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# **Geography School Plan**

**September 2021**

## **Introductory Statement**

St. Mary's N.S. is a co-educational, vertical, primary school in Saggart Co. Dublin. In our school 35% of our pupils are from countries outside of Ireland. We endeavour to recognise, celebrate and appreciate the variety of nationalities and cultures.

We also aim to provide opportunities for the children so that they can develop their understanding and appreciation of the world in which they live, while simultaneously developing important skills and attitudes appropriate to their individual stages of development. Below is the Geography school plan for St. Mary's N.S. It has been designed by the Geography coordinator in consultation with school staff. It was informed by the curriculum documents, PCSP planning prompts, and current practice in our school.

## **Rationale**

This plan is a record of whole school decisions in relation to Geography in accordance with the curriculum. It will:

- Benefit teaching and learning in our school
- Promote a co-ordinated approach to the planning and teaching of Geography throughout the school.
- Indicate the short-term and long-term planning requirements
- Facilitate the evaluation of teaching resources and methodologies.
- Ensure that pupils are given adequate opportunities to develop a sense of place, space and environment and to acquire the geographical skills as envisaged in the curriculum.

## **Vision**

In line with our school's mission statement which emphasises the creation of a whole school environment where we can all learn and grow to our full potential, we as a staff believe that Geography has a key role to play in achieving this mission. We seek to assist the children in:

- Developing important geographical skills
- Cultivating important values and attitudes appropriate to their individual stages of development.
- Exploring and learning about the natural and human environments which he/she encounters
- Using a range of investigative and communicative skills

## **Aims**

- 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 (mapping and other non-verbal, non-numerical forms of data presentation)
- 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.

**Additional aims that relate to our school**

- To use our school grounds and the local human and natural environment as our primary resource for the development of Geography.
- To develop Geography trails in the locality.
- To use all appropriate methodologies in the teaching of Geography in our school i.e. talk and discussion, active learning, fieldwork, use of the environment

**This Geography Plan will be addressed under the following headings**

**Curriculum Planning:**

- 1 Strands and strand units
- 2 Skills and concepts development
- 3 Children's ideas
- 4 Approaches and methodologies
- 5 Linkage and integration
- 6 Assessment and record keeping
- 7 Inclusion
- 8 Equality of participation and access

**Organisational Planning**

- 9 Timetable
- 10 Resources and ICT
- 11 Health and Safety
- 12 Individual teacher's planning and reporting
- 13 Staff development
- 14 Community Links/Parental involvement

**(1) Strands and Strand Units**

As a staff all teachers are familiar with the strands/strand units/content objectives for the relevant class level.

- 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

### **Junior Infants - Second Class**

<b>Human environments</b>	<b>Natural environments</b>	<b>Environmental awareness and care</b>
Living in the local community	The local natural environment	Caring for my locality
People and places in other areas	Weather	
	Planet Earth in space	

The curriculum is divided into three strands: Human Environments; Natural Environments and Environmental Awareness and Care. Each of these strands is further sub-divided into a number of strand units or topics which contain particular objectives. In line with the 'menu curriculum' we will teach aspects of all three major strands and strand units each year and content objectives will be chosen in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive coverage in Geography over a two year period.

- A thematic approach will be used, one new theme per month
- The content of the Geography programme is outlined in the three content strands and through the study of these areas, skills, concepts and attitudes are developed.
- The content themes are linked directly with the English Wonderland themes, and this is highlighted in the monthly plans - and in some months, with History/Science and SPHE.

