

Geography
Whole School Plan
St. Colman's N.S.

Geography

■ Title: Whole School Plan for SESE Geography – a work in progress

■ Introductory Statement and Rationale

(a) Introductory Statement:

This plan was drafted by the staff of St. Colman's.

This plan will form the basis of each teacher's long and short term planning in Geography and so will influence teaching and learning in individual classrooms.

It will also inform new or temporary teachers of our approaches and methodologies in this subject area.

This plan is being drafted in November 2013

(b) Rationale

We recognise that Geography is an integral part of the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education of our pupils. In our school SESE provides opportunities for the child to explore, investigate and develop an understanding of the natural, human, social and cultural environment in which he/she lives and of those in the wider world.

* (pg 2-5 TG for further info)

The distinct role Geography plays in SESE is one of helping the child understand and appreciate the physical and human features of their immediate and wider environments.

This plan is drawn up in response to the 1999 Primary School Curriculum, to conform to the principles outlined in this curriculum and to review our practices in light of these principles.

As a whole school plan it guides the organised teaching and learning in St Colmans.

■ Vision and Aims

* Attach mission statement

(a) Vision

In line with our school ethos we believe that the Geography Curriculum enables children to make sense of the natural and human environments in which they live and in the wider world. As such, Geography is pivotal to each child's rounded environmental education. Geography prepares pupils to contribute and play a role in their communities by encouraging them to appreciate the interdependence of people. Geography promotes an understanding of and respect for different cultures and ways of life. The Geography curriculum fosters children's responsibility for the immediate and wider environments.

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
- To develop a school garden.
- To acquire additional resources
- To carry out an environmental audit of the locality

■ Curriculum Planning

1. Strands and Strand Units

Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for his/her class level and indeed for each other's class levels. This is to ensure a coherent programme throughout the school. All strands and all strand units must be covered each year but not all the content objectives need be addressed within a strand unit.

The three strands of the Geography curriculum are: Human Environments; Natural Environments and Environmental Awareness and Care.

Infants and First and Second classes

We are aware that the content of the Geography Curriculum at this level is

Human Environments	Natural Environments	Environmental Awareness and care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Living in the local community;</i> • <i>People and places in other areas</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The local natural environments</i> • <i>Weather</i> • <i>Planet Earth in Space</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Caring for my locality</i>

We are aware that one of the key messages in this Geography Curriculum is that children start developing geographical concepts by exploring their local, immediate environment.

In this way the children get a strong sense and appreciation of their own place. This will be reflected in our teaching at this level and subsequent levels.

Third and Fourth classes

Human Environments

Natural Environments

Environmental Awareness and care

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People living and working in the local area</i> • <i>People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland</i> <p><i>Explore these 2 strand units through a selection of sub-units:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>People and communities</i> 2. <i>Natural Environmental features and people</i> 3. <i>Settlement: homes and other buildings</i> 4. <i>People at Work</i> 5. <i>Transport and communication</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People and other lands</i> <p><i>Choose an environment in another European country And an environment in a non – European country.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>County, regional and national centres.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The local natural environment</i> • <i>Land, rivers and seas of my county</i> • <i>Rocks and soils</i> • <i>Weather, climate and atmosphere</i> • <i>Planet earth in space</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Environmental awareness</i> • <i>Caring for the environment</i>
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We are aware that the children’s knowledge and sense of awareness is extending to wider environments at county, regional, national and international level. This then is reflected back to our own locality.

When choosing countries to study under the strand “Human Environments” these are our considerations:

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- a. Pupils from international communities in our school.
- b. Staffs own experience of and interest in other countries.
- c. Current resources already in place for other countries.
- d. Consideration of the history curriculum with possibilities of integration in mind.

We never forget the children’s growing knowledge of their own local environment.

Fifth and Sixth classes

We are aware that the content of the Geography curriculum at this level is

Human Environments

Natural Environments

Environmental Awareness/care

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People living and working in the local area</i> • <i>People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland</i> <p><i>Explore these 2 strand units through a selection of sub-units:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>People and communities</i> 2. <i>Natural Environmental features and people</i> 3. <i>Settlement: homes and other</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The local natural environment</i> • <i>Land, rivers and seas of Ireland</i> • <i>Rocks and soils</i> • <i>Weather, climate and atmosphere</i> • <i>Planet earth in space</i> • <i>Physical features of</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Environmental awareness</i> • <i>Caring for the environment</i>
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<p><i>buildings</i></p> <p>4. <i>People at Work</i></p> <p>5. <i>Transport and communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People and other lands</i> <p><i>Choose an environment in another European country</i></p> <p><i>And an environment in a non – European country.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>County, regional and national centres.</i> • <i>Trade and development issues.</i> 	<p><i>Europe and the world.</i></p>	
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The spiral nature of our curriculum is evident now as wider global environments are introduced at this level. In addition more complex geographical issues are explored in the above curriculum.

