



Avoca National School S. N. PHADRAIS NAOKA

Geography Plan Avoca NS

Introductory Statement

We aim through this plan, drawn up in accordance with the geography curriculum, to set out our approach to the teaching and learning of geography. This plan will form the basis for teachers' long and short -term planning. It will also inform new or temporary teachers of the approaches and methodologies used in our school. There are currently seven mainstream teachers, two fulltime learning support teachers and one shared learning support teacher at Avoca NS. This plan was reviewed by the teaching staff in January 2021 and necessary changes were made.

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)

Vision and Aims

(a) Vision

We seek to assist the children in our school in achieving a full and comprehensive knowledge of the geography curriculum as outlined in the revised curriculum.

Avoca is an area of supreme geographical wealth due to its mining history, its unusual topography, its industrial and craft history and its natural beauty. Therefore the study of the subject is held in high esteem as a vehicle to inform the students of their rich natural heritage and to broaden their horizons outside their locality.

Avoca takes great pride in its "Green School" status and the philosophy and ethos of green school practise should inform the teaching of geography and the students' attitude to the care of the environment in which they live.

(b) Aims

We endorse the aims of the Primary School Curriculum for *Geography*

- 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
- To foster an awareness and pride in the students of the geographical wealth of their local environment.

Curriculum Planning/Content

	Infants	1 st and 2 nd	3 rd and 4 th	5 th and 6 th
Human Environments	Living in the local community	Living in the local community	People living and working in the local area	People living and working in the local area
	People and places in other areas	People and places in other areas	People working and living in a contrasting part of Ireland	People working and living in a contrasting part of Ireland
			People and other lands	People and other lands
			County, regional and national centres	County, regional and national centres
				Trade and Development issues
Natural Environments	The local natural environment	The local natural environment	The local natural environment	The local natural environment
	Weather	Weather	Weather, climate and atmosphere	Weather, climate and atmosphere
	Planet Earth	Planet Earth	Planet Earth in	Planet Earth in

	in Space	in Space	Space	Space
			Land, rivers and seas of my county	Land, rivers and seas of my county
			Rocks and Soils	Rocks and Soils
				Physical features of Europe and the world
Environmental Awareness and Care	Caring for my locality	Caring for my locality	Environmental Awareness	Environmental Awareness
			Caring for the Environment	Caring for the Environment

The school will follow the "Small World" programme from Junior Infants to 6th Class. Each year the children will experience topics from each strand unit and all strand units from each strand will be covered over a two year period.

The locality of Avoca will form the basis of many lessons in each strand.

Skills and Concepts Development

To ensure that a balance is achieved between skills development and the acquisition of knowledge a number of strategies are used by class teachers.

- A sense of place and space
- Maps, globes and graphical skills -
 - picturing places
 - using pictures, maps and globes, 1st class up

- using models, 5th and 6th class
- Geographical investigation skills -
 - questioning
 - observing
 - predicting
 - investigating and experimenting
 - Estimating and measuring
 - analysing
 - Recording and communicating
 - Evaluating, 5th and 6th class

Children's Ideas

Children's ideas are regularly used as a starting point for geography activities. Children have many preconceived ideas, some of which are accurate, while others are wildly outlandish. It is important to separate facts from fiction.

To find out what the children already know a number of strategies are used.

These include:

- Class talk and discussion
- Questioning
- Listening
- Problem-solving tasks
- Drawings/diagrams
- Teacher designed tasks

- Teacher designed tests
- KWL charts

Approaches and Methodologies

The use of a variety of approaches and methodologies are essential to adopting a successful geography programme.

Children's learning in geography should involve:

- Active learning
- Problem solving
- Developing skills through content
- Talk and discussion
- Guided and discovery learning
- Teacher directed approach
- Use of the Environment
- Co-operative learning
- Collaborative learning

The methodologies used will vary depending on factors such as the type of lesson being taught and also the age group of the class.

Children's learning in geography should:

- Result from a process of enquiry in which children are encouraged to ask questions, to collect information and evidence, to search for patterns and to draw conclusions
- Engage pupils in lively, purposeful activity in the classroom and in extensive exploration of the local environment
- Build upon the geographical information about their immediate and other environments which children bring to school

- Introduce pupils to geographical concepts in a structured and systematic way and provide plenty of opportunities for concepts to be revisited and refined
- Arouse enthusiasm and curiosity about the environment
- Develop skills of co-operation, communication and problem solving
- Develop an appreciation of and sense of responsibility for environments
- Encourage the development of attitudes of mutual respect and tolerance

Linkage and Integration

Linkage:

Linkage is a term used to refer to integration within a subject. Integrated learning within subjects is an important principle of the curriculum.

Although the curriculum is presented in three strands, almost all geographical studies will encompass elements from at least two and on some occasions all three strands. Each unit in the geography curriculum will provide opportunities for the simultaneous development of geographical skills and concepts. For example, a study of children's homes may encompass aspects of human geography, natural environments and the natural process such as weathering and erosion.

Integration:

Within the curriculum statement the term Integration is used to refer to cross curricular connections. It allows blocks of time to be utilised in the most efficient way and is particularly useful in multi-class situations. Many content elements in the geography curriculum have close links with other curricula.

Integration within SESE:

Many opportunities exist for valuable links to be made between geography, science and history. The close alignment of Geographical investigation skills and working scientifically demonstrates how many investigations in geography can provide opportunities for the application of scientific methods.

The examination of natural features and fauna of local and other environments complements the study of living things in science while the strand environmental awareness and care is included in both curricula.

Integration with SPHE:

The links between geography and SPHE is highlighted in the curriculum. The development of the child's sense of identity and citizenship to which geography contributes is developed more fully in SPHE.

Integration and Mathematics:

The links between geography and mathematics are also highlighted in the curriculum. Many of the skills outlined in the geography curriculum such as maps, globes and graphical skills will be dependent on the child's mathematical development.

Integration with Visual Arts:

This takes place through the development of aesthetic awareness in the environment through looking and responding and during construction activities.

Integration with Physical Education:

Outdoor and adventure activities complement map work and the development of the child's sense of place and space.

Integration with Language:

This will take place through discussion and presentation of geographical ideas, through encouraging the child's awareness of languages in other countries and through identifying the relationships between geographical features and place names in Irish and English.

Integrated themes:

Themes such as 'Water', 'Homes' or one based on a novel or story can be chosen and explored in a number of ways, which would use elements of many different subject areas. This approach is often used with very young children. It requires careful planning in order to avoid superficial treatment of a wide range of content.

Multi-grade Teaching

Teachers with multi-classes will teach strands carefully chosen from both curricula. Both curricula will be taught on a two-year scheme and to ensure all strands are being taught teachers will address this area of planning regularly at staff meetings.

Integration will play a key role in this planning to ensure that blocks of time are being utilised in the most efficient way, something that the curriculum strongly recommends in the case of multi-classes.

A thematic approach will be implemented by all teachers where themes such as 'Water' or one based on a novel or story will be chosen. These themes will then be used to explore many different subject areas.

Assessment and Record Keeping

- Assessment is a vital component to the effective teaching and learning of geography
- Assessment ensures that the activities provided by the teacher meet the needs of the pupils, therefore building on their existing knowledge and understanding
- Assessment in geography enhances the teacher's awareness of each individual's learning and should assist in planning and supporting future learning for the child in this subject
- Assessment will also indicate areas of learning difficulty experienced by the child in geography, thus helping the teacher to identify approaches or learning experiences which would improve the child's learning
- Geographical assessment has a number of roles:
 - Summative assessment that provides a synopsis of what the child has achieved so far
 - Objective assessment plays a diagnostic role

- Planning and evaluative assessment reviews teaching effectiveness and inform decisions on how work in the classroom should proceed.

What should be assessed?

Assessment in geography must assess the child's knowledge and understanding of environmental matters, the acquisition of geographical skills and the development of aptitudes.

Assessment Tools

A range of assessment tools will be necessary, ranging from the informal assessment techniques to more structured approaches.

