



St. Raphaela's Primary School

Policy for the Teaching of Geography

Introduction:

We at St. Raphaela's Primary School recognise that Geography is an integral part of the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education of our pupils. In our school, S.E.S.E. 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 those of the wider world. (T.G. P2-5).

The distinct role Geography plays in S.E.S.E. is one of helping the child understand and appreciate the physical and human features of their immediate and natural environment. We also seek to help children acquire open, critical and responsible attitudes so as to enable them to live as informed and caring members of local and wider communities in an interdependent world.

The immediate environment will always be studied first with subsequent extension to regional, national and global environments. Our teaching of Geography will resemble a spiral in which the same geographical topics will be developed in increasing detail at a number of levels.

This policy was created by the teaching staff of St. Raphaela's Primary School in April 2006. It is our response to the 1999 Primary School Curriculum to conform to the principles outlined in this curriculum and to review our practices in the light of these principles. All teaching staff attended training days on Geography and worked collaboratively on this document. As a whole school plan it guides the organised teaching and learning of this subject area and will serve as the basis for all long and short term plans in Geography, and serve as a guide to our approach for new teachers joining the school.

It was ratified by the Board of Management in June 2006 and will be reviewed in June 2010.

Vision and Aims of Our Geography Programme:

We believe that the Geography Curriculum enables children to make sense of the natural and human environments in which they live and in the wider world. As such, Geography is pivotal to each child's rounded environmental education. Geography prepares children to contribute and play a role in their communities by encouraging them to appreciate the interdependence of people. Through our teaching of Geography, we will promote an understanding of and respect for different cultures and ways of life. The Geography curriculum fosters children's responsibility for immediate and wider environments.

In addition to the above we hope through our Geography:

- To provide opportunities for our children to explore, investigate and develop an understanding of the natural human, social, physical and cultural dimensions of local and wider environments and to learn and practice a wide range of skills.

- 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 develop children's appreciation of the issues surrounding sustainable development.
- To develop a wide range of skills, both subject-specific and general, that will help children prepare for adult life and the world of work.

Geography in the Infant Classes:

"What is required at this stage is not so much the teaching of Geography in a formal sense, as a predisposition to think geographically on the part of the teacher."

Melanie Harvey, 'Geographical Work in Primary & Middle Schools'.

We are aware that one of the key messages in this Geography Curriculum is that children start developing geographical concepts by exploring their local immediate environment. In this way children get a strong sense and appreciation of their own place. This will be reflected in our teaching at this level and at subsequent levels.

For pupils in Infant Classes, geographical skills will be acquired through their senses and immediate experience e.g. following directions, planning routes around the classroom, to other areas of the school and from home to school. The children are given opportunities to observe, through discussion and drawing, aspects of their surroundings and so to develop a sense of place.

Through playing with road and village play mats, train sets and farm animals, children will begin to acquire spatial skills and may progress to constructing model towns and farms or three-dimensional plans of their classroom. They will be taught to identify land, sea and rivers on globes and maps and talk about what is shown on pictorial maps. They will also be introduced to simple atlases.

Knowledge and understanding of the home area will initially be limited to the street in which children live and the site of the school. Children will be helped to identify the activities carried out by people with whom they are familiar and some of the features of the locality, e.g. the use of some buildings, where it is safe to play, the church, the library etc.

Both Junior and Senior Infants will have a Barnaby Bear in their classroom and children will be encouraged to take turns in bringing him with them whenever they go anywhere out of the area and then to present an account of Barnaby's travels to the class or even to the school in assembly.

Very young children are naturally interested in the weather and its effects on their lives. They will have opportunities to observe and record weather conditions and the changing seasons in a variety of ways. We make use of our local environment, especially our proximity to the coast, to study rocks, sand and sea, and whenever possible, making 'field trips'. Asking questions about what we like in our environment will help children appreciate the world in which they live and encourage a life-long care for it.

