

SCOIL URSULA

• **Title: Geography Policy**

• **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

a. **Introductory Statement:**

This plan was originally drafted in 2006 by the Principal and staff of Scoil Ursula. 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. It was disseminated to the wider school community through the Board of Management and ratified by the board on the 9th of May, 2011. 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.

b. **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**

a. **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.

b. **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

In addition we will undertake the following to promote and develop Geography education in our school:

- continue in the Green Schools project as part of our Environmental Awareness and Care programme
- each class to undertake a Geography fieldtrip and produce a survey/trail which can be used from year to year
- Set up weather stations for the Middle and Senior classes.
- Have a member of the local community visit our classes eg Postman, Guard, factory worker, tourism official, as part of our studies into the local human environment
- Audit our existing resources in the area of maps and globes and order additional materials if required

• 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 (see attached) and were conscious of the need to study our local natural and human environment throughout the school.

The three strands of the Geography curriculum are:

Human Environments

Natural Environments

Environmental Awareness and Care.

(See overview of strands and strand units attached)

Classes from third to sixth have selected one contrasting part of Ireland, one European country and one country from the rest of the world to study each year. Each class will take part in local studies each year but at a greater depth throughout the school. We are aware of the guiding principle behind the Geography curriculum that children move for the local, to the wider locality, county, country, Europe, the World.

(See topic selection for local human environment, local natural environments, contrasting parts of Ireland, counties, trade and development issues attached.)

2. Skills Development

We are aware that the development of Geographical skills is of equal importance to strand content in this curriculum.(see skills overview sheet attached)

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 6th class. We are aware of the progression and development of these skills throughout the school.(see overview of skills attached)

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
- Using simulations and models
- Keeping a wildlife garden

- Project work
- Video/DVD
- Maps and mapping
- ICT
- 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 have created a woodland walk in our school grounds and will develop trails, scavenger hunts and surveys that can be used from year to year.

We hope to prioritise the use of maps and photographs. The following map resources are available in the school:

We have built a bank of photographs both from our local area, a contrasting area in Ireland and our study of a European and non- European country. The following are available in the school:

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 selected one integrated project for each class. See attached sheet.

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

Our choice of international countries to study can also provide a link for history studies pertaining to those countries.

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.Multi-Grade Teaching

All classes do the three strands. We have identified that there is considerable overlap in the strand units from infants-second and third to sixth.

We have examined our use of textbooks in the context of multi-class teaching. There has been consultation and co-ordination between classes for selection of countries and contrasting part of Ireland.

We have identified the extra material for 5th/6th that will need to be covered in the case of a class division with 4th :

Trade and Development issues

Physical Features of Europe and the World

Land, rivers and seas of Ireland

We are conscious of the need to differentiate the work for younger classes mixed with older children

7. 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 eg. 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.

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 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 of 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. We took this into consideration when selecting countries for study from third-sixth class.
- SNA assistance and collaborative work with resource teachers will be encouraged as and when the need arises

9. Equality of Participation and Access

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

• Organisational Planning

10. Timetable

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.

11. Resources and ICT

We have completed and included an environmental audit of the immediate locality and have used it to inform our planning of local human and natural studies.

We have audited our existing reference materials, packs, DVD's, videos etc. See list attached

12. 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. See guidelines for fieldwork from the Geography Teacher Guidelines P 74 – 78 also attached. Teachers are requested to adhere to these procedures when planning outdoor fieldwork, trails and trips.

We have made the booklet “Your Child’s Learning” available to all parents and note the suggestions for parents on pgs 27 and 28 with regard to supporting their child’s learning in SESE.

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 participate in surveys and interviews and by helping out in supervision of fieldwork when/if needed.

13. Individual Teachers’ Planning and Reporting

Individual teachers are encouraged to use this school plan as a basis for planning within their own classrooms. The following systems are also in place in our school:

Cúnais Míósúil

Individual Progress Record Booklets.

Parents are informed of children’s progress in Geography at parent teacher meetings and end of year reports.

14. 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.

We have been supported by the SESE cuiditheoir and plan further visits.

