



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Subject Inspection: Geography

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Meán Scoil Muire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	5 St. Joseph's Road Longford Town Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63760E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	12/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	12/01/2026

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(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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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">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>2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, <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.</i>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.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>

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	11/11/2025 and 12/11/2025
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Meán Scoil Mhuire is a post-primary school for girls under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education, an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). There were 600 students enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation. The school offered the following programmes: Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The school participated in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Youth for educational inclusion and had one special class, catering for students with autism.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with some notable examples of excellent practice in individual lessons.
- Teachers created positive, inclusive, and engaging learning environments, where students were motivated and actively involved in their learning.
- In almost all lessons, students participated in purposeful learning tasks which supported peer collaboration and deep engagement with geographical concepts.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography were very good, underpinned by senior management's commitment to professional learning and effective resourcing.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation for Geography was good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should use clear, explicit success criteria linked to learning intentions to support student understanding and progress.
- Teachers should make greater use of open and targeted questioning to give students more opportunity to engage with key geographical questions such as who, what, where, when, how and why, and to develop stronger geographical reasoning.
- All teachers should provide consistent formative written feedback and give students structured opportunities to make improvements, supporting the development of their geographical understanding, skills and confidence as learners.
- The subject department should further develop and refine schemes of work. These developments should be informed by current practice, emerging learning needs and recurring themes from assessment to enhance ongoing planning.
- The junior cycle units of learning should be amended to ensure full alignment with the Framework for Junior Cycle and the geography specification. Local case studies should be included, where possible, to help students connect Geography to their local environments.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with some notable examples of excellent practice in individual lessons.
- Teachers established positive rapport with students and fostered a respectful classroom culture in which student participation was frequent, encouraged and valued.
- In most lessons, teachers monitored pacing carefully, adjusting timing to ensure all students had sufficient opportunity to process and apply new concepts.
- In most lessons, teachers provided effective signposting to subsequent lessons, helping students understand the sequence of topics and how new concepts linked to previous learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers structured lessons effectively, sharing and revisiting the learning intentions to maintain focus and support reflection. In a small number of lessons, teachers finished the lesson before the scheduled end. Teachers should revisit the learning intentions when this happens to ensure that learning time is used effectively and that students leave the lesson with a clear understanding of what they have achieved.
- Commendably, in a small number of lessons, the teachers explained action verbs, for example, “explain” and “identify”, to ensure students understood the depth of learning required. Teachers should have access to accurate definitions of these verbs to promote consistency.
- Teachers should present explicit success criteria and link them to the learning intentions, allowing students to monitor their progress and consolidate the learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers used a variety of effective starter activities and visual prompts to activate prior knowledge, with retrieval tasks reinforcing key geographical terms and concepts.
- Teachers used a variety of active learning strategies, including station tasks, movement-based activities, and “Geography in the News” discussions. These approaches promoted student input and choice, supported differentiation and encouraged peer learning.
- Students engaged confidently in pair and group work, collaborating effectively on movement-based activities, problem-solving, and analytical tasks that promoted creativity, critical thinking, and real-world application. In classrooms, student desks were arranged in rows. Teachers should review this seating arrangement and consider setting up a physical layout that facilitates student collaborative learning.
- Teachers effectively integrated a diverse range of visual, digital, and interactive resources, such as, matching activities, a 20-questions game, walking debates, sketch maps, videos, play-dough models and rock samples, to support students in making complex geographical concepts more tangible and meaningful.
- Students engaged with tactile and visual learning activities, including rotating rock-sample stations and play-dough, which supported their understanding of abstract geographical processes and strengthened their ability to interpret and apply key concepts.
- In almost all lessons, teachers used questions effectively to check prior knowledge and understanding. To enrich this practice, teachers should make greater use of open, higher-order and targeted questioning to give students more opportunity to engage with key geographical questions such as who, what, where, when, how and why, and to develop stronger geographical reasoning.
- Formative assessment was a consistent feature of most lessons. Teachers provided timely verbal and written feedback that clarified expectations and guided next steps. Written feedback was often high quality, using “What Went Well” (WWW) and “Even Better If” (EBI) comments identifying strengths and areas for improvement; this practice should be applied more consistently and include dedicated time for student response.