Overview of Geography Programme for 3rd and 4th Classes:

Third and Fourth Class will cover the same three strands in the following way:

Human Environments	Natural Environments	Environmental Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living and working in the local area • People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland <p><i>Explore these 2 strand units through a selection of sub-units:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>People and communities</i> 2. <i>Natural Environmental features and people</i> 3. <i>Settlement: homes and other buildings</i> 4. <i>People at Work</i> 5. <i>Transport and communication</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and other lands <p><i>Choose an environment in another European country And an environment in a non-European country.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County, regional and national centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local natural environment • Land, rivers and seas of my county • Rocks and soils • Weather, climate and atmosphere • Planet earth in space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental awareness • Caring for the environment

We are aware that the children's knowledge and sense of awareness in Third and Fourth Class is extending to wider environments at county, regional, national and international level. This then is reflected back to our own locality.

When choosing countries to study under the strand "Human Environments" these are our considerations:

- a. Children from international communities.
- b. Teacher's own interests and experiences of other countries.
- c. Consideration of the history curriculum with possibilities of integration in mind.
- d. Current resources already in place for a particular country.

We have tried to divide the syllabus for Third and Fourth Class, and an outline of what each class may cover from the curriculum menu is available in our long term plan.

The Geography Curriculum for Fifth and Sixth Class:

We are aware that the content of the Geography curriculum at this level is:

Human Environments	Natural Environments	Environmental Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living and working in the local area • People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland <p><i>Explore these 2 strand units through a selection of sub-units:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>People and communities.</i> 2. <i>Natural Environmental features and people.</i> 3. <i>Settlement: homes and other buildings.</i> 4. <i>People at Work.</i> 5. <i>Transport and communication.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and other lands <p><i>Choose an environment in another European country and an environment in a non-European country.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County, regional and national centres. • Trade and development issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local natural environment • Land, rivers and seas of Ireland • Rocks and soils • Weather, climate and atmosphere • Planet earth in space • Physical features of Europe and the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental awareness • Caring for the environment

Ever increasing wider global environments are introduced at this level. The spiral nature of the curriculum is evident now as wider global environments are introduced. More complex geographical issues are explored.

As is recommended in our curriculum, children will have the opportunity to explore one European and one non-European country per year from 3rd to 6th. (cf. long-term plan for agreed suggested countries to be studied in each class). This may vary according to nationalities of children in the class, particular circumstances, etc. We will try, however, to include at least one developing country (non-European) over the four year period.

In order to ensure continuity of content and to avoid unnecessary duplication, teachers will select content objectives and places of study collaboratively. Most classes choose to participate in the Junior Achievement programme in the summer term. Junior Achievement is sponsored and run by local business groups who train members of their team from the world of corporate business to do six week modules each, consisting of a lesson period a week in classrooms on The World Around Us. The following areas will be covered each year in the Junior Achievement programme:

Senior Infants:	Ourselves
First Class:	Our Families
Second Class:	Our Community
Third Class:	Our City
Fourth Class:	Our Region
Fifth Class:	Our Nation
Sixth Class:	Our World &/or Our Universe

Teachers will attend a pre-module meeting with whoever will present the module and will always be present for each lesson. Junior Achievement provide their own resources which are usually excellent, and samples of each resource will be kept where possible in the Geography Section of the resource room for the school.

We have been awarded Green School Status already and we are committed to caring for our environment as a school.

Skills Development:

We are aware that the development of Geographical skills is of equal importance to strand content in this curriculum. As a result when staff are planning a unit of work, every effort will be made to develop the skills through the content of the strands and strand units.

The skills of Geographical Investigation, a sense of space and place, and mapping and graphical skills will be developed through the content of the strands and strand units.

Strategies for development of these skills will involve the children being actively involved in fieldwork, and outdoor investigations as suggested in Teacher Guidelines starting on page 68.

Indoor geography lessons will also be designed to include the development of geographical skills. The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in age-appropriate ways, from infants to 6th class. By following the content of this curriculum and by developing geographical skills the children in our school are given opportunities to work as geographers at every class level.