These are as follows:

- Teacher observation
 - The responses the child makes to teacher questions and suggestions
 - The participation of the child in the whole-class discussion of geographical features, processes, interactions and phenomena
 - The way in which the child may identify and discuss environmental issues in a variety of environments
 - The participation of the child in efforts to enhance the environment and to solve environmental problems
 - The interaction of the child with others in discussions and group work
 - The reaction of the child to learning materials.
- Teacher-designed tests and tasks
 - Giving oral, written or pictorial accounts and descriptions of environmental factors observed or studied
 - Collecting information from sources such as direct observation in the environment, interviews and books, electronic sources such as the internet and other materials in the classroom and the library

- Observing accurately both inside and outside the classroom
 - Predicting outcomes of an investigation
 - Estimating, measuring and comparing
 - Analysing objects and processes
 - Sorting and grouping people, events and natural phenomena
 - Recognising patterns
 - Completing work cards or activity sheets which guide the child towards fulfilling particular tasks
 - Undertaking a range of outdoor tasks
 - Displaying and reporting on completed project work and on work in progress
 - Using elements of graphicacy
 - Using interactive multimedia computer programmes which enable the child to explore geographical themes and topics and complete a range of tasks, puzzles or problems
 - Using maps and globes
 - Completing independent geographical research, recording and presenting the results
 - Completing teacher-designed revision tests on a unit or units of work
 - Engaging in practical environmental investigation or enhancement
 - Asking questions about aspects of the environment.
 - Completing KWL charts
- Work Samples, Portfolios and Projects.

The following are some examples that could be considered for inclusion in a portfolio:

- Map work
- Photographs of models constructed
- Photographs of areas visited-field trips
- Completed trail booklets
- The results of project work **
- Record sheets from experiments
- Written work in copybooks
- Samples/examples of interviews, surveys, questionnaires
- Reflection exercises on project/field trips
- Scrapbook of work/project

**Project work can also be displayed on Class Dojo and the school website

- Curriculum Profiles

The main features associated with curriculum profiles are indicators of achievement, levels and assessment tasks or contexts.

Assessment Records and Communication

The range of assessment tools, teacher observations, teacher-designed tasks and tests, work samples, portfolios, projects and curriculum profiles provides a comprehensive system of assessing and recording each child's level of participation, understanding, knowledge and skill in all aspects of the geography curriculum. This wealth of information can be used in discussion with parents, teachers and other professionals to create a clear picture of the child's achievements as well as his/her future learning needs in geography.

Children with Different Needs

A variety of techniques may be used to provide a range of learning activities appropriate to the individual needs of pupils. Teachers could consider:

- Using a mixture of whole-class teaching and focused group work. A common lesson content might be used with all pupils but different groups of children could be set tasks of various complexities depending on their learning or physical abilities
- Planning topics so that opportunities are provided for alternative investigation work for the more able and/or less able
- Using a range of questions and providing a range of tasks. Teachers' questioning in oral discussion should use a range of skills from simple recall to more complex comparative and analytical skills so that all pupils will have opportunities for success while the more able will be challenged
- Planning for the use of a wide range of communication skills, opportunities should be provided for children to record and tell about their work using drawing, modelling, computer-aided work, etc.
- Intervening to give individuals and groups the direction, stimulus and encouragement they as the children are engaged in activities
- The role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) is important in helping the child who has special education needs as a result of physical or learning difficulties. The NCCA "Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities" focuses on developing students' enabling skills and on building their strengths in order to facilitate their participation in learning activities; assisting the child in the use of geographical equipment, helping him/her to carry out or communicate geographical tasks in a way most suited to them and accompanying the student on field trips
- The geography curriculum is structured to ensure that children learn about the lives and environments of people locally and worldwide. Thus giving the teacher the opportunity to include contribution from children in the class who may have been born or lived in other countries.

Equality of Participation and Access

- In planning and implementing a geography programme teachers should ensure that equal opportunities are given to boys and girls to participate and access all the geography strands and activities
- The geography class should be used as an opportunity to integrate the culture of all pupils. Thus, people from different cultural backgrounds could be invited to talk to class therefore promoting cultural awareness
- Provision may be made for children who are experiencing any form of disadvantage e.g. school funds might be required to fund geography field trips for some children in order that they can participate in all geography activities.

