



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Óige  
Department of Education  
and Youth

# Subject Inspection: Geography

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Presentation Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Castleisland Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	61260U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	04/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	13/03/2026

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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.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector(s) 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.

## 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>Dates of inspection</b>	04/11/2025 & 05/11/2025
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students, including focus groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Presentation Secondary School, is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). At the time of the evaluation, the school had an enrolment of 212 students. The school offered the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE).

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Geography was very good. Quality varied across the lessons observed.
- Lessons were well-structured, with carefully considered and well sequenced learning activities that were supported by high-quality resources, all of which enhanced the student learning experience.
- In several cases, well-structured group work supported meaningful collaboration and deeper inquiry, helping students to develop independence in their learning. This effective practice should be extended to more lessons by carefully attending to the structure of group activities and the time allocated to them.
- A notable strength in all lessons was the very effective use of geographical images, animations and digital media to check understanding, prompt discussion and reinforce key concepts. The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Geography was very good.
- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in Geography was very good, with examples of excellent individual teacher planning observed.

### Recommendations

- Teachers should begin the process of aligning success criteria with assessments in all planned units of learning. Doing so will help students identify their next steps after assessments.
- In some lessons, teachers should increase the proportion of time devoted to student-led activities. This will enable students to take a more active role in their learning through discussion, inquiry and collaboration.
- The subject department should review and re-order the sequence of junior cycle units of learning, introducing a map-reading module in the first year. This will provide students with foundational geographical skills that can be applied across subsequent topics.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Geography was very good. Quality varied across the lessons observed.
- Students benefited from a very positive rapport with their teachers, and in all lessons, the atmosphere was warm and purposeful.
- The Geography room provided a highly engaging learning environment, well supported by physical maps, displays and students' work. This strong practice could be further enhanced by increasing the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and adding more Physical Geography specimens, such as rocks, to enrich students' experiential learning.
- In a small number of lessons, effective use of student-led activities resulted in higher levels of engagement, richer discussion and more positive learning experiences for students. Students in the focus group reported that this approach supported their understanding and enjoyment of learning. This practice should be extended more consistently across lessons to ensure all students benefit from increased opportunities to lead discussions and collaborative tasks.
- A notable strength in all lessons was the very effective use of geographical images, animations and digital media to check understanding, prompt discussion and reinforce key concepts. In an excellent senior-cycle lesson on Folding and Faulting, students progressed through a sequence of activities that included interpreting diagrams, using guided video clips and exploring animations. This led students to independently identify and analyse key features of Folding and Faulting through visual sources, effectively deepening their understanding, linking learning and challenging them to apply their knowledge.
- In several cases, well-structured group work supported meaningful collaboration and deeper inquiry, helping students to develop independence in their learning. This effective practice should be extended to more lessons by carefully attending to the structure of group activities and the time allocated to them. In addition, teachers should incorporate follow-up activities that consolidate and extend learning from group work, enabling students to reflect on outcomes and apply their understanding more independently.
- To further strengthen students' effective use of key geographical terminology, the department could adopt a more consistent approach to note-making. Teachers could provide support materials in advance or after lessons (such as key explanations, diagrams, and model summaries) on a digital platform. This would allow students to focus on identifying and recording key terms and concepts during lessons, rather than copying large amounts of text. It would also free up lesson time for providing clearer explanations of challenging ideas. In the focus group, students expressed a preference for spending more time, during lessons, making sense of new learning over taking down notes as this would help them consolidate their learning more effectively.
- In all lessons observed, teachers referred to aspects of local Geography, enabling students to relate new learning to familiar contexts and to appreciate the relevance of geographical concepts within their own environment. During the focus group, students expressed that they valued opportunities to study Geography beyond the classroom and indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to engage in fieldwork within the school's rich geographical hinterland.
- Teachers made very good use of digital learning technologies (DLT) to support teaching and to visualise complex geographical ideas. Building on this strong practice, there is scope to develop further opportunities for students to use digital tools independently, for example, to conduct research, collaborate on group projects or present their findings.
- In all lessons, learning intentions were clearly shared and explained, ensuring that students understood the focus of their learning. In junior cycle lessons, there was scope

- to place greater emphasis on the use of action verbs when framing learning intentions. This would ensure closer alignment with the learning outcomes of the specification and further support students in engaging with lesson content at the most appropriate level.
- In one junior cycle lesson on Soils, the teacher's exemplary use of success criteria to support an assessment task enabled students to engage meaningfully with the learning intentions and develop a clear understanding of the task requirements. Although the assessment had not yet been completed, the structured approach observed indicated that the success criteria would facilitate high-quality formative feedback aligned with the agreed standards. To maximise impact, this very good practice should be further strengthened by consistently aligning success criteria with assessments across all planned units of learning. Doing so will help students identify their next steps in learning after assessments.
  - A high level of subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise was evident in the majority of lessons. Teachers introduced new learning effectively, building on students' prior knowledge and setting appropriately high expectations for all learners.
  - There was team teaching in half of the observed lessons. In these cases, highly effective teacher collaboration supported all students and particularly focused on those with English as an Additional Language. This approach was a very effective way to ensure that learners were fully included and appropriately challenged. As this is a new departmental initiative, there is potential to develop it further and for teachers to share strategies they find especially impactful.

## 2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Geography was very good.
- Timetabling was appropriate at both junior and senior cycle. Geography was a core subject at junior cycle and an optional subject at senior cycle, taught in mixed-ability classes in all cases.
- Interest in senior cycle Geography remained high, with a very high percentage of students studying it in both fifth and sixth year.
- The TY Geography programme has been successfully adapted to a modular approach in line with the TY Programme Statement 2024. This should be kept under review to ensure the module continues to focus on key geographical topics that effectively help students make informed Leaving Certificate subject choices.
- The role of Geography coordinator was rotated annually, which successfully developed leadership capacity within the department.
- Senior leadership provided very good support for the department, including ongoing access to professional learning experiences (PLEs) and opportunities for ongoing professional dialogue, where colleagues shared insights both formally and informally.
- Recent school self-evaluation (SSE) work on growth mindset among staff and students has strengthened the department's reflective practice, with clear links to whole-school initiatives evident in planning. Developing an annual subject action plan would provide a structured way to target and align these initiatives with students' learning more effectively.
- Students were fortunate to have access to a well-resourced Geography classroom, and all teachers had access to laptops, tablets and a dedicated computer room. There was also an annual departmental budget for resources.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in Geography was very good, with examples of excellent individual teacher planning which included very clear learning objectives and a wide variety of carefully selected resources to support all learners.
- There were very high levels of collaboration between department members. Teachers met regularly, formally and informally, to share experiences, review progress and agree

on approaches to classroom-based assessments. Collaborative practices were further strengthened through peer observation and team teaching, which supported the sharing and development of pedagogical approaches.

- Teachers made very good use of a wide variety of digital resources, and there is an opportunity to establish a digital repository to make these resources more accessible and support consistent use across the department.
- Junior cycle plans had addressed the main aspects of the specification, with very comprehensive units of learning developed. There is scope to further enhance the student learning journey by reviewing and reordering the sequence of units, including the introduction of a map-reading module in first year to provide students with foundational geographical skills that can be applied across subsequent topics.
- The department had created a commendable senior cycle scheme of work and ensured students experienced a very positive engagement with the Geographical Investigation, including a focus on the local area.

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



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## For the students of Presentation Secondary School about their learning in Geography

Date of inspection: 04/11/2025

### 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 overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons visited was very good.
- There was a respectful and positive atmosphere in all lessons and student showed great interest and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers supported students really well by explaining things clearly, checking that everyone understood, and giving extra help when needed.

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



- In a few lessons, students could have had more chances to lead learning activities.
- Students should have more chances to use digital tools on their own; to research, work with digital maps or share ideas.
- In a few lessons, group work could be better organised so that students have more time to work together, independently of the teacher.

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