Children's ideas:

We plan to use the children's ideas of places and spaces as a starting point for all geographical activity.

We find out what the children already know by:

- Talk and discussion
- Questioning and listening
- Annotated drawings
- Brain-storming
- Concept maps.

We do this to build on the children's previous knowledge or to challenge their existing ideas if they are not accurate.

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.

In learning about our own natural and human environments we will use methodologies specific to Geography:

- Fieldwork
- Survey
- Interview
- Maps
- Photographs (we have detailed photos of the Stillorgan area as well as of Maynooth and Glengariff. We also have aerial photos of Stillorgan and our school and ordnance survey maps of the campus.)
- 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 trails. We have created a tree trail of the school grounds and identified twenty varieties of common trees on the campus.

In learning about distant places we will use these approaches and methodologies:

- Artefacts
- Atlases, maps and globes
- Interviews (especially with children and families of that country)
- ICT
- Photographs
- School twinning (We will look for schools in our own Congregation network and also through Irish Convent Primary Schools Network)
- School textbooks.

Our teachers will follow the recommended sequence for Geography where local areas are first studied, followed by regional, national, European and global studies.

As part of our Geography programme the distinctive skill of graphicacy will be developed through exploring the language of spatial awareness, aerial perspective, symbol, scale, grids and orientation.

We endeavour to create a map-rich environment in our school.

- The maps, globes and atlases we have selected for our school are: *Irish Students Atlas* (Revised 2006) by Eleanor Butler, published by EDCO for Fourth to Sixth Class inclusive.
- *Oxford Infant Atlas* published by Oxford University Press (30 copies of these are available in the staff reference library in the Staff room).

Linkage and Integration:

Linkage:

When we are studying the local environment, we will study both the natural and human environments and the effect one has on the other. When we are studying distant places under the Human Environment strand, we also learn about the natural environments of these places. The strand Environmental Awareness and Care is by its nature, linked strongly with the other two strands.

Integration:

We will explore possibilities to integrate the S.E.S.E. subjects at all class levels, referring to the Teacher Guidelines in Geography, History and Science as follows:

SOME IDEAS FOR S.E.S.E. INTEGRATED PROJECTS IN THE DIFFERENT TEACHER GUIDELINES:

CLASS	TOPIC	BOOK and PAGE
INFANTS	MYSELF: When studying Myself and my and my family in History	HISTORY P.59
INFANTS	AUTUMN: When studying weather in Geography	HISTORY P.59
INFANTS/ JUNIORS	TOYS AND GAMES: When studying Games in the past in History	HISTORY P.59
INFANTS/ JUNIORS	WATER: When studying water in the natural environment in Geography	HISTORY P.59
INFANTS	SPRING: When studying Living things in Science and Weather in Geography	SCIENCE P. 46
INFANTS	WINTER: When studying Weather in Geog. And Living things in Science	GEOGRAPHY P.50
INFANTS	PEOPLE WHO HELP US: When studying People at Work, Human Environments	GEOGRAPHY P. 50
JUNIORS	CLOTHES: When studying Materials in science and Weather in Geography	SCIENCE P. 47
JUNIORS	MYSELF AND MY FAMILY: When studying this strand in History	HISTORY P. 73
MIDDLE	WATER: When studying natural environments in Geography and Living Things in Science	SCIENCE P. 48
MIDDLE	THE OLD MILL: When studying buildings History and Geography	HISTORY P.60
MIDDLE	THE GREAT FAMINE: When Studying this topic in History and "Famine" in the Trade and Development Issues in Geography	HISTORY P.61
SENIORS	FOOD: When studying "Food and Farming" in Human Environments, Geography	SCIENCE P.49
ALL CLASSES		HISTORY P.100-103

We plan this type of integration by collaborating with our colleagues and by referring to the teacher guidelines of Geography, History and Science.

Our use of environmental trails and of local museums and sites of interest will serve to integrate History, Geography and Science in a holistic and meaningful way.

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.