Time Allocation in the Curriculum

To assist teachers and schools in planning the implementation of the curriculum, a time framework is suggested that allocates a minimum time to each of the curriculum areas. The recommended time for SESE (which includes history, geography and science) is three hours per week for senior classes and two hours fifteen minutes for infant classes.

The time framework also provides "discretionary curriculum time". This time affords the teacher and the school the flexibility to accommodate different school needs and circumstances and to provide for the differing aptitudes and abilities of the children it serves.

The element of discretionary curriculum time can be used for different purposes and in different ways. It could be used, for example, to provide extra time for the completion of an aspect of learning in one subject, to respond to children's needs in particular areas of learning or to afford flexibility when dealing with a specific project or theme.

Planning Blocks of Time over an Extended Period

It is the goal of the curriculum to provide a comprehensive and coherent learning experience for the child. It is important that teachers use the suggested framework on time allocation in the most flexible way, in order to make the mediation of the curriculum as effective and efficient as possible. In addition to weekly planning, this will entail planning over extended periods such as a month, a term and a year. For example, over a four week period the framework might suggest an allocation of twelve hours for social, environmental and scientific education. Such a block of time could be used

- To pursue a common theme in geography and science
- To deal in a concentrated way with different aspects of history
- To allow for field trips in geography, history or science.

Time Allocation in Infant Classes

The child at infant level perceives and experiences learning in an integrated way. This requires particular approaches to teaching and learning and will entail a more flexible use of the suggested time frame. One way that Geography is integrated into the infant timetable is through Aistear and the use of station teaching within Aistear.

Resources

Each teacher in the school is provided with an inventory of resources available for the teaching of geography.

Additional resources and materials are purchased as required.

ICT

- Information technology can greatly enrich the range of sources and information available to the child. Using the internet can give children access to an even greater range of sources. An increasing number of

interpretative centres, industries, organisations, charities and NGOs, meteorological agencies, embassies, government departments and other bodies have web pages and children can visit these via the computer

- The internet can also give children an added incentive for geographical research.
- Interactive whiteboards and surfaces are used in the class

Health and Safety

Working with children in the environment can raise a number of organisational and safety issues. Good preparation and planning together with adequate supervision can help to ensure successful field work.

When a teacher is planning to take his/her class on a trip he/she consults the principal and makes provision for insurance, transport and other requirements.

Parents complete a consent form for such trips when they enrol their child in the school. Medical details and parental contact numbers are also provided at that time. The teacher communicates with parents the details of the trip and request further consent if deemed necessary.

Preparatory work for the trip will be undertaken in the classroom. Home activities may also be part of the preparation. In most cases when a field trip is being undertaken it is necessary to bring a number of adults to accompany the class. When an SNA is designated to that class they also accompanies the children in their care.

When leaving the school on a trip the pupils wear the school uniform or tracksuit to help with identification in crowded areas. Where necessary, the children wear name tags. Parents are made aware of reporting back locations and times. The class teacher carries a written record of the names of pupils in each group and their leaders and should know the location of each group and the activity in which they should be engaged in at all times.

Checklist for Teachers on Fieldtrips

- Information on the latest weather forecast
- A list of all participants in the fieldwork
- Medical details
- Contact Numbers including emergencies and school
- Mobile phone
- First aid kit and medication for children covered by board sanction
- List of children and helpers
- Programme of activities and worksheets
- Sack for litter
- Map of area
- Equipment for investigations
- Lunch and drink

Checklist for Pupils

- A clear understanding of the activities they will undertake
- A clear understanding of the group to which they are allocated and leader
- Suitable clothing
- Copy of work directive or trail booklet
- Map, pencils etc;
- Extra paper and crayons to take rubbings and make sketches
- Camera (the task of taking photos may be given to one child or teacher)

- Plastic containers to collect specimens (if required)
- Compass and other equipment for investigations (if required)
- Lunch and drink
- Rucksack to carry items and keep hands free for work

Individual Teachers Planning and Reporting

All teachers in the school use the whole school plan as a menu from which to choose strands for their yearly scheme. Teachers will ensure that all strands and strand units are covered over a two year period. Avoca NS uses "Small World" from 1st to 6th Class.

The Cúntais Míosúil are filed electronically on Aladdin so that teachers can review work covered and plan new work.