*In order to ensure continuity of content and to avoid unnecessary duplication, teachers will select content objectives and places of study collectively.

As is recommended in the curriculum, children will have the opportunity to explore one European and one non European country per annum from 3rd class to 6th class.

We will endeavour to include at least one developing country when choosing a non European environment over this four year period.

2. Skills Development

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

The skills working as a Geographer are :

- A sense of place and space
- Maps , globes and graphicacy
- Geographical investigation skills .(Questioning , Observing , Predicting , Investigating and experimenting , Estimating and measuring , Analysing , Recording and communicating , Evaluating)

These skills will be developed through the content of the strands and strand units. Strategies for development of these skills will involve the children being actively involved in fieldwork, trails and outdoor investigations as suggested in Teacher Guidelines starting on page 68.

- A sense of place and space will be developed through direct and indirect experiences first in relation to the child's own home and immediate surroundings but will later extend to include wider environments.
- The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in age appropriate way from infants to 6th class and will encompass a wide range of graphical activities
- The geographical investigation skills will be included in various indoor and outdoor Investigation work.

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.

Children's ideas

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

*We find out what the children already know by

- Talk and discussion
- Play and experimenting
- Enquiry process and Questioning
- Annotated drawings
- Brainstorming
- Concept maps
- Concept cartoons

We do this to build on the children's previous knowledge or to challenge the existing ideas if they are not accurate.

4. Approaches and Methodologies

Our teachers will follow the recommended sequential approach for Geography whereby local areas are first studied followed by regional, national, European and global studies.

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.

*In learning about our own natural and human environments we are using these methodologies specific to Geography:

Fieldwork and trails
Survey
Models
Maps
Story

* We have completed a Geographical Environmental audit of our school grounds and immediate locality and identified features and trails that can be focused on when embarking on local environmental studies.

These are:

School Grounds

Main Street

River Baiteogue and Stradbally Lake

* In learning about distant places we will use these approaches and methodologies:

Atlases, maps and globes

Interviews

ICT

Photographs

School twinning

As part of our Geography programme the distinctive skill of graphicacy will be developed through exploring aerial perspective, use of symbols, grids, scale, orientation and the language of spatial relations.

* The resources we have / need to acquire for this are:

- ✓ Maps or plans of classrooms
- ✓ Map of our school
- ✓ Local Street plan
- ✓ Ordnance Survey maps of County
- ✓ Ireland Wall maps
- ✓ Europe wall maps
- ✓ World Wall maps
- ✓ Atlases – a variety of different ones is a good idea – each have their own strengths
- ✓ Globes
- ✓ Satellite Images : www.met.ie
- ✓ Leisure maps / Tourist maps showing trails etc
- ✓ Transport route maps : those found on bus timetables
- ✓ Aerial photos particularly of local areas
- ✓ Historical Maps or previous OS versions Local Library
- ✓ Electronic Maps: Internet has good interactive maps.

6. Linkage and Integration

Linkage: When we are studying the local environment, we will study both the natural and human environments and the effect one has on the other.

When we are studying distant places under the Human Environment strand, we also learn about the

natural environments of these places.

The strand Environmental Awareness and Care is by its nature, linked strongly with the other two strands.

Integration:

We will explore possibilities to integrate the SESE subjects at all class levels, We will refer to the Teacher Guidelines in Geography , History and Science in order to choose topics or themes for SESE integration. In particular the use of environmental trails in Geography will complement the study of living things in Science while the strand of Environmental Awareness and Care is common to both curricula. The use of trails will also lead to the study of how places and features have been shaped by the actions of people in the past and so integrate naturally with Local studies in History.

Opportunities that exist for integration with other subject areas are :

- SPHE : The development of the child's sense of identity sand citizenship
- Mathematics ; The skills outlined in mapping and graphicacy
- Visual Arts: Aesthetic awareness in the environments and Making drawings.
- Physical Education: Outdoor and adventure activities.
- Language: Discussion of ideas and relationships in Geography. The language of location, direction and position.

7. Multi-Grade Teaching

The use of an integrated approach within SESE and the broader curriculum will facilitate blocks of time to be utilised in an efficient way and will be particularly useful to our multi class situation. We will differentiate the work for the different ages by setting tasks for the older children that will demand more complexity in terms of content, process and outcome.

We will provide resources for each class level so that they can work independently as another class level is being attended to.

