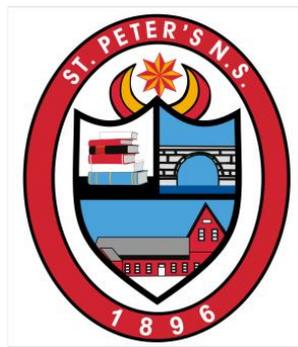


# *Whole School Plan*

*For*

# *Geography*



*Scoil Naomh Peadar*  
*Droichead Átha*

*St. Peter's N.S*  
**Curriculum Policy Document**  
Geography

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## **Introductory Statement & Rationale:**

This policy was formulated following a consultative process which took place over a period of months. The principal, class teachers, and special education teacher were involved in drafting this policy. This policy has been formulated as part of a whole school development of curricular policies.

This policy was devised:

- To provide clear guidelines for teachers
- To insure consistency throughout the school
- To conform with legislation

## **Vision and Aims:**

### **a) Vision**

We seek to assist the children in our school in achieving their potential.

### **b) Aims**

We endorse the aims of the Primary 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 (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.

## **Broad objectives**

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances the geography curriculum should enable the child to

- develop knowledge and understanding of natural and human environments in the locality, region, Ireland, Europe and the world
- understand some of the natural, social or economic processes which create, sustain or change environments

- study the impact of environmental conditions on the lives of people in the locality and in other areas, and come to appreciate some of the ways in which humans use, modify or influence their environments
- engage in active exploration of local and other environments as an intrinsic element of learning
- acquire the ability to use and understand appropriate investigative methods in the study of natural and human features and phenomena in local and other environments
- develop a sense of place: an understanding and appreciation of the major characteristics of different places
- develop a sense of space: an understanding of how natural and human features are located and distributed in local and other environments and how and why they relate to each other
- develop an appropriate cognitive map of the local area and extend the process to wider geographical settings
- acquire an ability to understand, develop and use a growing range of plans, maps and globes
- develop an ability to acquire, analyse and communicate geographical knowledge using a wide variety of sources, including oral, written and graphical forms, models and globes, information technology and other media
- extend, refine and apply artistic, linguistic and mathematical skills
- learn that the sharing, responsible use and conservation of the Earth's natural and human resources are necessary for the continued existence of life
- develop aesthetic sensitivity to the natural and human elements of the environment and to the repercussions of human actions
- learn of and come to value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in Ireland and throughout the world, acquire an awareness of human interdependence and develop empathy with others
- use and value creative, innovative thinking in the exploration and/or resolution of human and environmental issues.

## ❖ Curriculum Planning

The content of the geography curriculum is presented in three strands:

- Human environments
- Natural environments
- Environmental awareness and care

## 1) Strands & Strand Units:

	<b>Junior &amp; Senior Infants</b>	<b>First and Second Class</b>
Human Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in the local community</li> <li>• People and places in other areas</li> </ul>	<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>	<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for my locality</li> </ul>
	<b>Third and Fourth Class</b>	<b>Fifth and Sixth Class</b>
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> <li>• People and other lands</li> <li>• County, regional and national centres</li> </ul>	<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> <li>• People and other lands</li> <li>• County, regional and national centres</li> <li>• Trade and development issues</li> </ul>
Natural Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local natural environment</li> <li>• Land, rivers and seas of my county</li> <li>• Rocks and soils</li> <li>• Weather, climate and atmosphere</li> <li>• Planet Earth in space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local natural environment</li> <li>• Land, rivers and seas of Ireland</li> <li>• Physical features of Europe and the world</li> <li>• Rocks and soils</li> <li>• Weather, climate and atmosphere</li> <li>• Planet Earth in space</li> </ul>
Environmental Awareness and Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental awareness</li> <li>• Caring for the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental awareness</li> <li>• Caring for the environment</li> </ul>

## 2) Skills Development:

As children develop knowledge and understanding of human and natural environments, they should also have opportunities to develop important geographical concepts and skills. These will be fostered most effectively by activity in, and experience of, a range of environments.

<i>Skills and concepts development: Infants – Sixth Class</i>	
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</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><li>• Estimating and measuring</li><li>• Analysing</li><li>• Recording and communicating</li></ul>

## 3) Children's Ideas:

The knowledge that the pupils already possess must be used as a starting point for all geographical activities. It is important to find out what the children already know before proceeding further.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to find out children's ideas –

- ✓ Talk & Discussion
- ✓ Questioning
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Problem solving tasks
- ✓ Drawing
- ✓ Teacher designed texts and tasks

## 4) Approaches and Methodologies:

- Active learning
- Problem solving
- Developing skills through content
- Talk and discussion
- Co-operative learning
- Use of the environment

## 5) Linkage & Integration:

The content for SESE has been presented in the three curricular documents; History, Geography and Science. A cross-curricular approach will be adopted wherever possible. At each class level the teachers will also seek to integrate Geography with other curricular areas such as English, Gaeilge, S.E.S.E., Visual Arts and Drama. Teachers will make provision for this linkage in their short-term planning.

## **6) Multi-Grade Teaching:**

A thematic approach is used to teach the subject in both junior and senior classes with extended differentiation for most able children. The teaching of the subject is fully integrated with the teaching of other subjects where possible. Pupils will work individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole class depending on the topic and/or objective. Topics will be covered on a two yearly plan.

## **7) Assessment & Record Keeping:**

As in all subject areas assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning of Geography. We as a staff have a common understanding of its purpose and the ways in which the progress of children in geography will be assessed, documented and reported.

Assessment in Geography in our school will fulfil the following roles:

- ✓ A Diagnostic Role – to identify area of difficulty in order to respond to the needs of the child.
- ✓ A Summative Role – to establish the outcomes of learning after completing a unit of work.
- ✓ An Evaluative Role – to assist teachers in assessing their own practice, methodologies, approaches and resources.

We recognise that assessment techniques used in Geography must seek to assess progress in:

- ✓ Children's knowledge of the environment and of the world.
- ✓ Children's ability to use geographical skills
- ✓ Children's development of attitudes

The assessment tools we will use will range from the informal means to the more structured approaches. They will include:

- a) Teacher observation of the children's learning
- b) Teacher designed tasks and tests at the end of units of work
- c) Work samples, e.g. projects and investigations

These records will inform the teacher of the progress of each child, the effectiveness of teaching methodologies employed and will also inform future planning. The assessment records will form the basis for reporting and discussing the child's progress with parents. This information will be relayed at the Parent Teacher Meetings and in the annual school reports.

## **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.
- Teachers will develop their questioning techniques spanning from simple recall to more complex and analytical skills so that all pupils will have opportunities for success.
- Map work will be graded for the less able and the more able pupils.
- Different ways of recording and communicating findings will be encouraged: drawing, ICT, written records, oral reports and models.
- All children benefit from active involvement in the environment so all will be encouraged to participate in fieldwork.
- The more able pupils will be encouraged to undertake additional research and recording their geographical findings in a variety of ways.
- Children who were born abroad or who have lived in other countries will be invited to share their experiences with their classmates.
- Children with special needs will be supported in reaching their potential in this subject.

All teachers will familiarise themselves with the Draft Guidelines for Children with General Learning Disabilities. (NCCA)

## **9) Equality of Participation & 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. The Geography programme in our school will allow children to learn of and come to value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in Ireland and throughout the wider world and so promote cultural awareness. Children with special needs will be included in all activities.

## **❖ Organisational Planning –**

### **10) Timetable**

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction (p.70) a minimum of 2¼ hours per week is devoted to SESE in Infant Classes and a minimum of 3 hours per week for 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Class. One hour of this time will be spent on Geography.

On occasion, time will be blocked as appropriate: This might occur when

- ✓ Working on an integrated project
- ✓ Exploring the local environment on a field trip.

Discretionary curriculum time will be used as appropriate.

### **11) Resources & ICT**

The staff will, over time, continue to collect resources to support the implementation of the Geography programme. A full audit of these resources will be carried out on a regular basis and some resources will be stored centrally in the staff room while other more specific resources will be stored in the relevant classrooms.

At present the resources which are available are:

- Local, National and International Maps
- Globes
- Photographs
- Equipment for carrying out weather investigations
- Reference Books
- Atlases
- Compasses
- Thermometers
- Resource Packs (Agri Aware, Trócaire, etc)

In addition the school is fortunate to have a good supply of IT equipment and resources. These include:

- Interactive Whiteboards
- Digital Camera
- Classroom computers
- Laptops
- DVDs / Videos with a geographical focus
- Websites with geographical content
- Computer software

Teachers are also aware that the websites below offer support and information.

<i>Primary Curriculum Support Programme</i>	<a href="http://www.pcsp.ie">www.pcsp.ie</a>
<i>School Development Planning Support</i>	<a href="http://www.sdps.ie">www.sdps.ie</a>
<i>Irish National Teachers Organisation</i>	<a href="http://www.into.ie">www.into.ie</a>
<i>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</i>	<a href="http://www.ncca.ie">www.ncca.ie</a>

## **12) Health & Safety**

During practical work teachers will be aware of the safety implications of any exploratory or investigative work to be undertaken. Successful and enjoyable investigations require sensible planning, good supervision and adherence to safety rules.

Outdoor work will be based in areas that are accessible for children, teachers and helpers and that are safe. Preliminary visits by teachers to the site will be necessary to identify potential hazards.

Refer also to school's Safety Statement and Policy on School Tours / Excursions.

## **13) Individual Teachers' Planning & Reporting**

Teachers will consult this School Plan for Geography and the relevant curriculum documents when they are drawing up their long and short term plans. Teachers will include all strands and strand units every year and will select objectives within the

strand units each year. Teachers will inform subsequent teachers who are taking their class of content covered to ensure continuity in our spiral curriculum. Where it is meaningful and suitable Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with the other SESE subjects of History and Science.

Each class teacher will have a long term plan for the year as well as preparing short term plans for their class. *Cúntais Míósúil* will assist in the recording material covered, in evaluating progress in Geography and in informing future teaching.

#### **14) Staff Development**

- ✓ Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites relating to Geography.
- ✓ Staff will be encouraged to research and try out new approaches and methodologies.
- ✓ All teachers will be responsible for keeping resource material up-to-date and will arrange for opportunities for new resources to be assessed for purchase and for new approaches to be piloted in the school.
- ✓ Teachers will be encouraged to attend in-service workshops and courses on Geography in order to enhance their teaching of the subject.
- ✓ They will up-skill other staff in what they have learned by sharing the expertise acquired at courses.
- ✓ A school culture that encourages the sharing of experience and good practice is fostered in our school.
- ✓ Opportunities to share expertise and information will be provided at staff meetings and at school planning days.

#### **15) Parental Involvement**

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 support the delivery of this programme by:

- ✓ Participating in surveys and interviews
- ✓ Assisting with supervision of fieldwork when needed
- ✓ Talking to the pupils about their life, work, cultural and leisure interests.

Parents are invited to celebrate and view results of projects, surveys, investigations in the school or read about them in the school newsletters.

#### **16) Community Links**

School will liaise with local library and local people with good geographical knowledge.

Speakers from Concern/Trócaire may be invited to talk to the children about the situation in developing countries.

## ❖ Success Criteria

This school plan shall be reviewed under the following headings:

- How individual teacher preparation, planning and teaching reflects this plan.
- Are procedures outlined in the plan consistently followed? (ie fieldwork)
- How methodologies worked in the classroom.
- Resources.
- How well were geographical concepts learned by the pupils.
- How well are the geographical skills of the pupils progressing – a sense of place and space, mapping and geographical investigation skills.
- Are the key messages being adhered to:
  - a) The primary resource for geography is the environment, starting with the local, then regional, national, European and finally global.
  - b) Knowledge and skills are of equal importance.
  - c) Geography is about developing a sense of place and space.

We will assess the outcomes of the Geography Plan by:

- ✓ Revisiting the aims of the plan as a staff
- ✓ Teacher / Parent feedback
- ✓ Children's feedback
- ✓ Inspectors' Reports / suggestions
- ✓ Results of class assessments

## ❖ Implementation

- Roles & Responsibilities

The plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff members with the support of pupils, parents and Board of Management.

- Timeframe

Plan to be implemented from September 2008.

## ❖ Review

- Roles & Responsibilities

Those involved in a review of this plan will be principal, class teachers, parents and BOM.

- Timeframe

A review of this plan will take place during the school year 2010/2011.

## ❖ Ratification & Communication

This school plan for Geography was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Peter's NS.

Signed: .....

Chairperson BOM

Principal:

Ratified on: .....