### Third - Sixth Class

Human environments	Natural environments	Environmental awareness and care
People living and working in local area	The local natural environment	Environmental Awareness Caring for the environment
People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland	Land, rivers and seas of my county	
	Rocks and soils	
	Weather, climate and atmosphere	
People and other lands	Planet Earth in space	
County, Regional and National Centres	Physical features of Europe and the World (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> only)	
Trade and Development Issues (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> only)		

#### SESE programme in use in classes 3rd to 6th:

3<sup>rd</sup> class: Explorers: Geography and Science 3<sup>rd</sup> class, Folens

4<sup>th</sup> class: Explorers: Geography and Science 4<sup>th</sup> class, Folens

5<sup>th</sup> class: Explorers: Geography and Science 5<sup>th</sup> class, Folens

6<sup>th</sup> class: Explorers: Geography and Science 6<sup>th</sup> class, Folens

Atlas and Atlas Hunt: Folens; is used from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>

To ensure continuity and avoid duplication these specific areas are to be taught in the following class levels only;

	European Country	Non- European Country
3 <sup>rd</sup> class	Denmark	Egypt
4 <sup>th</sup> class	Italy	China
5 <sup>th</sup> class	Greece	Brazil
6 <sup>th</sup> class	Poland	Nigeria

#### **(2) Skills and concepts development**

The following strategies are used by class teachers to assist in the child's skills and concepts development.

### A sense of place and space

- A sense of place
- A sense of space

### Maps, globes and graphical skills

- Picturing places (infants)
- Using pictures, maps and models

### Graphical investigation skills

- Questioning
- Observing
- Predicting
- Investigating and experimenting
- Estimating and measuring
- Analysing
- Recording and communicating

- The geographical skills and concepts will be developed as work is completed on the strands and strand units of the curriculum outlined above.

### **(3) Children's ideas**

- We use the children's ideas of place and space as a starting point for all geography activities:  
We use the human or natural features of an area  
We use locational/directional terms  
We record journeys
- We elicit what children know already through talk and discussion, questioning, listening, predicting, investigating and experimenting, estimating and measuring, drawing, analysing, teacher designed tasks and tests.

### **(4) Approaches and methodologies**

- Our Geography curriculum asserts that one of the keys to successful Geography teaching is the use of a broad range of classroom approaches and methodologies. We plan to use the key methodologies of the Revised 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  
Use of photographs  
Use of atlases, globes, maps

## Use of ICT

Fieldwork, geography trails, surveys

Interviews, exchanges between classes (*Intercultural Week*)

- The environment is the primary resource for geography.
- Workbooks are not used in the teaching of SESE for Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class so that we would have time to base our teaching and learning in the local environment.
- The school grounds have been created, maintained and developed as a safe and worthwhile environment in which to observe, investigate, describe and explore many natural features and processes at work.
- Teachers select appropriate methodologies to accommodate the different learning styles of the children and the varying topics under consideration.
- We follow the recommended sequence for geography and begin with our own area, extending to other places during intercultural activities/holiday time/school tours/trips/visits. We make links between the local area and people/ features/ processes in other areas.
- In learning about place, local people come into Junior and Senior Infants classes to tell us about the local area and land use. They are interviewed by the children about their work as Gardaí, teachers, firefighters.
- In learning about other places we use maps, globes, atlases, artefacts, internet, resource packs/books and we listen to other people telling us about their lives. During intercultural activities we have local people from different cultures come in to visit the classes and talk to the children about their country on an aspect like food, clothes, homes, games, festivals, weather, cultural activities.
- Fieldwork is incorporated into the geography programme through use of school grounds for seasonal walks, tree observation, mini beast hunt, mapping skills and through trips to school grounds, Saggart Village and Rathcoole Park. Simple trails of the school grounds and the local area have been made to allow children to investigate the local natural and human environment.
- Mapping skills and mapping concepts are used as part of the geography programme. Journeys are mapped in all classes i.e. journey to yard/Centra/old school building/Local church/Rathcoole Park. Folens Atlas and Atlas Hunt workbook is used for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> to develop mapping skills. Specific pages are to be covered in Atlas Hunt in specific years (as per long term planning grids). World maps are used when learning about people and places and during intercultural activities.

## (5) Linkage and integration

### Linkage:

The content objectives for each month at all class levels are based on suitable links within Geography. Study of each unit will provide opportunities for the simultaneous development of geographical skills and concepts.

