

## Whole School Plan Geography

### 1. Introductory Statement and Rationale

#### (a) Introductory Statement:

This plan was written by the principal and staff of St .Michael's National School following a review of the current Geography plan and after consultation amongst the staff.

#### (b) Rationale

In keeping with the guidelines laid down by the DES (1999), we focussed on this area of planning to ensure that the revised curriculum for geography was introduced in our school in a well-planned and organised manner. This plan will form the basis of each teacher's long and short term planning in geography and will benefit teaching and learning within our school. This plan resulted from a review of our existing geography plan undertaken in February 2018.

### 2. Vision and Aims

#### (a) Vision

Our school is located in the village of Cloonacool. We have many significant natural features in our local environment, including the Ox Mountains and the River Moy.

We hope that through the teaching of geography in our school that children will have a clear understanding and awareness of their immediate local environment. We have several children from different European countries attending our school and we endeavour to ensure that all children gain an awareness of their native environments. We aim to celebrate difference in addition to promoting cultural awareness. We are currently working towards our 8th Green Flag, in the area of Marine. We place great emphasis on environmental awareness throughout the school and all children are encouraged to appreciate and respect their local environment. We have strong links with our local Tidy Towns Committee and have worked together in the past in an effort to preserve and enhance our local environment.

#### (b) Aims

We endorse the aims of the SESE geography curriculum as outlined in the geography curriculum P. 14:

- To develop knowledge and understanding of local, regional and wider environments and their interrelationships
- To encourage an understanding and appreciation of the variety of natural and human conditions on the Earth
- To develop empathy with people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence
- To develop the ability to use a range of communicative methods, especially those concerned with the development of graphicacy
- To encourage the development of a sense of place and spatial awareness
- To encourage the development of caring attitudes and responsible behaviour towards the

environment, and involvement in the identification, discussion, resolution and avoidance of environmental problems

- To develop an understanding of appropriate geographical concepts

We have prioritised the following short term aims

Short-term Aims:

- We will continue our work under the Marine theme and increase awareness amongst the school population of the importance of preserving and enhancing our local area.

## 1. Curriculum Planning

Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for their relevant class levels. We understand that all strands and all strand units must be covered each year but not all the content objectives need be addressed within a strand unit.

As a staff we consult with each other regularly to ensure there is continuity and progression in the geography programme from class to class, particularly in relation to the selection of contrasting parts of Ireland, European and Non European countries. We differentiate work according to ability and class level. In so far as is possible, teachers will avoid undue repetition of material. We have agreed locations from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class for study of a contrasting place in Ireland, a European and Non European country.

## 2. Skills Development

We are aware that the development of geographical skills is of equal importance to strand content in this curriculum. Class teachers will ensure that throughout their teaching there is a balance between skills development and the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers will refer to appropriate pages within curriculum outlining skills development for their relevant classes.

The skills of geographical Investigation include,

- a sense of place and space
- maps, globes and graphical skills
- geographical investigation skills

Some strategies which we use for developing the skills of the geography curriculum include:

- *Use of Learning through play/ Aistear Programme in the infant classes to develop vocational language*
- Use of the globe across the school
- Use of journey stories e.g. *Rosie's Walk*
- Use of maps of the local area
- Use of Google Earth and Google Maps throughout the school
- Use of formal maps from first class
- Use of OS maps
- Use of symbols, grid references, longitude and latitude and time zones
- Mapping of travel
- Drawing of basic plans and use of scale in the senior classes

### 3. Children's Ideas

Teachers use the children's ideas of place and space as a starting point for all geographical activity. We find out what the children already know by

- Talk and discussion
- Questioning and problem solving
- Listening
- Brainstorming
- Drawings
- Teacher designed tasks and tests

### 4. Approaches and Methodologies

We plan to use the key methodologies of the Primary Curriculum in the teaching of geography

- Active learning
- Problem solving
- Developing skills through content
- Talk and discussion
- Co-operative learning
- Use of the environment

The following are the methodologies specific to the geography curriculum

- Photographs
- Story
- ICT
- Fieldwork
- Maps, globes and atlases
- Models and simulations
- Interview
- Survey
- Artefacts

Teachers follow the recommended sequence for geography: local, regional, national, European and global and reflect it back to their own location. We believe the children's awareness of their local area is paramount however so too, is their understanding of the wider world.

