



**Whole School Plan
for
Geography**

Geography

▪ Title: Whole School plan for Geography

▪ Introductory Statement and Rationale:

(a) Introductory Statement

The geography plan for Lucan Educate Together N.S. was developed as a result of a process of collaborative discussion and decision-making engaged in by the staff using our experience and knowledge of teaching geography in the classroom.

Our geography programme aims to help the children develop geographical concepts, knowledge and understanding which will enable them to explore and investigate natural and human aspects of their world and foster a concern for the natural environment.

Geography involves acquiring a broad and balanced understanding of geographical issues – locally, nationally and internationally. Children will also be enabled to develop and practice a range of geographical investigation skills such as using and interpreting maps, questioning, observing, analysing, recording and communicating information.

Developing a sense of place and space are at the heart of the geography curriculum, complimenting both history and science within the broader context of Social Environmental and Science Education (S.E.S.E.).

As an ‘Educate Together’ school, we incorporate the fundamental principles of child-centredness, democracy, equality and a co-educational approach in the delivery of our geography programme. The ultimate goal of our geography plan is that our children will develop a growing appreciation for and understanding of the Earth, its inhabitants and the inter-relationships between them.

(b) Rationale

Our rationale, in line with and conforming to the principles outlined in the primary curriculum, is to:

- Provide an overview of the geography programme throughout the school as well as providing a framework to facilitate more specific planning in this curriculum area.
- Provide a coherent approach to the teaching of geography throughout the school.
- Encourage, where appropriate, a thematic approach interlinking science, geography, history, English and ICT.
- Ensure the plan will benefit all staff members as well as being a source of information for parents and other education partners in the school and community.
- Inform new/temporary staff of the geography curriculum content whilst also highlighting the approaches and methodologies used to deliver this.

▪ Vision and Aims:

(a) Vision

In our school we recognise that geography education is an important element towards providing our children with a broad, balanced and relevant education. We believe that through teaching them about different geographical aspects of the world they inhabit, our children will gain a fuller understanding of the many different physical processes and human events that shape their lives in both local and wider contexts.

(b) Aims

The aims of this plan are:

- 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 and appreciation of people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence, drawing on the experiences of those in our school community as well as from other, more generic, sources.
- To encourage a growing sense of place and spatial awareness in relation to our local environment and

extending this more widely as children mature and develop (including the development of 'mental maps' of the local area and, over time, wider geographical settings).

- To develop the ability to use a range of communicative methods, especially those concerned with the development of graphicacy (using maps and plans, pictorial data representation etc.).
- To gain experience in the use of geographical investigative methods in the study of natural and human features of the local area and, where possible, other environments.
- To encourage the development of caring attitudes and responsible behaviour towards the environment (at a local level and in terms of our responsibility in relation to national and global concerns).
- To promote involvement in identifying, discussing, resolving and avoiding environmental problems through work done in class and through school-wide activities such as Green Team initiatives.
- To develop an understanding of relevant geographical concepts.

▪ **Curriculum Planning:**

Strands and Strand Units

Details of the strands/strand units and learning outcomes for each class level can be found in the Geography curriculum guidelines as follows:

Infant classes – pp. 17-27

First and Second classes – pp. 29-43

Third and Fourth classes – pp. 45-61

Fifth and Sixth classes – pp. 63-84

▪ **Skills Development:**

As children acquire knowledge and understanding of the interplay between human and natural environments they should also have the opportunity to develop key geographical skills. The relevant skills and concepts for each class level are again outlined in the Geography curriculum guidelines as follows:

Infant classes – pp. 22-23

First and Second classes – pp. 34-37

Third and Fourth classes – pp. 50-53

Fifth and Sixth classes – pp. 68-71

These will be fostered through exposure to and investigation of a range of human and natural environments. The key concepts to be explored are:

- **A sense of place and space:** Developing a sense of place and space is fundamental to a child's understanding of the world they inhabit. A sense of place refers to a child's understanding of the essential character of different spaces; how different landscapes and environments have been formed and shaped by the action of natural processes and human activity (in particular, the distinctive impact of peoples' motivations, beliefs, values and attitudes). It also enables a child to gain a growing appreciation of what any place is like to live in. This sense of place will be developed by focussing on familiar contexts (e.g. their own home and locality) before extending this to explore places in local, national and international contexts.

