



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Óige  
Department of Education  
and Youth

# Subject Inspection: Geography

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Kilian's Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballywaltrim Bray Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91376L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19/09/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	04/11/2025

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# What is a subject inspection?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

## How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Geography under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Bí Cineálta</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. <i>Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.</i></li><li>2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.</li><li>2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.</li><li>3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>.</li></ol>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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# Subject inspection

<b>Date of inspection</b>	17/09/2025 & 19/09/2025
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students, including a focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

St Kilian's Community School is a co-educational, post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Franciscan and Marist orders, and Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB). At the time of the inspection the school had an enrolment of 429 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle (JC), the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied and the established Leaving Certificate (LCE). The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative, the action plan of the Department of Education and Youth for educational inclusion.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall with some examples of excellent practice observed.
- Teachers prepared and used high-quality resources which were integrated purposefully, and, in most lessons, this progressed learning very effectively.
- In almost all lessons, teachers provided very regular opportunities for students to collaborate and learn together; in this practice students' learning outcomes and experiences were very good.
- Subject provision and whole school support for Geography were very good; all students studied the subject as part of their JC and compulsory TY programmes, and the senior management team were very supportive of the subject department.
- While subject planning was good overall, the JC units of learning were not fully developed and needed review.

### Recommendations

- To facilitate students to gain a deeper understanding of the major geographical issues discussed in class, all teachers should make regular and explicit use of key geographical questions including an exploration of 'who, what, when, where and how'.
- Teachers should agree and implement strategies to develop students extended writing skills when preparing for certificate examinations. Additionally, teachers should make use of differentiated exemplars to support students in making improvements in their written work.
- The JC units of learning should be reviewed and amended to ensure that all elements of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* and subject specifications are implemented; this should include the use of local case studies, where possible, that allow students to draw on their experience of their local communities.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall with some examples of excellent practice observed.
- The students' learning experience was very good overall, with high levels of student engagement evident in all lessons. Teachers planned student-centred and purposeful learning activities that optimised engagement and maintained student focus throughout the lessons.
- It was good that all teachers shared the learning intentions at the beginning of each lesson and, in almost all instances, revisited them again before the end of the lesson. Where this was most effective the learning intentions built on previous learning. To maximise the impact on student learning, teachers should link the learning intentions to success criteria allowing students track their progress and consolidate the learning from the lesson. In the majority of lessons, there was scope for teachers to provide a more comprehensive consolidation of learning at the conclusion of the lesson.
- Teachers were affirming in all lessons. Very good classroom management fostered positive student-teacher relationships; student participation was frequent and highly valued which impacted positively on their learning.
- Teachers made use of very effective oral formative feedback in all lessons. Where the teacher identified areas for improvement in individual students' work, they advised on how the student could progress in their learning and this was very good.
- It was good that students were provided with opportunities to collaborate through a range of pair and group activities. However, there were instances, in a small number of lessons, where these would have benefitted from a more structured approach including the assigning of roles, setting strict time limits and allowing appropriate time for meaningful student feedback.
- There were examples of excellent collaboration in lessons where students were encouraged to move about the classroom, to actively work with their peers, or use resources displayed on the classroom walls that enhanced their learning outcomes and experiences.
- In a significant minority of lessons, there was scope to challenge students to think more critically about the geographical topic, aligned to their strengths and needs. To facilitate students to gain a deeper understanding of the issues discussed in class, all teachers should make regular and explicit use of the key geographical questions, including the exploration of 'who, what, when, where and how'.
- Teachers made good use of whole school agreed literacy strategies in lessons. In almost all lessons, there was an effective emphasis on key geographical terminology and most students demonstrated a good level of understanding and the correct use of the key terms taught in the lesson.
- In the majority of lessons, students were given regular opportunities to develop their numeracy skills, usually through the analysis of data or working on calculations. There was an excellent learning experience in one JC lesson, where students went outside to read the rainfall levels from a rain gauge, calculated and recorded precipitation levels over a period of time. The students engaged very positively with the task and participated enthusiastically in a discussion of their findings and their enjoyment of learning was very apparent.
- Senior cycle students demonstrated a high-level of knowledge and understanding of the topics taught in the lessons. However, there was scope to develop students' extended writing skills when preparing for certificate examinations by sharing differentiated exemplars of sample answers.
- Participants in the student focus group spoke approvingly of their experiences in geography lessons and identified the regular, planned active learning opportunities as a strategy that helped them make progress. It was very good that student voice was

sought and valued in the lessons observed and the student focus group reported positively on this practice, stating that this encouraged their participation in lessons.

- Students were able to use real-life examples to demonstrate the relevance of Geography to them, making connections between their learning in school and climate, migration, culture and the economy.

## 2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography was very good.
- All students studied the subject as part of their JC and compulsory TY programmes. At the time of the evaluation, it was a popular subject choice for Leaving Certificate.
- Timetabling for Geography was appropriate and in line with the subject specifications and Department of Education and Youth guidelines. All lessons were taught by suitably-qualified teachers who demonstrated good subject and pedagogical knowledge. Commendably, teachers were given the opportunity to teach both junior and senior cycle specifications where the timetable allowed.
- Senior management supported the subject department to collaborate, share good practice, and engage with professional learning in regular scheduled meetings.
- Teachers were allocated base classrooms, where possible, giving them easy access to the materials and resources required to deliver the individual specifications. These were pleasant, print-rich learning environments with subject-specific resources displayed on the walls to stimulate and support student learning. There were also plentiful examples of high-quality student work displayed in the classrooms.
- All teachers had access to personal mobile computer devices and classrooms were fitted with data projectors which facilitated the use of digital technology.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning for Geography was good overall; however, there were areas for development in relation to JC units of learning to ensure all elements of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* are met. When reviewing the units of learning teachers should consider their locality when choosing case studies that allow students to draw on their experiences and make connections with their communities.
- A comprehensive subject plan outlining the key areas of focus for teaching, learning and assessment had been developed. The subject plans, and classroom practice, very effectively incorporated strategies that responded to the student literacy and numeracy targets identified in the schools' DEIS plan.
- Individual planning for lessons was very good and teachers had prepared a range of stimulating resources which helped to optimise student engagement throughout the lessons.
- Teacher's engagement in shared professional learning and their collaborative approach to planning was a considerable strength of the geography department. Teachers met regularly to discuss and coordinate aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The minutes of formal subject department meetings were recorded and shared on the schools' digital platform and set out the actions agreed and targets for improvement.
- The geography teachers collaborated very effectively in planning for classroom-based assessments, assessed students' work using the features of quality, and recorded the recommendations from the subject learning and assessment review meetings.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.



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## For the students of St. Kilian's Community School about their learning in Geography

Date of inspection: 19/09/2025

### What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Geography.

### What were the main findings of the inspection?



- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall.
- Teachers produced high-quality resources to support student learning.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography was very good.

### What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Geography?



- Teachers should encourage regular use of the key geographical questions like who, what, where, when and how to deepen student understanding.
- Teachers should agree strategies to support students in developing their extended writing skills in Geography.
- A review of JC planning should take place to improve the units of learning.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.  
Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.**

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective