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Geography Policy

● Introductory Statement and Rationale

Introductory Statement: This plan was originally drafted in 2006 by the Principal and staff of Rathcormac NS. Following attendance at Geography In-service Training and a process of consultation and collaboration among staff members on in-school planning days, we are planning to implement the key messages, skills, content, and methodologies of the Geography curriculum. It was reviewed in the Autumn of 2010 and again in Spring 2024. This plan will form the basis of each teacher's long and short-term planning in Geography. It will inform new or temporary teachers of our approaches and methodologies in this subject area.

Rationale In keeping with the guidelines laid down by the DES, we focussed on this area of planning to ensure that the revised curriculum for Geography was introduced in our school in a well-planned, organised, and consistent manner. We are conscious of the importance of the role Geography plays in helping the child understand and appreciate the natural, human, social and cultural environment in which he/she lives. We have planned for the integrated implementation of Geography particularly within the context of the three SESE subjects. We aim to ensure the implementation of a broad and balanced Geography curriculum throughout the school.

● Vision and Aims

Vision It is our vision that the holistic education of the child must include the study of Geography. In our school we aim to present a Geography programme that is enjoyable, interesting, and active. We hope to stimulate the child's understanding of and sense of belonging to their own place and space. We encourage a hands-on investigative and explorative approach to the child's local environment. We actively encourage pupils to take an interest in other cultures. We aim to develop an appreciation of the diversity of people and places in the wider environment, while encouraging pupils to make connections between their own place and space and that of wider national and international environments. Environmental activities encouraged in our school will foster a positive attitude and sense of responsibility among our pupils for the natural environment and its relationship with the human environment.

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
- 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

Curriculum Planning

1.Strands and Strand Units

Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for his/her class level. Having read the Curriculum documents and Teacher Guidelines 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. We will ensure that that the pupils receive a broad and balanced range of topics and objectives. We carried out an environmental audit and were conscious of the need to study our local natural and human environment throughout the school.

- Infant classes pp. 17-27
- First and second classes pp. 29-43
- Third and fourth classes pp. 45-61
- Fifth and sixth classes pp. 63-84

The three strands of the Geography curriculum are;

Human Environments

Natural Environments

Environmental Awareness and Care.

Strands and Strand Units for Each Class Level

Strand and Strand Units	Junior Infants	Senior Infants
Human Environments		
Living in the Local Community	Our School Keep Safe at School Living in the Local Community Inside My Bedroom Can I help You? I Live Here! Buildings All Around Me. The Farm What Can I Eat?	Getting to School Inside the School Who So I Tell? Let's Get Active Playing Safe Upstairs and Downstairs Rooms in the House Getting Around Family Holiday
People and Places in Other Areas		

Natural Environments

The Local Natural Environment	What Do Your See? Holiday Time	Let's Get Active The Rocky Road Water All Around
Weather	Look At all the Leaves Winter Woollies Let's Look it Up Weather Report Furry Friends	Keep Warm Weather Report A Windy Day

Planet Earth in Space	Day and Night	Turn On Your Lights Shining Bright
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Environmental Awareness and Care

Caring For My Locality	Keeping The Garden Tidy Where Do I Sleep? The Beach	Can We Reuse? Tidy Up! Let's Take Care Watch Out!
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Strands and Strand Units	1 st Class	2 nd Class
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Human Environments

Living in the Local Community	My Local Area How are Homes made? Kind Deeds in Winter Playtime Going to the Playground Working in Ireland Work in my Area Travelling to School Working in Travel	Homes Look Different Travelling to Help Others Helping me Get Better The Shopping Centre Visiting the Shop Map the Parade Making Bales Working at Dublin Airport The Irish Coastguard I am Grateful
People and Places in Other Areas	People in Other Places Autumn Celebrations	India and the Holi Festival Portugal

Natural Environment

The Local Natural Environment	Geography Trail Irish Beaches	Where I Live The River Shannon Soil and Growing Food
Weather	Living in Different Places Wind Turbines Spring Changes Local Weather Weather in Other Countries	Autumn The Story of Rain Winter Changes Weather at Home and Abroad
Planet Earth and Space	Space Exploration Planet Earth Solar Energy	Day and Night in Antarctica Planet Life

Environment Awareness and Care

Caring for my Locality	Rubbish Flossie Donnelly Planting and Gardening	Natural Disasters Endangered Animals
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Strands and Strand Units	3 rd Class	4 th Class
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Human Environments

People Working and Living in the local area	Living in a Community Transport The Way We Communicate The GAA The GAA County Colours Bridges: with a focus on the Golden Gate Bridge, California.	People Living and Working in my Locality Transport-Getting from Here to There Communication
People and Other Lands	Terrific Transport Around the World The Clothes we Wear Homes In Ireland and Around the World Tanzania	Norway Brazil and Its Rainforests

	The Story of Fair trade Shoes of the World Italy United States of America	
People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland		Houses and Homes
County, Regional and National Centres		Ireland-Our Wonderful country