A sense of space refers to the development of a child's understanding of the location of places and how they are positioned in relation to one another. As the child learns about his/her surroundings he/she should develop a growing locational knowledge and spatial awareness of how places and objects are connected and relate to each other. In doing so, the child is gradually expanding and refining his/her 'mental map' of the world. Rote memorisation of the names of towns, counties, countries and physical features may have some value but should be done in the context of developing an increasingly detailed appreciation of place and space through the use and practice of a range of geographical investigation skills (see below).

- **Maps, globes and graphical skills:** The recording, communication and interpretation of spatial information through the use of maps, globes, plans, diagrams, models, photographs etc. is a key skill to be developed through the delivery of the geography curriculum. Understanding and using maps, plans and other graphical forms of data representation to enhance the child's perspective of the world will occur through a range of practical activities at each class level (refer to learning outcomes in the curriculum guides for details).
- **Geographical investigation skills:** Investigating geographical phenomena should involve the practice and development of a range of skills including:
Questioning

Observing
Predicting
Investigating and experimenting
Estimating and measuring
Analysing
Recording and communicating

These skills mirror those included within the science curriculum and should be developed as work outlined in the curriculum strands/strand units (see above) is carried out. Their inclusion in the geography curriculum shows that a scientific approach should inform children's investigations of the environment and that many aspects of the science curriculum can also be achieved through the study of geographical topics (e.g. animal habitats, plant growth etc.).

▪ **Linkage and Integration:**

As with the other subject areas covered under the remit of Social, Environmental and Science Education (SESE), Geography makes a distinctive contribution to the development of the child while also complementing the growth of his/her learning in other curricular areas. In our school, much learning in geography takes place through integrated themes or topics, this is especially so in the junior classes (infants to second class). In our senior classes, as well as topic-based work, we link aspects of geographical study with historical periods (e.g. Italy and the Romans). Links with the science curriculum have already been mentioned.

The study of human environments and the communities that create them will involve the children in understanding and growing in appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of people in local and wider settings. This links with issues explored in social, personal and health education (SPHE) around citizenship and social concern.

Learning about our relationship with natural environments will bring a focus on environmental concerns and issues. As well as learning about how to care for the environment our children are also given opportunity to actively pursue this through working on the school garden, going on fieldtrips and through the work of our 'Green Schools' initiative.

Finally, many tasks in geographical investigation require mathematical knowledge and understanding. Understanding and presenting data, reading co-ordinates, measuring perimeters and areas of plans etc. are all dependent upon and complement work and skills covered in mathematics.

▪ **Approaches and Methodologies:**

The use of a variety of approaches and methodologies (appropriate to the age and experience of the children) is an essential component of the delivery of our geography curriculum. These approaches 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 linkages and to draw conclusions
- Engage children in practical and purposeful activity both in the classroom and in exploration of the local environment
- Build upon the geographical information about their immediate and wider environments (beginning with local and moving on to regional, national, European and global)
- Introduce the children to geographical concepts in a structured and systematic way, providing opportunities for concepts to be revisited and refined
- Arouse their enthusiasm for and curiosity about the environment
- Develop an appreciation of and sense of responsibility for different environments
- Encourage and develop skills of co-operation, communication and problem-solving

In terms of learning about specific places and spaces, undertaking fieldwork (where possible), going on local trails and outings, observing and sketching aspects of the environment, conducting surveys and interviews, looking at maps, plans, photographs etc. and accessing information from books and the internet will all be used to enhance the children's geographical knowledge and skills.

▪ **Children's Ideas:**

Discovering what our children's prior and existing knowledge of different places and spaces is a useful starting point when embarking on geographical activity. We can do this through:

- Talk and discussion
- Brainstorming

- Creating concept maps
- Playing and experimenting
- Questioning

Drawing on the knowledge of children whose families represent different cultures and countries of origin is particularly relevant in our school context.

▪ **Assessment and Record Keeping:**

As in other curriculum areas, assessment in geography incorporates a range of formal and informal approaches that can be used to evaluate and enhance the learning experience of the child. These include:

- Teacher observation
- Questioning
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Concept mapping
- Work samples and portfolios
- Presentations and projects
- Self-assessment tasks

Information yielded from these activities will be included in mid and end of year reports to parents.

▪ **Children with Additional/Different Needs:**

Planning for additional and/or different needs in our children should be a part of all geography lessons. Adaptations such as differentiated work tasks, access to computers or iPads, pre-teaching of key concepts and vocabulary, simplifying these for specific children with English as a second language or with processing difficulties, providing extension materials for more able children etc. should all be considered to ensure access to the curriculum is as inclusive as possible.