In learning about places teachers use the following methodologies:

Photos, story, ICT, maps, globes and atlases, survey, artefacts, interview.

In learning about the environment teachers use the following methodologies:

Photos, story, ICT, fieldwork, models, maps, globes and atlases, interview.

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In learning about human environments teachers use the following methodologies:

Photos, story, ICT, maps, globes and atlases, interview, survey.

In learning about natural environments teachers use the following methodologies:

Photos, story, ICT, fieldwork, maps, globes and atlases, models and simulations

In learning about other places teachers use the following methodologies:

Photos, story, ICT, maps, globes and atlases, interview, artefacts.

Mapping skills and mapping concepts are developed using the following techniques e.g.:

- The use of mapping stories in the junior and middle classroom
- Drawing of plans and use of aerial photos throughout the school
- Use of Google Earth and Google Maps in the senior classes
- Globes are used in each class throughout the school.
- Atlases are in use in the middle and senior classes
- We have maps of the immediate environment, Ireland, Europe and the World.

Teachers from third to sixth collaborate when choosing maps and atlases. Fieldwork is incorporated into our geography programme through the investigation of our local natural environment and the village of Cloonacool. We bring the children on field trips to local features of interest.

As we are engaging with the theme Our Local Environment as SIP fieldtrips will form part of our planning

## **5. Linkage and Integration**

We acknowledge that the curriculum recommends for cross curricular linkage and integration, teachers will note SESE integration and linkage in their short-term plans.

Geography and Maths – use of survey, graphs, co-ordinates, grid referencing, angles and data.

Geography and History – through the study of civilisations, European and non-European countries

Geography and English – through storytelling and the development of oral language

Geography and Science – through the study of weather, environmental awareness and care and the Green Flag project.

## **6. Multi-Grade Teaching**

St. Michael's National School is a 6 teacher school with five mainstream class teachers. As a result there are certain factors that must be taken into consideration in relation to multi class. Within the classes we will differentiate the work for the different ages by expecting the older children to cover more ground in depth and content and presentation. Children partake in group work, grouped across the classes regardless of age, ability. We will take account of children with different needs and the Special Education Teacher will support the class if the need arises. In the event of using textbooks, they are selected after consultation within the staff. At present we draw on a variety of resources to supplement the teaching of geography in the classroom. Textbooks are used judiciously in all classrooms.

## **7. Assessment and Record Keeping**

## *Refer to Assessment and Record Keeping Policy*

Assessment in geography seeks to achieve a balanced picture of the children's progress in relation to the skills, concepts and content of the curriculum.

Methods we will use:

- Teacher observation of the children's learning as the geography curriculum is implemented
- Work samples, copies and projects & SALF
- Classroom displays of project work
- Feedback from pupils
- End of year reports.

Information gained from assessment will inform future teaching and learning. This information will form part of teacher's classroom and school planning. Teachers share this information with parents at parent teacher meetings and when the opportunity presents itself.

## **8. Children with Different Needs**

### *Refer to Learning Support/Resource policy*

All teachers are familiar with the NCCA guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities and the guidelines for Exceptionally Able Students. These documents inform our Learning Support/Resource Policy.

We endeavour to provide for individual difference, to make the geography curriculum accessible to as many children as possible, so that that all children have the opportunity to experience a rounded environmental education. In order to do this we will consider:

- Teachers will use a mixture of whole-class teaching and group work, with different groups set tasks of various complexities
- Planning topics so that opportunities are provided for alternative investigation for the more/less able
- Teachers will develop their questioning techniques spanning from simple recall to more complex and analytical skills so that all pupils will have opportunities for success
- Different ways of recording and communicating findings will be encouraged: drawing, ICT, written records, oral reports and models
- Intervening to ensure that all children are given direction, stimulus and encouragement that they require
- The exceptional ability child will be encouraged to undertake additional research and recording their geographical findings in a variety of ways
- In the event where children are born abroad or who have lived in other countries they will be invited to share their experiences with the other pupils
- The Special Education Teacher may work with children to support their learning

## **9. Equality of Participation and Access**

### *Refer to Equality Policy*

- Boys and girls will be having equal opportunities to participate in geography lessons and activities and experience all strands and strand units
- Children experiencing any form of difficulty have the support of the Special Education

Teacher.