8. Teaching Arrangements

Fifth and sixth class teachers presently alternate classes for one hour per week, one teacher teaches Geography to both 5th and 6th class (once during the swap and on a second timetabled slot with their own class) while the second teacher facilitates the history curriculum to both 5th and 6th class in a similar manner.

- Jnr/Snr Infants – shared curriculum
- First/ Second – Year 1/Year 2
- Third/Fourth - Year 1/Year 2
- Fifth/Sixth - Year 1/Year 2

9. Assessment and Record Keeping

As in all subject areas Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning of SESE Geography We as a staff have a common understanding of its purpose and the ways in which the progress of children in geography will be assessed, documented and reported.

Assessment in geography in our school will fulfil the following roles :

- A diagnostic role – to identify areas of difficulty in order to respond to the needs of the child.
- A summative role- to establish the outcomes of learning after completing a unit of work.
- An evaluative role – to assist teachers in assessing their own practice, methodologies, approaches and resources.

We recognise that assessment techniques used in Geography must seek to assess progress in

- a) Children's knowledge of the environment and of the world.
- b) Children's ability to use geographical skills
- c) Children's development of attitudes

The assessment tools we will use will range from the informal means to the more structured approaches.

*Methods we will use are ;

- Teacher observation of the children's learning as the geography curriculum is implemented
- Teacher designed tasks and tests at the end of units of work.
- Work samples eg. Finished projects and investigations.

These records will inform the teacher of the progress of the child; the effectiveness of teaching methodologies employed and will also inform future planning.

The assessment records will form the basis for reporting and discussing the child's progress with parents. This information will be relayed at Parent Teacher Meetings and in annual school reports.

8.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.
- 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.
- Map work will be graded for the less able and the more able students.
- Different ways of recording and communicating findings will be encouraged: drawing, ICT, written records, oral reports and models.
- All children benefit from active involvement in the environment so all will be encouraged to participate in fieldwork.
- The exceptional ability child will be encouraged to undertake additional research and recording their geographical findings in a variety of ways.
- Children who were born abroad or who have lived in other countries will be invited to share their experiences with the other pupils.
- Provision will be made for children with physical difficulties.
- We will refer to the NCCA Guidelines in this regard.
- Children with general Learning difficulties will be catered for in the teaching and learning of Geography

All teachers will familiarise themselves with the Draft Guidelines for Children with General Learning

Disabilities (NCCA)

10. Equality of Participation and Access

- *Boys and girls will be having equal opportunities to participate in geography lessons and activities.
- *Equal opportunity will be given to boys and girls to experience all strands.
- *Provision for children experiencing any form of disadvantage or whose first language is not English
The Geography programme in our school will allow children to learn of and come to value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in Ireland and throughout the wider world and so promote cultural awareness.

■ Organisational Planning

10. Timetable -

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

One hour of this time will be spent on Geography.

- *On occasion, time will be blocked as appropriate. This might occur when
 - working on a integrated project
 - exploring the local environment

11. Resources and ICT

*As stated in Section 4 we will complete an environmental audit of the immediate locality and will use it as a resource.

We have a supply of age appropriate equipment for carrying out weather investigations.

Our resources for mapping are outlined in section 4 above.

We use text books as a resource in our teaching of geography.

We intend to build on our current a stock of photographs of the local human and natural environment which will be used as a methodology for teaching Geography.

Education Resource Packs such as

“Agri ware”

“Trocaire”

“ GAA ar aghaidh”

are used to support the curriculum.

Environmentalists in the community will be asked to talk to the children and share their knowledge with them.

* In relation to ICT :

We will make use of data handling programs to record and analyse geographical findings.

We have bought software with a geographical focus for use in our computers.

We have DVD's / videos that show places of relevance to the programme we have planned.

We have access to the internet so that we can use the web as a geographical resource and we have identified some useful websites. See attached sheet for this list.

Our current stock of resources is outlined on the attached document.

* We will seek to acquire the following additional resources and materials :

More Globes

Photographs

12. Health and Safety

* We have a Health and Safety policy in place in our school which covers safety concerning the handling of equipment and out of school activities such as fieldwork (See Geography Teacher Guidelines P 74 – 78 for guidance on such a policy)

Teachers will consult the Principal whenever it is proposed to engage in fieldwork.

During practical work teachers will be aware of the safety implications of any exploratory or investigative work to be undertaken. Successful and enjoyable investigations require sensible planning, good supervision and adherence to safety rules.

Outdoor work will be based in areas that are accessible for children, teachers and helpers and that are safe. Preliminary visits by teachers to the site will be necessary to identify potential hazards. If there are apparent dangers then a more suitable habitat will be selected for study. Habitat studies involve children in working with plants and animals, and teachers will be made aware that some children may be allergic to some animals and plants.