Staff Development

The *Geography* curriculum is implemented by the individual class teachers. There is frequent co-operation and sharing of ideas, approaches, methodologies and resources amongst the staff. Teachers are informed via the staff notice board, e mail and local Education centre of any upcoming professional development courses in *Geography*.

Parental Involvement

Parents may help to enrich and support the *Geography* programme in a number of ways.

An important aspect of the Infants to Second class programme is the child's own home and immediate surroundings. Parents can be directly involved in helping their child to explore the geography of these areas.

Parents of children in older classes can support their child by encouraging them to watch the news and read newspapers. These activities are useful for the "People and other Lands" and "Weather" strand units.

Parents are encouraged to walk with their children to school.

Parents who live and work in the local area may be interviewed by the children to find out about their lives, work, family history, cultural and other interests.

Community Links

There are many places in Avoca that provide geographical interest for the children. Places such as The Hand weavers, The Old Mines, Graveyards, Churches. The Meetings of the Water and The Old School are perfect venues to visit to inform the students of their locality and heritage.

A trip to a local business such as The Avoca Hand weavers provides an opportunity for the children to observe first hand some of the work that takes place in the local community. Here the children can learn about, appreciate and respect the craftsmanship of local people.

Visits to the local recycling centre reinforce the importance of recycling and encourage the children to do so both in school and at home.

The school constantly involves the community in its Green School endeavours by posting up to date information on our website and inviting local newspaper to various events.

The Geography trolley has a wide selection of photographs (including aerial photographs) of local businesses and areas of geographical interest. Ordnance Survey maps of Avoca and the surrounding areas that were provided by the local library are also stored on the geography trolley.

Success Criteria

The School Plan will assist the different parties involved in teaching geography to work as a cohesive team in implementing all the strands of the revised Geography curriculum.

How will we know that the plan has been implemented?

Class teachers will devise yearly plans and fortnightly schemes of work based on the school plan. In addition, Cúntas Míósúil and staff discussion will ensure that procedures and all strands in the plan are being followed.

Has the plan achieved its aims?

The success of the implementation of the plan's aims may be measured using the following indicators:

- A knowledge and understanding of local, regional and wider environments and their interrelationships is developed
- An understanding and appreciation of the variety of natural and human conditions on the Earth is encouraged
- An empathy with people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence is developed
- The ability to use a range of communication methods, especially those concerned with the development of graphicacy (mapping and other non-verbal, non-numerical forms of data presentation) is developed
- The development of a sense of place and spatial awareness is encouraged
- The development of caring attitudes and responsible behaviour towards the environment and involvement in the identification, discussion, resolution and avoidance of environmental problems is encouraged
- An understanding of appropriate geographical concepts is developed

When assessing the success of the plan the following will be taken into consideration:

- Teacher feedback

- Parent feedback
- Children's feedback
- Inspector's suggestions/reports
- Second level feedback

Has the plan promoted the key considerations when implementing the Geography programme?

The following key considerations are implemented in our *Geography* plan:

- *Geography* is about developing a sense of space and place
- Children's ideas of place and space are used as the starting point
- Knowledge and skills are of equal importance
- The primary resource for *geography* is the environment, starting with the local, then regional, national, European and global.

Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

The plan in its entirety will be developed and implemented by the teaching staff of the school. Implementation of the plan may be enhanced by visits to local areas such as Avoca Hand weavers, fieldwork and nature walks.

The principal, with the support of the staff, will co-ordinate the progress of the plan.

Feedback on its implementation will take place at staff meetings.

Timeframe

As a result of a review of the school *Geography* plan, implementation of the revised plan will begin in February 2021. It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the *Geography* curriculum in the school. The review will include the opinions of the teachers involved in implementing the

curriculum, the response of the pupils to the material taught and the requirements of the wider school community as they arise.

Ratification and Communication

This completed geography plan will be presented to the members of the board of Management for ratification in February 2021. A copy will be available for inspection at all times in the school office.

The above *Geography* plan was presented to the Board of Management on 16th February 2021 and has been ratified by the Board.

Signed:

Marian Canavan (Chairperson)

Mary Cahill (Principal)

Date: _____