As in all subject areas, Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning of S.E.S.E. 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 will fulfil the following roles:

- A diagnostic role - to identify areas 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. In this way assessment can provide the basis for reporting to, and communicating with, parents and others.
- 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:

- a) Children's knowledge of the world
- b) Children's ability to use geographical skills
- c) Children's development of values and attitudes.

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

Teacher Observation	Teacher designed tasks /tests	Children's work and projects	Curriculum Profiles (with indicators/ tick-list)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses of children to questions and suggestions. • Level of participation in whole class discussions. • Interaction with others in group discussion and collaborative activities. • Use and understanding of the Language of spatial relations • Reaction to learning materials and tasks assigned. • Ways that child identifies and discusses environmental issues. • Efforts made to enhance the environment and to solve environmental problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing accurately both inside and outside the classroom. • Asking and answering a variety of closed & open questions. • Oral, written and pictorial descriptions or recordings. • Predicting outcomes of an investigation. • Activities designed around estimation, measurement and analysis. • Work cards or activity sheets. • Undertaking a range of outdoor tasks. • Completing a trail of designing a trail. • Completed projects or books • Making a model. • Using interactive multimedia computer programs. • Using maps and globes proficiently and mastering the elements of graphicacy. • Teacher designed revision tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of work in progress • Written accounts • Drawings, diagrams, concept maps. • Completed work-cards. • Tests. • Photographs of models made and areas visited • All attempts at map-work • Completed trail booklets. • Record sheets from experiments and investigations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveys knowledge of the human and natural environment accurately through oral , written or drawn accounts • Displays a sense of responsibility for sustaining and enhancing the environment. • Appreciates the interdependence of all living things and their environments. • Has respect for various ethnic, cultural, religious and social groups. • Has an understanding and appreciation of the main characteristics of different places: A sense of Place. • Has an understanding of how human and natural features are located and distributed in the environment: A sense of Space • Can use a range of plans, maps and globes purposefully. • Uses the language of spatial relations correctly. • Confidently employs the skills of a Geographer in investigative work : Questioning , Observing , Analysing Recording Communicating

Equality of Provision:

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 student.

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 exceptional ability child will be encouraged to undertake additional research and recording their geographical findings in a variety of ways.

Children will be provided with opportunities to work co-operatively in mixed ability groups and will be given a variety of investigative work for different levels of achievement.

Organisational Planning:

Timetable :

In keeping with the recommendations in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction (page 70) for S.E.S.E. we will give a minimum of $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours per week in infant years, and three hours for classes from First to Sixth. This will include one hour per week for Geography.

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

- The class are working on a integrated project
- The class are exploring the local environment.

Teachers might use discretionary curriculum time (2 hours per week) for S.E.S.E. as appropriate.

Resources and ICT:

We have completed an environmental audit of the immediate locality and have decided how to use it as a resource. The audit is held in photographic form in the Geography box in the resource room. (cf. Resource list).

We have put in place maps, globes and atlases in our school.

We have located a large scale map of our school for mapping purposes.

We have access to the internet so that we can use the web as a geographical resource.

We use text books as a resource in our teaching of geography.

Education Resource Packs such as "Agri ware" and "Something Fishy" are used to support the curriculum. We have a dedicated resource area for Geography and are presently building up our resources. A list of current resources are appended to this document.

Health and Safety:

We have a Health and Safety policy in place in our school which covers safety concerns around out-of-school activities.

Teachers will consult the Principal whenever it is proposed to engage children in Geography activities in the environment. Provision will be made for adult help, suitable clothing, footwear, insurance and transport.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting:

- Teachers will consult this whole school plan and the curriculum documents for Geography when they are drawing up their long and short term plans.
- From infants to second class all strands and strand units will be covered every year as outlined in the documents. Content objectives within each strand unit will be chosen.
- Teachers from third to sixth have planned collaboratively on strands chosen in order to avoid duplication. Strand units may be repeated as children progress through the school to ensure continuity and progression.
- Where it is meaningful and suitable Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with the other S.E.S.E. subjects.
- Each teacher has a long-term plan for the year drawn up collaboratively with teachers of near the same class level. From this each teachers will tailor fortnightly short-term planning according to the individual needs of their own classes.
- In this school the cuntas miosúil is closely linked to short-term planning and is usually a ticked indication of what has been covered. Parents are informed of children's progress in geography at parent-teacher meetings and in end of year report cards.