Natural Environment

The Local Natural Environment	Around Ireland's Coast The Wild Atlantic Way The Bogs of Ireland Rivers: with a focus on the Amazon River Mountains in Ireland and Around the World Lakes of Ireland	Wetlands of the World My Local Natural Environment
Land, Rivers and Seas of my County	Trees and Mountains	Rivers and Lakes of Ireland Ireland's Coast: Islands, Bays and Headlands Ireland's Wetlands
Rocks and soils	Rocks and Soil Volcanoes: with a focus on Iceland Unusual Environments	Rocks and Soils Irish Rock Stars
Weather, Climate and Atmosphere	Weather, Climate and Seasons Natural Disasters	Weather Ireland-extreme weather Climate and Climate Change Geography in the News
Planet Earth and Space	Our Solar System Living in Space	Outer Space Inside Space

Environment Awareness and Care

Caring for the Environment	Recycling	Sustainability From Farm to Fork
Environmental Awareness	Tea and Coffee	Minding Our Planet

Geographical investigation skills/Maps, globes, and graphical skills

Using pictures, maps, and globes	Using Maps	Maps Our Wonderful World
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Strands and Strand Units	5th Class	6th Class
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Human Environments

Living and Working in a contrasting part of Ireland	Where we Live Networks-Getting Connected Communications-Keeping in Touch Farming and where our food comes from	
People and Other Lands; County, regional and national centres	A visit to Mexico North America	Berlin The Human Landscape Europe The European Union Japan

		Wear and Where: The Geography of Clothes Making Land our of Water
People Working and living in the local area; People and other lands	Finding our Way –Directions Making Maps La Belle France Generating Power	Human Migration Stable Foods and Main Crops World Heritage Sites Your County Profile: A Project Challenge Tourism-Getting Away from It All
Trade and Development Issues		Borders Trading Around the World

Natural Environments

Land, rivers and seas of Ireland (and the world): Weather, climate, and atmosphere	Water The World's Seas and Oceans Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea	
Weather, climate, and atmosphere	World Climate Where the Wind Blows Extreme Weather and Climate Change	Erosion
Planet Earth and Space	Our Place in Space	
Physical features of Europe and the World	Landmarks-Places that Stand Out!	Plate Tectonics Exploration Ice Natural Disasters
Rocks and Soils	Natural Resources-Gifts from nature The Ground Beneath Our Feet	
The Local natural Environment	Habitats	

Environmental Awareness and Care

Caring for the Environment	Animal Migration	Invasive Species and Unwelcome Guests	
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Maps, globes, and graphical skills: Using Maps

Using pictures, maps, and globes		Using Maps
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2. Skills Development

We are aware that the development of Geographical skills is of equal importance to strand content in this curriculum.

The skills of Geographical Investigation include,

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

These skills will be developed through the content of the strands and strand units.

Strategies for development of these skills may involve the children being actively involved in fieldwork and outdoor investigations (Teacher Guidelines p.68). The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in an age-appropriate way, from infants to 6thclass. We are aware of the progression and development of these skills throughout the school.

By following the content of this curriculum and by developing the geographical skills the children in our school are given opportunities to work as geographers at every class level.

3. Children's ideas

We plan to use the children's ideas of places and space as a starting point for all geographical activity.

We will find out what the children already know by

- Picture representation
- Talk and discussion
- Open questioning and problem solving
- Active listening
- Annotated drawings
- Brainstorming
- Concept maps
- Free investigation of Geography materials
- Teacher designed tasks and tests

Children in our school will be encouraged to question and openly investigate. We do this to build on the children's prior knowledge and awareness of the subject area.

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.

Teachers particularly at Senior level will follow the recommended sequence for Geography – local, regional, national, European, and global and then reflecting it back to the child's own location.

In learning about our own natural and human environments we intend to use methodologies specific to Geography:

- Fieldwork
- Observation
- Annotated drawings, sketches
- Using photographs/photo packs
- Survey
- Trails
- Interview
- Story
- Use of news and topical affairs
- Experiments/investigations
- Project work
- Maps and mapping
- ICT (Information and Communication Technology) -use of laptops and iPads for project work, quizzes, YouTube videos, scoilnet, museum.ie, etc.
- Artefacts

We have completed a Geographical Environmental audit of our school grounds and immediate locality and identified features that can be focused on when embarking on local environmental studies and participating in fieldwork. We will develop scavenger hunts that can be used from year to year.

The following are some ideas which the school will use to enhance delivery of the Geography Curriculum:

- Nature walks around school and the village including Countess Markievicz Park (opposite the school), the local History Center, The Old School, St Colmcille's Church etc.

- Field trips e.g. Park's Castle, the R.N.L.I. station (Rosses Point), Hazelwood and other woodland areas, Sligo Abbey, Carrowmore Tombs, Glencar Lake and Waterfall, local beaches, local library, etc.
- Further afield e.g. Arigna Coal Mines, Marble Arch Caves etc.
- Invite guest speakers/parents with an area of expertise, to give talks to classes eg volunteers with the R.N.L.I., talks in relation to the Green Schools including Climate Change, the Heritage Council etc.