### **Integration:**

Integration within SESE is recorded in both long and short term planning on a whole school basis. History, Geography and Science are considered a unit and all possible cross references are made. Other links can be made between Geography and other curricular subjects:

- **Visual Arts:** Artists and their work from other countries, aesthetic awareness in environment, construction, visual representation
- **English:** Recording of information found in books/factsheets or projects, stories from other countries, extension of vocabulary using geographical terms, discussing/reporting information found. Monthly themes in the Wonderland literacy programme give focus to the SESE plan (junior infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class).
- **Maths:** Spatial awareness, following directions, making data graphs of information found
- **Drama:** Role play and conscience alley as a way to develop ideas and attitudes of geographical topics.
- **SPHE:** identity, citizenship, culture
- **PE:** Folk dances, orienteering/mapping, outdoor activities
- **Gaeilge:** Treoracha a thabhairt agus a leanúint.
- **Music:** Song singing i.e. songs from around the world

### **(6) Assessment and record keeping**

[Refer to TG p157-160; Curr p88-97]

Assessment is a central part of the everyday learning and teaching process in Geography. It can provide valuable information on the child's progress and on the effectiveness and suitability of the programme and the teaching methods being used. Both formal and informal assessment can be deployed in implementing the Geography programme. Assessment is used to assist in planning and supporting future learning for the child. Knowledge, skills development, values, attitudes and participation are assessed by teachers.

Teachers select from the following range of assessment approaches:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and projects [ICT, pictures, paintings, models, story board]

### **(7) Inclusion**

- 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 children.
- The requirements of children with additional needs will be taken into consideration when planning class lessons and field trips and the special needs



assistant (if available) will support particular children as directed by the class teacher.

- As communication skills can vary, children may record their work by writing, drawing, model building, computer-aided work, etc.
- Children of exceptional ability will be encouraged to carry out supplementary studies and recordings/project work.
- As a school we will look at providing opportunities to communicate information in a variety of ways.

#### **(8) Equality of Participation and Access**

- All children are provided with equal access to all aspects of the geography curriculum.
- All children are provided with equal opportunities to engage in activities related to geography.
- Opportunities for co-operative learning are provided for as appropriate.
- Class teachers ensure that children attending SET or Language Support are included for as much of the geography curriculum as possible, or they access it in the support setting where appropriate.

#### **Interculturalism**

- All cultures are celebrated through the Intercultural activities every year on a whole school basis.
- Geography class is seen as an opportunity to integrate the culture of all pupils.
- The Geography programme in our school celebrates difference as well as promoting cultural awareness.

### **ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING**

#### **(9) Timetable**

- Teachers can decide to allocate time for Geography on a weekly basis or they can block time over a month or term. (This might occur when working on an integrated project or exploring the local environment)
- The weekly allocation for SESE is: Infants 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  hours; First to sixth classes 3 hours.
- This must be indicated in each teacher's timetable.

#### **(10) Resources and ICT**

- The Geography Coordinator is responsible for geography equipment. Requests for additional equipment should be made to this post holder who will coordinate purchases as authorised by the Principal.
- All teachers have class folders with SESE long term whole school plans containing curriculum objectives and corresponding resources.

- An inventory of existing geography equipment is available from the office.
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class have access to at least one class set of *Geography Quest* and *Window on the World*.
- Every class, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, has 30 copies of Explorers Geography and Science Pupil book and 1 Teachers manual
- The school has access to Folens digital resources for the Explorers programme.
- Every classroom has a *Globe*.
- Samples of manuals and workbooks from other companies are available in their appropriate classroom levels. ( see inventory list)

## ICT

- ICT and the digital camera are important tools/resources for teaching and learning in geography. Each class level is supplied with a digital camera.
- Our General (G) Drive has been organised for staff to access a wide range of resources in the three folders - Human environments, Natural environments and Environmental awareness and care. Each folder is subdivided into class levels and each class level has power points, photos, activity sheets and resource packs.
- There are school trails along with a trail of the locality available for teachers on the g drive.
- Every class has access to tablets. This time can be used to research a particular topic for written tasks/projects.

