis for future development. We recognise the need to ensure good progression and breadth and balance in all strands of the curriculum. We are confident that our staff will embrace this, as they do with all changes and developments which arise in the curriculum, by ensuring the content to be taught at each class level will be clearly outlined in the whole-school plan for Geography.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies will be agreed and implemented at a whole-school level, to ensure a better assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills. The school has undertaken an environmental audit of the immediate and local environment to identify specific natural and human features to be investigated by pupils. Steps are now in place to incorporate the recommendations in our planning. We will strive, as always, to provide the highest quality teaching in all areas of the curriculum for the children in our school to achieve their full potential.

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;