## **Interculturalism**

*Teachers will refer to the Department of Education and Science Intercultural Education in the Primary School Guidelines for Primary Schools.*

The geography class is used as an opportunity to educate children as to the culture of people from different countries and different cultures e.g. children from other countries. Our geography curriculum celebrates differences in addition to promoting cultural awareness.

## **3. Organisational Planning**

### **1. Timetable**

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction (page 70) a minimum of three hours will be allocated to SESE per week, from first class to sixth, and two and a quarter hours with the infant classes. Geography integrates effectively with literacy through the development of oral language, use of story for mapping and maths through the use of graphs, scales etc.

On occasion, time will be blocked as appropriate. This might occur when:

- working on a (integrated) project
- exploring the local environment
- devising and undertaking a local trail
- working on environmental activities linked to the Green Flag

### **2. Resources and ICT**

Each teacher will be responsible for their own resources. Teachers have a range of resources and reference materials to supplement the teaching of geography in the classroom. One of these resources will be the environment. This may include areas of local geographic interest. The school also uses a range of schemes, programmes, educational software, hardware and reference books that are consistently in use as an aid to curricular implementation. While using the internet to supplement the teaching of Geography in our school teachers will adhere to the school's acceptable user policy for ICT.

### **3. Health and Safety**

*Please refer to our School's Health and Safety statement and Geography Fieldwork Guidelines.*

### **4. Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting**

The curriculum is presented as a yearly cycle

- Teachers will prepare fortnightly and yearly plans
- Teachers use the whole school plan and curriculum to inform their yearly plans.
- Teachers will report on work completed on the Cúntas Míosúil. These will help inform teachers future classroom planning

### **5. Staff Development**

Teachers have access to reference books, resource materials, and websites dealing with geography. Teachers are responsible for keeping these resources up to date. School personnel can research new methodologies and approaches and are encouraged to use these in the classroom and share with colleagues. Teachers are made aware of geography courses available in Sligo

Education Centre and encouraged to attend and share their knowledge with other members of staff. Teachers who have a particular expertise in an area are encouraged to share this with other members of staff, likewise teachers may avail of outside expertise e.g. PDST support, Heritage in Schools scheme, An Taisce etc

## **6. Parental Involvement**

Parents have an important role to play as custodians of local knowledge that can be shared with their children as they explore the various aspects of the local environment. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to support the delivery of this programme by participating in surveys and interviews.

Children and parents from other countries may be invited to share their culture/heritage with the children in the school. Special events are held to focus on the school's SESE curriculum e.g. Green Flag raising ceremony, Action Day, school trips etc.

## **7. Community Links**

People in the local community who have an interest and knowledge in the environment will be invited to speak to the children.

## **■ Success Criteria**

It is our aim that the whole school plan for geography will make a difference to the teaching and learning of geography in our school. We will use the following criteria to assess the success of this plan

- Teacher's preparation is based on this plan
- Procedures outlined in this plan consistently followed throughout the school
- Children's feedback
- Teacher feedback
- Inspectors' suggestions/feedback
- Parental feedback
- School Self Evaluation framework
- Staff will review our short term aims after a three year cycle in the plan.

We will consider if the plan has promoted the key considerations of the geography curriculum

- Geography is about developing a sense of space and place
- Children's ideas of place and space are used as the starting point
- Knowledge and skills are of equal importance
- The primary resource for geography is the environment, starting with the local, regional, national, European and global
- Increased environmental awareness amongst the school population by engaging with the Green School program

## **■ Implementation**

### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities**

All teachers are responsible for the implementation of the geography curriculum in their own classrooms. The environmental and resources audit will be carried out as a staff activity.

## **(b) Timeframe**

Geography has been implemented throughout our school, and will be reviewed after three years. It may be reviewed within the SSE framework.

## **■ Review**

This plan will be reviewed after three years 2021. This will occur during staff meetings/other planning sessions. All staff will be involved in the process of review.

## **■ Ratification and Communication**

This plan was presented to the Board of Management and ratified during Term 3, 2018.

A copy of this plan will be published on the school website.