▪ **Equality of Participation and Access:**

Being a co-educational school, equal opportunities are given to both boys and girls to participate in discussion about and investigation of geographical concepts and phenomena across all the strands of the curriculum. Our commitment to inclusive practice means that any particular learning needs are accommodated and planned for to maximise participation in the teaching and learning of geography. We actively celebrate difference and promote cultural awareness through class lessons, at whole school assemblies and other community events.

▪ **Organisational Planning:**

Timetable

Geography is a component of SESE and, as prescribed in the National Curriculum Guidelines, this is allocated three hours per week in relation to teaching time, meaning approximately one hour being dedicated to geographical studies.

▪ **Resources and ICT:**

There are a number of resource boxes dedicated to different topics covered in the geography curriculum. These are stored in one of the upstairs Special Education rooms in the school. A range of texts are also stored there learning about different countries and locations. This resource bank is added to as required.

Sets of atlases (included in our book rental scheme) are shared between partner classes throughout the school, as are sets of the textbook 'Unlocking SESE'. Maps and globes are available to all classrooms. There are other, supplementary texts in each classroom.

A catalogue of useful and relevant internet sites is available on the school share drive and staff are encouraged to add to this as and when appropriate.

The children are able to access geographical information in the school's computer room for research purposes. The school has a number of digital cameras for use on fieldtrips.

▪ **Health and Safety:**

In relation to fieldwork, all staff will be aware of the safety implications of undertaking activities in the school grounds and further afield. Such outdoor work will take place in areas that are accessible and assessed for any potential risks. Preliminary visits may be necessary to identify and pre-empt such hazards. First aid supplies should be taken on any trips outside the school grounds.

▪ **Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting:**

Teachers will consult the whole school plan and the curriculum guidelines when drawing up long and short term plans.

Teachers will refer to our school SESE glance cards for topics to be covered at each class level.

Where useful and appropriate geography will be taught as part of a thematic approach to learning, integrating with other SESE curriculum areas.

Cuntas miosula will assist in recording work covered as a means to evaluating progress in geography, informing future learning outcomes and ensuring effective continuity throughout the school.

Parents will be informed of their children's progress in geography at parent-teacher meetings and via end of year reports.

▪ **Staff Development:**

Teachers will be encouraged to share current research, reference books, resource material websites and associations dealing with geography.

Staff working groups will take responsibility for monitoring the upkeep of resources and supplementing these as necessary.

Regular curriculum meetings provide opportunities for teachers, across a two year band to meet, discuss and plan for the development and implementation of the geography curriculum in the school.

The sharing of any useful and relevant resources (from the internet or otherwise) will be encouraged among the staff.

▪ **Parental Involvement:**

It is part of our ethos to involve parents as much as possible in their children's education. Parents may be invited to share information about the places they grew up in, especially if these are in other parts of the world. Family members may be interviewed about aspects of their lives relevant to the study of geography. Information about aspects of the curriculum will be shared with parents through school newsletters, the school website, parent/teacher meetings and end of year reports. Parents are also invited in to school to view geography projects researched by the children.

▪ **Community Links:**

If appropriate, parents or agencies who could support our geography programme will be invited to do so.

<p>▪ Success Criteria:</p> <p>The following criteria will indicate the effectiveness of this plan to support successful teaching and learning of geography in our school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher preparation and planning will be based on this plan • Procedures outlined in this plan will be followed consistently • Assessment of the outcomes of the plan via feedback from teaching staff • Assessment via evidence of children’s knowledge and skills • Feedback and suggestions from School Inspectors
<p>▪ Implementation</p> <p>(a) Roles and Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Management will support the implementation of this policy by providing ongoing professional development and funding for resources. • The principal will oversee the day to day implementation of the plan in each class. • Members of staff will share information, materials and resources on best and current practice. • Class teachers will plan and facilitate children’s learning and progress in geography. <p>(b) Timeframe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This plan will be implemented in the 2018/2019 school year.
<p>▪ Review:</p> <p>(a) Roles and Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the geography curriculum in the school. • The principal and members of staff will be responsible for reviewing this plan. <p>(b) Timeframe</p> <p>This plan will be reviewed in the 2020-2021 academic year.</p>
<p>▪ Ratification and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This plan will be ratified by the Board of Management in 2018/2019 school year.

Ratified by:

Tina Stallard (Chairperson)

Date

For and on behalf of the Board of Management of Lucan Educate Together National School.