When designing investigative activities teachers will find useful safety advice in the *Teacher Guidelines for Science* and in *Safety in School Science (An Roinn Oideachais 1996)*.

We will also consult the “Be Safe” handbook (The Association for Science Education) for advice on safety during such activities

13. Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting.

Teachers will consult this Whole School Plan and the curriculum documents for Geography when they are drawing up their long and short term plans.

Teachers will include all the strands and strand units every year and will select objectives within the strand units each year. Staff teaching the same class level will decide collaboratively on objectives chosen and will inform subsequent teachers of content covered to ensure continuity in our spiral curriculum. Where it is meaningful and suitable Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with the other SESE subjects of History and Science.

Each teacher will have a long term plan for the year drawn up collaboratively with teachers of the same class level. Individual teachers will then take these yearly outlines and tailor them to the needs of their own classes in their short term planning.

Cúnais Míósúil will assist in recording work covered, in evaluating progress in Geography and in informing future teaching.

14. Staff Development

- Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites dealing with Geography. Staff will be encouraged to research and try out new approaches and methodologies. Mrs Caroline O'Donnell, Mrs. Sharon Carroll and Ms. Anna Mc Donald will be responsible for keeping resource material up to date and will arrange for opportunities for resources to be assessed for purchase and for new approaches to be piloted in the school.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend in service workshops and courses on Geography in order to enhance their understanding and teaching of the subject. They will up skill other staff in what they have learned by sharing the expertise acquired at these courses during staff meetings.
- The culture in our school is one that encourages the sharing of experience and good practice.
- We have secured support from an SESE cuiditheoir this year with regard to the planning and implementation of the Geography curriculum.

15. 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 are encouraged to come to the school to help out in the delivery of this programme by

- a. participating in surveys and interviews
- b. by helping out in supervision of fieldwork when/if needed
- c. Talking to the children about their lives, work, cultural and leisure interests.

Parents are invited to celebrate and view results of projects, surveys, investigations in the school or read about them in the school newsletter.

Parents will be encouraged to invite the children to view places of interest like orchards, farms or distinctive natural environments with which they are familiar.

Parents from distant lands will be encouraged to share their heritage with the rest of the school if they so wish or if it is appropriate.

Parents will be advised to study the Primary School Curriculum; Your child's learning, Guidelines for Parents (NCCA); The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school, NCCA DVD (2006).

16. Community Links

- People in the local community who have an interest and knowledge in the environment will be invited to speak to the children.
- The local library will be a source of knowledge for the children.
- Local businesses will be approached to host a visit to a factory or other work –place
- Local farms encourage school visits for local studies of a rural area. The discussion of farm safety issues will be an essential element in the preparation of such visits.
- The work of some national agencies relates to aspects of the Geography programme. As well as accessing materials produced by these agencies specifically for schools, we will welcome visits by speakers from these organisations. i.e. Bord Na Mona , Duchais , ESB , Tree Council
- Personnel from Concern/ Trócaire / Fair Trade will be invited to speak with the senior pupils about trade and development issues and issues involving the developing world such as famine and fair trade

■ Success Criteria

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

- How individual teacher preparation, planning and teaching reflects this plan.
- Are procedures outlined in this plan consistently followed? i.e. procedures for fieldwork , assessment.
- How methodologies listed in this whole school plan are working in the classroom
- Resources
- 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
 1. The primary resource for geography is the environment, starting with the local, then regional, national, European and global.
 2. Knowledge and skills are of equal importance.
 3. Geography is about developing a sense of place and space.

*Means of assessing the outcomes of the plan will include

- Revisiting the aims of this plan as a staff
- Teacher feedback
- Children's feedback
- Inspectors reports / suggestions
- Results of class assessment

■ Implementation

(a) *Roles and Responsibilities.

The plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff members. Ms. Róisín Brennan, Ms. Aisling Kelly and Mrs. Collette Hanlon will have responsibility for the following:

- Geographical audit of school grounds and immediate locality.
- Fieldwork trails and packs.
- Purchase , maintenance and storage of resources
- Leading the development of new methodologies identified.
- Liaising with community organisations and relevant agencies.
- The development of ICT as a learning tool in Geography and the vetting of websites.
- Attendance at up skilling workshops and course providing feedback to staff.

■ Review

■ Date – September 2015

* It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the Geography curriculum. This plan was previously reviewed in November 2014 and will be reviewed again in the September 2015.

On this date we will refer to the tasks in our action plan and check that they have been completed in accordance with the agreed time frame.

Those involved in the review will be :

- Principal
- Class teachers
- Post holder
- Parents
- BOM / DES
- PCSP Cuiditheoir

■ Ratification and Communication

This review was ratified by the Board of Management on 22/10/'15

Signed: