



Whole school plan for

Geography

St. Ronan's National School - Cloonloo

## **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

### **Introductory Statement:**

This plan was created by the staff of St. Ronan's N.S.

### **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. Geography is the study of the Earth, its inhabitants and the inter-relationships, between them in the context of the three themes place, space and environment. We wish to ensure that children within our school receive a broad, balanced and coherent understanding of these themes from a local to global level. Through the geography curriculum in our school we want to foster an appreciation of the environment and the notion that we are all custodians of the earth for future generations.

### **Vision and Aims**

#### **Vision**

The mission statement of St. Ronan's N.S. states that every effort is made to assist the children to develop at a personal and academic level. We believe that Geography can make a huge contribution in helping pupils to come to an understanding of and take an interest in the natural and human environments around them and the wider world. We believe that in reality Geography is present all around the children. 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. We hope that children will have a clear awareness and knowledge of their immediate local area through the study of Geography in our school.

#### **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

### Curriculum Planning

#### Strands and Strand Units

Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for his/her relevant class levels.

We consult with each other regularly to ensure there is continuity and progression in the geography programme from class to class, with work being differentiated for older children within the classes. In so far as is possible, teachers will avoid undue repetition of material however we note the geography curriculum allows for natural repetition of topics e.g. the local natural environment. We have attached a grid table for the Junior Room and the Senior Room over a four-year cycle. The Senior Room grid outlines locations for study of a contrasting place in Ireland, a European and Non-European country, we have also selected topics for the strand units living in the local community and the local natural environment.

The three strands of the Geography curriculum are:

Human Environments; Natural Environments and Environmental Awareness and Care.

#### Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> Class

All strand and strand units will be covered every two years.

Strand	Strand Unit
Human environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in the local community</li> <li>• People and places in other areas</li> </ul>
Natural environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local natural environment</li> <li>• Weather</li> <li>• Planet Earth in space</li> </ul>
Environmental awareness and care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for my locality</li> </ul>

#### Third to Sixth Class

All strand and strand units will be covered every two year. Due to the multi-grade nature of our school

Strand	Strand Unit
Human environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living and working in the local area</li> <li>• People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People and other lands</li> <li>• County, regional and national centres</li> <li>• Trade and Development issues (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
Natural environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local natural environments</li> <li>• Land, rivers and seas in my county</li> <li>• Rocks and soils</li> <li>• Weather, climate and atmosphere</li> <li>• Planet Earth in space</li> <li>• Physical Features of Europe and the World (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
Environmental awareness and care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental awareness</li> <li>• Caring for the environment</li> </ul> <p><i>Both strand units should be linked into place studies and integrated into other curricular areas.</i></p>

Explored through a selection from: People & communities; Natural environmental features and people; Settlement: homes and other buildings; People at work; Transport and communications.

### Skills and concepts 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.

### Junior to Sixth Class

Skills and concepts development	
A sense of place and space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of place</li> <li>• A sense of space</li> </ul>
Maps, globes and graphical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picturing places (Jnr/Snr)</li> <li>• Using pictures, maps and globes (1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
Geographical investigation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Observing</li> <li>• Predicting</li> <li>• Investigating and experimenting</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysing</li><li>• Recording and communicating</li><li>• Estimating and measuring</li><li>• Evaluating (5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Class only)</li></ul>
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Children are encouraged to explore their local area, which we undertake as class and whole school activities. The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in age appropriate way from infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. Maps are available in the school from the local area to international maps. Each classroom has a globe available to them. The skills of Geographical investigation and a sense of place and space are taught in tandem with curricular content. 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
- Annotated drawings
- Problem Solving Tasks
- KWL Charts
- Brain-storming
- Concept maps

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

### **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
- Co-operative learning
- Talk and Discussion
- Use of the environment
- Aistear

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

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

In learning about distant places we will use the following approaches and methodologies:

- Artefacts
- Atlases, maps and globes
- Interviews (with children and families of that country)
- ICT
- Photographs
- School textbooks.

### **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 S.E.S.E. subjects at all class levels, referring to the Teacher Guidelines in Geography, History and Science. Aspects of

Geography will be dealt within the context of English, Gaeilge, Maths, History, Science, Visual Arts and Drama. Teachers will make provision for this linkage in their short term planning.

### **Multi-Grade Teaching**

St. Ronan's N.S. is a two teacher rural DEIS school. We use a thematic approach occasionally in the study of SESE throughout our classes, however we also teach the subjects individually. Most strand units are taught together to the four 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. Textbooks are selected after consultation with staff and are a whole staff decision. Textbooks are used as a resource.

### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

Assessment in Geography seeks to achieve a balanced picture of the children's progress in the knowledge and understanding of environmental matters, acquisition of geographical 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.
- Work samples and portfolios e.g. finished projects and investigations.
- Project group work and classroom displays of pupils work
- Feedback from pupils

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

In line with our school's policy on assessment, the primary purpose underlying assessment in geography is to enhance the learning experiences of the child.

