

Whole School Plan for

Geography

For

*Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál
Creagh,
Ballinasloe*

Geography

■ Title: Whole School Plan for SESE Geography

■ Introductory Statement and Rationale

(a) Introductory Statement:

This plan was drafted by the staff of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál during the school year 2006-2007. Following attendance at Geography In-service Training and follow-up in school planning we are embarking on the implementation of the key messages, skills, content and methodologies of the Geography curriculum.

This plan will form the basis of each teacher's long and short term planning in Geography. It will document our approaches and methodologies in this subject area. This plan was drafted in 2007 after a process of consultation between the staff.

(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.

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 our school.

■ Vision and Aims

(a) Vision:

Our school mission statement states that we will promote the full and harmonious development of the individual - intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual and that we will present a varied curriculum so as to allow all to achieve some level of success. In effect as a school community we aspire to enable each and every child to reach his/ her full potential. We are aware of the contribution SESE makes to the harmonious development of the child. 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 environment.

(b) Aims

We endorse the aims of Social, Environmental and Scientific Education as outlined on Page 4 of the SESE Geography Curriculum Statement.

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

■ Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units

Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for his/ her own class levels and indeed for each other's class levels. This is to ensure a coherent programme throughout the school. As children move from one classroom to another teachers liaise with each other to ensure continuity in progression.

We realise 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.

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">• Living in the local community;• People and places in other areas• The local natural environments• Weather		
Planet Earth in Space	Caring for my locality	

-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.

-We recognise the emphasis placed in this curriculum on starting with children's ideas at every level.

-We agree that knowledge and skills are of equal importance.

Third and Fourth classes

We are aware that the curriculum for Third and Fourth is as follows:

Human Environments	Natural Environments	Environmental Awareness and care
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People living and working in the local area• People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland		

Explore these 2 strand units through a selection of sub-units:

- People and communities*
- Natural Environmental features and people*
- Settlement: homes and other buildings*
- People at Work*

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,*

-a sense of space and place

-mapping and graphical skills

will be developed through the context of the strands and strand units.

-Strategies for development of these skills will involve the children being actively involved in fieldwork, outdoor investigations as suggested in Teacher Guidelines starting on page 68.

The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in age appropriate way in all classes.

-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
- Questioning and listening
- KWL Charts
- Annotated/ labelled drawings
- Brainstorming
- Concept maps

We do this to build on the children's previous knowledge and to address any misconceptions they may have.

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

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

- Fieldwork
- Photographs
- Artefacts
- Survey
- Interview
- Models
- Maps

-We are in the process of compiling 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.

-When exploring other places we will consider these approaches and methodologies:

- Artefacts
- Atlases, maps and globes
- Interviews
- Photographs
- Textbooks
- Establishing links schools in other places.
- ICT

- We have a selection of different atlases available in the school..

- We aim to acquire a globe for each classroom.

- We have Wall maps of Ireland, Europe and the World and aim to acquire a variety of different types of maps (a map of the local area, a map showing our school, aerial photographs) in order that children experience a map- rich environment.

5.Linkage and Integration

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

When we are studying distant places under the Human Environment strand, we also consider the natural environments of these places.

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

Integration: we will explore possibilities to integrate the SESE subjects at all class levels, teachers create their own integrated topics and / or referring to the Teacher Guidelines in Geography, History and Science.

Integration of History and Geography:

When choosing a European and a non European country in the Human Environments Strand, we shall consider our choices in History under the “Life, society, work and culture in the Past” strand (for example: If we choose Germany in Geography, we could choose to focus on WW2 in History; Italy – Renaissance under Eras of conflict and Change in History; Britain – Industrial Revolution

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 at the end of units of work
- KWL Charts , Annotated drawings , Concept maps etc.
- Work samples

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

Children with Different Needs

We feel that it is important that all children experience a rounded environmental education. As Geography plays a pivotal role in this education, 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.
- Children will be provided with opportunities to work co-operatively.

Equality of Participation and Access

We will endeavour to make Geography accessible to all.

■ Organisational Planning

Timetable

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction (page 70) we allocate three hours per week for SESE - that is one hour per week for geography.

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

- working on a integrated project
- exploring the local environment

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

Resources and ICT

- We are in the process of compiling an environmental audit of the immediate locality and intend to use it as a resource.
- We have discussed locating a large scale map of our school for mapping purposes.
- We have access to the internet so that we can use the web as a geographical resource.
- We use text books as a resource in our teaching of geography.
- Education Resource Packs such as ‘Dig in’ from Agriaware; ‘Our World Our Future’ from Irish Aid, “Something Fishy” from Bord Iascaigh Mhara, ‘The Energy File’ from Sustainable Energy Ireland etc are used to support the curriculum.
- Environmentalists and other experts in the community may be asked to talk to the children and share their knowledge with them.

Health and Safety

We have a Health and Safety policy in place in our school which covers safety concerns around out of school activities, in this subject fieldwork.

Individual Teachers’ Planning and Reporting

- Individual teachers go into more detail re content, skills, resources needed, methodologies, recording of work and assessment in their short term planning.
- Cúntais Míósúil assist in evaluating progress in Geography and inform future teaching.
- Parents are informed of children’s progress at Geography at parent teacher meetings and in end of year reports.
- Teachers are aware of the curriculum covered at each class level in order to ensure a coherent , broad and balanced programme is experienced by the children by the time they leave sixth class.

Staff Development

We will attend any In-service training and will consider workshops and summer courses that may extend our understanding of Geography as a distinct subject and as part of SESE.

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 may be encouraged to help out in the delivery of this programme by participating in surveys and interviews.
- Parents from other countries may be encouraged to share their heritage with the rest of the school if they so wish or if it is appropriate.

Community Links

- People in the local community who have an interest and knowledge in the environment may be invited to speak to the children.
- Personnel from Concern/ Trócaire / Fair Trade/Goal/ Bothar etc may be invited to speak with the senior pupils about trade and development issues.

■ 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
- Resources
- How procedures for fieldwork are working in the school.
- 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.

Implementation

We have embarked on the implementation of this Whole School Plan for Geography and aim to gradually introduce the newer elements.

We will continue with fieldwork in the local area as we recognise this as being a central component of the curriculum.

Review

This Whole School Plan for Geography will be reviewed in 2010 and any necessary changes will be made.

Ratification and Communication

This Whole School plan for Geography was communicated to the Board of Management and was ratified on 25.09.2007.