5.Linkage and Integration

The linkage of the three strand units in Geography is encouraged. We have identified some of the links as follows:

Local human environment links with the local natural environment Rocks and soils and Weather link with a study of the local natural environment. Land, rivers and seas of my county and the physical features of Ireland are also strongly linked to the study of the local natural environment. The strand Environmental Awareness and Care is by its nature, linked strongly with the other two strands.

The Geography curriculum lends itself to integration with other curricular areas, particularly within the SESE framework.

We have identified some other major areas of integration within the content of the geography programme as follows:

Properties and Characteristics of materials in science links strongly with a number of strands units of the geography curriculum- rocks and soils, local natural environment, homes and buildings in the local human environment, weather.

Light and Forces in science can be linked to the strand unit Planet earth in Space

Environmental awareness and Care in science is almost identical to the similar strand in geography

Work on my family, home and school will integrate with History

Maths work on data and graphs can be explored while engaging in surveys and trails of the local human and natural environments.

We encourage the use of drama, visual arts, and music as a means of exploring geographical topics

6.Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment in Geography seeks to achieve a balanced picture of the children's progress in the acquisition of knowledge and skills and in the development of important positive attitudes.

Methods we will use:

- Teacher observation of the children's learning as the geography curriculum is implemented
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Work samples e.g. finished projects, drawings, and investigations.
- Parent/pupil feedback

These records will inform the teacher as to the progress of the child and the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies.

7.Children with Different Needs

It is important that all children experience a rounded environmental education. Geography plays a pivotal role in this education and so we will do our best to ensure that every child will have opportunities to engage in learning activities appropriate to their abilities.

■ Teachers will use a mixture of whole class teaching and group work, with different groups set tasks of various complexities when appropriate

■ Content and pace may be varied as the need arises

■ Teachers will use a variety of methodologies to cater for the different learning styles in their class

■ Different ways of recording and communicating findings will be encouraged: drawing, ICT, written records, oral reports, and models will be included. When the need arises teachers may offer a variety or recording methods following a whole class activity

- All children benefit from active involvement in the environment so all will be encouraged to participate in fieldwork.
- Children who were born abroad or who have lived in other countries will be invited to share their experiences with the other pupils.
- SNA assistance and collaborative work with resource teachers will be encouraged as and when the need arises

8. Equality of Participation and Access

Geography will be for all pupils in our school regardless of age, gender, or ability.

Organisational Planning

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction (page 70) SESE is a minimum of two and quarter hours in infant years and three hours for classes 1 – 6 per week

On occasion, time will be blocked as appropriate. This might occur, for example, when working on an integrated project or exploring the local environment.

Teachers might use some of their discretionary curriculum time (2 hours per week) for SESE as appropriate.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

Individual teachers are encouraged to use this school plan as a basis for planning within their own classrooms. Parents are informed of children's progress in Geography at parent teacher meetings and end of year reports.

Staff Development

The staff members are made aware of any opportunities to attend in-service workshops and summer courses that may extend our understanding of Geography. Opportunities are given to share any resulting ideas or materials with the whole staff.

Parental Involvement

When appropriate, parents from distant other countries may be encouraged to share their heritage with the rest of the school.

Community Links

We have identified the following individuals and agencies who may be able to support our Geography programme:

- People who work in the school eg Caretaker, Secretary etc may be invited to talk to junior classes about their work in the school.
- People who work in our local area eg shopkeeper, post mistress, member of An Garda Síochána, vet, nurse, doctor, or others who are involved in local community or sports groups may be asked to facilitate a visit by a class or be invited to visit a class as part of our study of local human environments.
- Green School's Co-ordinator.
- Members of Sligo Town Tidy Towns group.
- Our local tourist office is a rich resource of pictures and maps.
- The local library will be a source of knowledge for the children.
- Children will be encouraged to seek out books that may be of relevance to a particular strand unit.

Success Criteria

We shall review this whole school plan in the future under the following headings:

- How methodologies listed in this whole school plan are working in the classroom?
- How well are geographical concepts learnt by the children?
- How well are the children's geographical skills progressing: a sense of place and space, geographical investigation skills, and mapping?
- Are the key messages being adhered to?

- Resources- use of, maintenance and upkeep- are there any concerns or issues?
- Are classes engaging in outdoor survey and fieldwork and how well are the procedures for fieldwork working in the school?
- Is there evidence of displays, projects etc in school?
- Results of assessment, as set out in this plan, may be used to assess the progress of pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities

Class teachers are responsible for the implementation of the Geography programme for their own classes. They will provide feedback on how the plan is progressing at regular intervals throughout the year. We intend to put Geography on a number of staff meeting agendas during the year.

Review

This revised policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the 16th of April 2024.

Signed: Thomas Hevel, (Chairperson, BOM)

Signed Geraldine Connell. (Principal)