Staff Development:

- Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites dealing with geography. A special geography section is available in the staff reference library and a list of our resources is available.
- Staff will be encouraged to research and try out new approaches and methodologies.
- Teacher x will be responsible for keeping resource material up to date and will arrange for opportunities for 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 in Geography. They will pass on to other staff what they have learned. This is usually done at staff meetings.
- Each year we seek the services of an S.E.S.E. Cuiditheoir to assist in this development.
- Our school has a culture where teachers share good experience and practice.

Role of parents:

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 come to the school to help out in the delivery of this programme by participating in surveys and interviews and by helping out in supervision of fieldwork when/if needed.

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

Parents will be encouraged to invite the children to view places of interest like orchards, farms or distinctive natural environments with which they are familiar.

Parents from distant lands will be encouraged to share their heritage with the rest of the school if they so wish or if it is appropriate.

Community Links:

People in the local community who have an interest and knowledge in the environment will be invited to speak to the children.

The local library will be a source of knowledge for the children.

Personnel from Concern/Trócaire/Fair Trade will be invited to speak with the senior pupils about trade and development issues.

Children will be brought on visits to different places of local interest as they progress through the primary school. Trips to parks, woodland, waterways and centres will form part of the geography programme.

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
- Resources
- How procedures for fieldwork are working in the school
- 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?
 1. the primary resource for Geography is the environment, starting with the local, then regional, national, European and global
 2. Knowledge and skills are of equal importance
 3. Geography is about developing a sense of place and space.

Ways of assessing this plan will be:

- Revisiting the plan as a staff
- Teacher-parent feedback
- Parental feedback
- Formal assessment
- Children's feedback
- Inspectors reports and suggestions.

Ratification and Review:

This plan was worked on collaboratively and agreed by all staff in April 2006. It was ratified by the Board of management in June 2006 and will be reviewed in June 2010.

Geography Resources Available in St. Raphaela's School:

Teachers reference books (available in Staff library staff room):

- Facts about Australia
- Going to School
- In the Country
- On the Move
- Where we Live
- Energy Resources in Ireland
- Re-using and Recycling paper
- I can help clean our Air
- Volcanoes
- Science Works
- Geography 1,2,3 &4
- The Energy File
- Geography Key Stages One - Scottish Levels A-B
- The Weather - Wind
Rain
Sunshine
Clouds
- Hurricane
- Guide to Savage Earth
- Habitats - Wetlands
Northern Forests
Mountains
Around the Poles
Tropical Grasslands
Tropical Rainforests
- The Rock Factory - A story about Rocks and Stones
- Living in Australia
- In the City
- What we Wear
- Views of Japan
- Making and Using Maps
- Energy in Our Lives
- Your Environment - Recycling
- Encyclopaedia of Natural Disasters
- Waste Recycling and Re-use
- Cracking Up - A story about Erosion
- World Geography

Big books available from rail in Principal's Office:

- Barnaby Bear goes to Dublin (Infants)
- Barnaby Bear goes to Brittany (Infants)
- A is for Africa
- One Child One Seed
- The Hunter (Story from Kenya)
- Think of an Eel
- Waves (Infants)
- Window (All Classes, Human Interaction with Environment and changes ensuing)
- Where the Forest meets the Sea
- Birds of Prey
- Earth Story
- Volcanoes and Earthquakes

Posters and resources available in Geography boxes, Resource Room):

Rivers, Counties and Mountains of Ireland. 15 packs of maps of each of these features with numbers and names cut out and laminated so children can match names and numbers with map.

Comprehensive photos of Geographical features of : STILLORGAN
 MAYNOOTH
 GLENGARIFF

Box of resources from various countries.