15. Parental Involvement

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

16. 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, Traffic Warden, Secretary etc may be invited to talk to junior classes about their work in the school.

People who work the area eg shopkeeper, post mistress or 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

Maisie Mc Nabola, Green School's Co-ordinator

Members of Sligo Town twinning 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.

Sustainable Energy Ireland run workshops that we regularly attend as part of the Environmental Awareness and Care strand

• **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.

The post holder with responsibility for Geography will support the implementation of the Geography programme particularly in the collation, organisation and distribution of resources.

Responsibilities will also include the organisation of special Geography talks or events eg trips and tours to places of geographical interest

The geography co-ordinator will liaise with the Green School's co-ordinator in planning for the Environmental Awareness and Care strand.

• **Timeframe for Implementation & Review**

This revised policy will implemented in September 2011 and will be reviewed in 2014.

• **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the _____ of _____.

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula N.S. does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members

of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula N.S. policies are available for inspection in the school and at scoilursula.com

Appendix

Local Human Environment

We will study the Local Human Environment under the following sub-topic division for each class:

Junior Infants:	My family Our School People at work in the school
Senior Infants:	Our school community People at play in the school and its environs Homes
First Class:	My family and home People at work in the local area
Second class:	My family and community (including homes and shelter) People at play in the local area
Third class:	Settlement and buildings- including our school and homes Transport and communications in Sligo Natural environmental features and people
Fourth class:	People and communities Settlement- homes and other buildings Communications in Sligo Tourism, leisure and recreation in the region
Fifth class:	People and communities, people working and living in Sligo Fishing in Sligo and county Food and Farming in Co Sligo
Sixth class:	Industry in Sligo town and county Mining in County Sligo Natural environmental features and people in Sligo

Contrasting part of Ireland

Choice of contrasting parts of Ireland under the same sub-units as above is at the discretion of the individual teacher having regard to what parts have been done by the class previously and what other teachers are doing to avoid duplication.

European and non-European Countries

Choice of countries is at the discretion of the individual teacher having regard to what countries have been done by the class previously and what other teachers are doing to avoid duplication.

Local Natural Environment:

We will focus on the following features in the local natural environment to ensure a broad and balanced study throughout the school:

Junior and Senior Infants:	Our school grounds, particular emphasis on trees Water in our school grounds, puddles, rain Natural materials in our school grounds- rocks, pebbles
First and second classes:	Coast Mountains Water in our local area: Lake Natural materials in these places-rocks, stones, pebbles, soil
Third and fourth:	River: Story of the Garavogue Coastal features of Sligo
Fifth and sixth:	Sligo Seashore Mountain/hill- Knocknarea

Trade and Development:

The following topics have been chosen by fifth and sixth class:

Fifth:	Banana Story
Sixth:	World trade

Integrated projects:

Infants:	Myself Seasons Clothes
First and second:	Games Festivals
Third and fourth:	Egypt- Ancient Egyptians, pulleys and levers Normans Water
Fifth and sixth:	France and the French revolution Italy and the Renaissance and Ancient Rome; wheels, axles, bridges

Issues to be addressed by collaborating teachers:

- List of European and non-European countries that each class from third to sixth will study
- List of contrasting places in Ireland to be studied from third to sixth
- Is either fifth or sixth class studying the famine in history? If so the unit on famine might be considered under the Trade and Development strand unit
- Geography Environmental Audit needs to be completed and attached to the plan.
- Each teacher to fill out the termly class planning sheet to append to plan
- List of map resources available in school
- List of other geography resources in the school eg Trocaire materials, Team Planet, School packs eg Something Fishy, AgriAware etc DVDs, videos

Things to get:

- Weather recording equipment- available from school science suppliers
- Model of the Solar System- available from school science suppliers
- Maps- sourced from the Tourist Office
- Globes- available in local toy shops
- Street play mats- available in local toy shops
- Rock samples- available from science suppliers eg Shaws Scientific
- Watoto pack available from www.trocaire.ie- for infant and junior classes studying People and Places in other areas
- 'We are the World' pack from Mary Immaculate College