## (11) Health and Safety

(Refer to TG p.74-78).

The teacher should be aware of the safety implications of any outdoor trips. Children should be encouraged to observe safety procedures as outlined by the teacher. To ensure the health and safety of children and adults, thorough preparation is vital. If we invite parents to help in the supervision of field trips they should be fully briefed on all aspects of the outing and have signed the school's Child Safeguarding Statement. When engaging in trails outside of the school grounds or visiting the local library/supermarket /estate agents/Park etc. there will be a ratio of 3 adults to every 10 pupils (excluding SNAs).

## (12) Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

- Teachers will use the long term SESE plan, and planning grid to guide their short term planning and lessons.
- Work covered is highlighted in their Cuntas Míosúil and submitted to the principal.
- The Cuntas Míosúil will form an important part of the record of skills, strands and strand units explored. It will assist in evaluating progress in Geography and inform future teaching.

### **(13) Staff Development**

- Teachers have access to reference books, workbooks and resource materials in their classrooms.
- There are folders on the G drive of shared ideas for all subject areas and class levels.
- CPD relating to the teaching of Geography will be communicated to staff via Aladdin or staff meeting.
- Visits by Cuidaitheoirí experts will be arranged on request to the principal.
- Teachers who are confident and competent in Geography will also be invited to lead learning and to demonstrate/share ideas and skills during staff meetings, on subject teams and/or during class planning meetings.

### **(14) Community links/Parental involvement**

- Parents are invited to support the school's programme for Geography by helping out on school trips to Rathcoole Park and on school walks/ tours.
- Parents are acknowledged as having a formative and supportive role in assisting the development of children's geographical knowledge and skills through language - by talking about trips, holidays, work, people in the local community, homes and in the use of spatial, locational and directional terms.
- Parents with particular expertise may be invited to address classes.
- Parents support the development of the school grounds and garden through input into planning, planting, pruning and clean up days.
- Parents are invited to accompany field outings i.e. trail of the locality.
- Parents are kept informed of developments through the school's weekly newsletter.
- Local and national experts are invited to contribute to the school's Geography programme throughout the year. We hope to continue established links with the following bodies and individuals:
  - Centra
  - South Dublin County Council e.g.- organized events for National Tree Day/Tree Week with Park Rangers
  - Local people visit classes to share their life experiences with the pupils.
  - [www.antaisce.org](http://www.antaisce.org)
  - [www.enfo.ie](http://www.enfo.ie)

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

The success of this plan will be measured using the following criteria:

- Continuity of content and methodology will be evident in teachers' preparation and cuntas míosúil.

- Ongoing assessment, formal and informal, will show that pupils are acquiring an understanding of concepts and a proficiency in geographical skills appropriate to their age and ability.
- Inspector's reports and suggestions will be taken on board.
- The promotion of the key considerations of geography - *a sense of space and place, starting with the children's ideas, a balance between knowledge and skills and regarding the environment as the primary resource in geography* - will indicate its success.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Roles and Responsibilities

- Class teachers are responsible for the implementation of the Geography programme in their own classes.
- The post holder with responsibility for Geography will coordinate the progress of the plan, encourage and accept feedback on its implementation and report to staff on findings.

**Timeframe:** School years 2021 - 2024.

## REVIEW

### Roles and Responsibilities

- The review will be based on teachers' feedback on the effectiveness of the plan, on any results of assessments we have and on any further reports from the Department of Education and Science.
- The post holder with responsibility for Geography will be responsible for coordinating the review.

**Timeframe:** Progress made during these years will be reviewed in 2024.

## RATIFICATION and COMMUNICATION

This plan will be ratified by the Board of Management and parents can inspect the plan in the school office or via the school website. This plan will be communicated to teachers and implemented in classes.

**Reviewed:** Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ratified:** Date: 21/6/21 Signed: Miriam Harewood