### **Children with Different Needs**

The Geography programme aims to meet the needs of all children in the school. This will be achieved by teachers varying the pace, content and methodologies to ensure learning for all pupils.

In some cases a differentiated text is provided for children with learning difficulties, which may be prepared with the support teacher.

The requirements of children with special needs will be taken into account when planning class lessons and related activities. The S.N.A. supports particular children and groups as directed by the class teacher.

### **Equality of Participation and Access**

We view the Geography Programme as playing a key role in ensuring equality of opportunity for all children. The programme at each class level will be flexible so that the learning requirements of all children may be addressed. We provide an equal educational experience for both boys and girls as we recognise that stereotyped expectations of gender roles can inhibit children's educational achievements. Children with special needs will be included in all activities.

#### **Interculturalism**

The geography class is used as an opportunity to educate children as to the culture of all people within our community. Our geography curriculum celebrates difference in addition to promoting cultural awareness.

### **Organisational Planning**

#### **Timetable**

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction S.E.S.E. will be assigned a minimum of 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  hours per week in infant classes and three hours from First to Fourth. This will include one hour per week for Geography. The teaching of geography is often integrated with other subjects and also through Aistear for younger classes.

On occasion time will be blocked for:

- Field work, environmental trails
- Exploring local environment
- Project work of a thematic project
- Visiting a museum

### **Resources and Digital Technologies**

- There is no core SESE book used in the school, however there is access to a large resource bank of SESE materials in the shared resource presses outside classrooms.
- The teaching of SESE subjects in Junior and Senior Infants is integrated to the monthly Aistear theme where possible.
- Each class has a number of local, national, European and World maps where appropriate for the class level.

- The classroom libraries have a "geography" section where children and teachers can access more information on topics they are covering in class.
- There is a selection of technologies available in the school, e.g. cameras, video camera, visualiser, interactive whiteboards, computer, laptops and iPads.
- All classes have access to the internet where age appropriate educational websites can be accessed.

### **Health and Safety**

The Health and Safety policy covers safety concerns around out-of-school activities. Teachers will consult the Principal whenever it is proposed to undertake fieldwork. Provision will be made for adult help, suitable clothing, footwear, insurance and transport.

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

- Teachers will consult this whole school plan and the curriculum documents for Geography for the purpose of long and short term planning.
- Where appropriate Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with other S.E.S.E. subjects.
- Long term plans will be drawn up for each classroom and from these, each teacher will tailor fortnightly/monthly short-term plans according to the individual needs of their own classes.
- In St. Ronan's, the cúntas míosúil is linked to short-term planning. Parents are informed of children's progress in geography at parent-teacher meetings and in end of year report cards.

### **Staff Development**

- Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites relating to geography.
- Staff will be encouraged to research and explore new approaches and methodologies. At times they arrange for opportunities to try out resources on a pilot basis and assess whether or not they should be purchased.

- Teachers will be notified of courses and in-service workshops in Geography.
- Our school has a culture whereby teachers share effective experiences and practice.
- Times may be allocated at staff meetings to discuss aspects of the geography curriculum.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parents have an important role to play as custodians of local knowledge that can be shared with their children as they explore various aspects of the local environment. Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in our *Green School/School Garden* endeavours. Parents are invited to celebrate and view projects, surveys and investigations in the school or read about them on the school website or in the termly newsletter. Parents from other countries will be encouraged to share their heritage with the school community where appropriate.

### **Community Links**

People in the local community with an interest and knowledge in the environment will be invited to speak to the children. The Boyle library will be a source of information and reference material for our pupils. Children may be brought on field trips to places of geographical interest at times during their journey through St. Ronan's N.S. Trips to parks, woodlands and centres may form part of the geography programme.

### **Success Criteria**

This plan shall be reviewed in the future under the following headings:

- How effective the methodologies outlined in this plan are proving to be in the classroom.
- How fieldwork procedures are working.
- How well are geographical concepts/skills being acquired by the pupils.
- Are the key messages being adhered to?
  1. The primary resource for Geography is the environment (local, regional, national, European and global)

2. Knowledge and skills are of equal importance.
3. Geography is about developing a sense of place and space.

Assessment of this plan will include the following:

- Revisiting plan as a staff
- Teacher-parent feedback
- Parental feedback
- Formal assessment
- Children's feedback
- Inspectorate reports and recommendations

### **Implementation**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The whole staff is responsible for the implementation of the plan. The Principal and Deputy Principal will co-ordinate the progress of the plan and will look for feedback on its implementation.

#### **Review**

This Geography plan was reviewed in October 2023 and will be further reviewed as necessary.

#### **Ratification and Communication**

Ratified by Board of Management on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Fr. Joseph Caulfield

Chairperson

Board of Management