- In a few lessons, students were given opportunities to present their learning, such as those on factors affecting population change, demonstrating the key skill of communicating by sharing ideas with peers, explaining their findings, and responding to questions. While this was effective, there was a missed opportunity to include structured peer-feedback, which would have supported students in learning from one another.
- In all lessons, students reflected on their learning through strategies such as KWL (Know-Want to Know-Learned) charts, “Quick Self-Check” activities, and quick reflection techniques such as “one thing I learned”. These approaches supported metacognition and strengthened student ownership of responsibility for their learning.
- In most lessons, students benefitted from effective differentiation and the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which provided multiple ways for students to access content, participate actively and demonstrate their learning. Teachers should continue to develop these approaches to ensure that all students engage meaningfully with lesson tasks.
- In the focus group, students spoke positively about their learning experience in Geography. They valued practical and tactile resources, visuals, videos, exemplars, note-making strategies, and reported that these approaches helped them understand topics more effectively. Students highlighted the benefits of peer learning and group work, noting that discussion and outdoor learning further enhanced their understanding. They expressed an interest in increased use of the school’s digital platform to access materials, individualised formative feedback with time for follow-up, more opportunities for group work and a clearer roadmap of their learning.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Geography were very good.
- Students studied Geography as an optional subject at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Geography was a core module in the Transition Year (TY) programme; all TY students studied it for half the year which kept them connected to the subject before making choices for Leaving Certificate.
- Senior management provided support for digital learning and ensured that all geography classrooms were equipped with suitable technologies. Students had access to three computer rooms, laptops and digital devices. Teachers should provide more structured opportunities for students to develop digital literacy and to use digital tools for research, collaboration and presenting their learning.
- Senior management was very supportive of teachers' ongoing professional development. Geography teachers had engaged in a variety of professional learning experiences (PLE) opportunities, including those focused on senior cycle Geography.
- The school participated in the Anseo attendance initiative to promote attendance, improve continuity of learning, group participation and the completion of extended activities.
- Almost all teachers were allocated base classrooms, giving teachers easy access to their materials and resources. These were print-rich learning environments with subject-specific resources displayed on the walls to stimulate and support student learning.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of subject planning was good overall. Individual teachers were well-prepared for lessons and produced a range of engaging resources to stimulate student interest. All teachers should upload their resources to the school's digital platform to support consistency in planning.
- The subject department should further develop and refine schemes of work. These developments should be informed by current practice, emerging learning needs and recurring themes from assessment to enhance ongoing planning.
- The junior cycle units of learning should be amended to ensure full alignment with the Framework for Junior Cycle and the geography specification. Local case studies should be included, where possible, to help students connect Geography to their local environments.

- Teachers should incorporate success criteria in learning activities and assessments, providing a transparent framework for evaluating achievement and supporting actionable feedback. Collaboratively designing and sharing these criteria with students would enhance clarity, promote student agency, and strengthen learner outcomes.
- The subject department should introduce geographical skills earlier in both the Junior and Senior Cycle to strengthen students' ability to interpret, analyse, and apply geographical information.
- Teachers shared good examples of reflective practice during the inspection. To build on this, a more systematic approach to collaborative reflection, including an annual review of recorded progress and analysis, would support meaningful professional discussion.
- Planning relied on textbook resources. Expanding the range of materials and integrating teacher-developed strategies would create more dynamic and responsive planning.
- The subject department analysed examination data, which was commendable as it supported informed decision-making, highlighted trends in achievement and identified areas requiring targeted development. The assessment tracker available in students' journals was underutilised and should be promoted to help students monitor their own progress.

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



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**For the students of Meán Scoil Muire
about their learning in Geography
Date of inspection: 12/11/2025**

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?



- Teaching and learning were very good.
- All lessons took place in respectful and positive environments.
- Students enjoyed Geography, especially hands-on work, visuals and working together.
- Individual teachers planned their lessons carefully to engage students.

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



- Teachers should share success criteria so students know exactly what to do to succeed.
- Teachers should give more written feedback and time for students to use that feedback.
- Planning documents should be updated to include local examples, digital learning and geographical skills.

**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
Excellent	Provision that is excellent 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
Very good	Provision that is very good 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
Good	Provision that is good 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
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard 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
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard 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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management of Meán Scoil Mhuire welcomes this subject inspection report on the quality of teaching and learning in the geography department. The board notes the recognition of effective and highly effective practice, as well as the strengths identified in teaching, learning and assessment and whole-school support in the area of Geography.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Our school is committed to implementing the recommendations of this report which will inform teaching and learning in the geography department and all other departments in Meán Scoil Mhuire in the years ahead.