An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Geography
# REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile/School name | Our Lady's Grove Secondary School |
| Seoladh na scoile/School address | Our Lady's Grove<br>Goatstown Road<br>Dublin 14 |
| Uimhir rolla/Roll number | 60891E |
| Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation | 11/03/2025 |
| Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report | 09/05/2025 |

# 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 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.

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.

## Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.<br>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.<br>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.<br>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

# Subject inspection

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| **Date of inspection** | 10/03/2025 and 11/03/2025 |
| **Inspection activities undertaken**<br>• Review of relevant documents<br>• Discussion with principal and key staff<br>• Interaction with students, including a focus group | • Observation of teaching and learning during 4 lessons<br>• Examination of students' work<br>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

## School context

Our Lady's Grove is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of Le Cheile, a Catholic Schools Trust. At the time of the evaluation there was an enrolment of 317 students. The school offered the Junior Cycle (JC), the Leaving Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme. All students studied Geography as part of their Junior Cycle and Transition Year programmes.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with examples of very good practice identified.
- Effective assessment was evident in lessons with good use of targeted questioning to assess prior knowledge and understanding.
- All teachers encouraged and regularly affirmed students' work which contributed to a very positive learning environment.
- Subject provision and whole school support for Geography was very good overall; the senior leadership team were very supportive of the subject department.
- The overall quality of subject planning for Geography was very good with a comprehensive subject plan in place; there were few areas for development in the JC units of learning.

### Recommendations

- To enhance the student experience and promote a culture of independent learning teachers should achieve a greater balance between teacher-led instruction and active student participation in lessons.
- In lessons, teachers should provide further opportunities for students to work collaboratively and learn from each other through structured pair and group work.
- The subject department should agree a strategy to ensure that consistent, individualised written formative feedback is shared with students to facilitate them to identify gaps in their learning and provide a pathway for improvement.
- The JC units of learning should be reviewed and to include identified areas for further development.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with examples of very good practice identified.
- Effective assessment was evident in lessons with a range of assessment strategies observed including good use of targeted questioning to assess prior knowledge and understanding. In lessons where students had recently completed summative assessments, the teacher provided students with comprehensive oral feedback that supported students to identify areas for improvement in their learning.
- It was good that all teachers outlined the learning intentions at the beginning of the lessons and, in some instances, revisited them again at the end. In the most effective lessons this enabled students to make clear links with prior learning and track their progress.
- Overall, classroom management was good with an emphasis on fostering respectful student-teacher relationships which contributed to the creation of a positive learning environment.
- In all lessons observed teachers encouraged and valued students' contributions and opinions. In the most effective lessons, students were engaged in meaningful active-learning tasks early in the lesson, were motivated to learn and demonstrated their learning when responding to teacher questioning. However, in the majority of lessons prolonged instruction by teachers and a delay in introducing opportunities for active student engagement led to periods of passive notetaking. There was a need, in most lessons, to seek a greater balance between teacher-led instruction and active student participation to allow students to share their geographical knowledge, understanding and experiences, and to promote a culture of independent learning.
- Teachers planned for differentiation in the majority of lessons and prepared a good variety of activities and resources. These were well-considered, deepened student knowledge and supported skills development effectively, aligned to their needs and abilities.
- Very good practice was observed when the teacher placed an emphasis on embedding key geographical terms, with continuous and appropriate use of these terms throughout the lesson, combined with regular and effective assessment of students this ensured that they used the terms correctly.
- Key geographical skills were also emphasised in a small number of lessons and very good practice was observed in a lesson where students were supported in developing good habits when sketching aerial photographs.
- In lessons where students were being prepared for certification examinations there was evidence of good oral and written formative feedback. Participants in the student focus group believed that they were better prepared for certificate examinations when they received individualised, written formative feedback from teachers to support their learning. However, a review of student written work undertaken during the evaluation revealed a need, in the majority of lessons, for teachers to provide further individualised written formative feedback to progress learning.
- Almost all participants in the focus group spoke positively about their experience in Geography lessons. A number of students used real world examples to demonstrate their depth of knowledge and understanding of major global events and stated that they enjoyed lessons where they were given opportunities to discuss these events.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision and whole school support for Geography was very good overall.
- Geography was a core subject at JC and as part of a compulsory TY programme. At the time of the evaluation, it was a popular subject choice for students at Leaving Certificate.
- Timetabling for Geography was appropriate and in line with the subject specifications and Department of Education guidelines. All lessons observed were delivered by suitably qualified teachers who were given the opportunity to teach both the junior and senior cycle programmes where the timetable allowed.
- The senior leadership team was very supportive of the geography department and facilitated teachers to engage with continuous professional development both as participants and associates with the teacher support services.
- The senior leadership team provided the resources necessary to deliver the programmes with very good provision of digital technology to support teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school provided a digital platform to facilitate the sharing of resources and the setting of homework. Participants in the student focus group identified this as a useful learning tool, and almost all confirmed that they accessed the online platform regularly.
- The co-ordination of the subject was rotated between the geography teachers. This good practice built professional capacity and leadership within the subject department.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning for Geography was very good overall and the teachers had developed a comprehensive subject plan.
- The subject plan included an appropriate scheme of work for Leaving Certificate, a clear assessment policy, strategies for supporting students with special educational needs and resources to support teaching and learning.
- The JC units of learning should be regularly reviewed and should include identified areas for further development.
- Time was set aside for collaborative planning and it was good that the minutes of planning meetings recorded the decisions taken and actions agreed. These were shared with the senior leadership team.
- This collaboration extended to planning for classroom based assessments and there was evidence that subject learning and assessment review meetings had taken place to assess student work using the features of quality framework. The subject department also worked collectively to plan for common in-house assessments.
- Individual teachers' planning for lessons was good with a range of engaging resources and meaningful learning tasks prepared with consideration given to student needs and abilities.
- Commendably, succession planning was a priority with clear schemes of work and units of learning available to new teachers joining the subject department to ensure that they could continue to teach the subject with minimal disruption.

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.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

**For the students of Our Lady's Grove Secondary School about their learning in Geography**
**Date of inspection: 11/03/2025**

## 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 quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with examples of very good practice identified.
- The senior leadership team was very supportive of the geography department.
- Teacher planning for Geography was very good.

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

- There should be a greater balance between teacher-led instruction and active student participation.
- A more structured approach to pair and group work was needed.
- Students wanted more individualised, written formative feedback to help them make progress.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.**
**Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.**

# Appendix

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

## Submitted by the Board of Management

**Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management congratulates the Geography Department teaching staff and the leadership team for their successful parts in the recent Geography Subject Department Inspection which took place in March 2025. We welcome the hugely positive report which shines a light on the wonderful meaningful practice demonstrated in our school community every day.

The Board is specifically proud of the following which were identified in the report:

- The relational emphasis on everyday student teacher interactions was one of mutual respect. The quality of teaching and learning was rated very good and good overall with effective assessment practices and targeted questioning visible in classes.
- Our subject department suite of planning was considered comprehensive.
- Comprehensive oral and written feedback was witnessed in classes.
- Students' contributions to their own learning were valued.
- Differentiation for diverse learning need was visible in the majority of lessons.
- Key geographical skills and terminology were woven into the fabric of all lessons.
- Our students were able to draw on real world geopolitical events to explain their geographical understanding.
- The overall quality of leadership and management subject provision was afforded the highest descriptor possible on the Inspectorate's Quality Continuum.
- Engaging resources and meaningful learning experiences were planned for by individual teachers.

**Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

Follow up actions since the completion of the Inspection:

- Student centred learning: Lesson planning will seek to find a greater balance between teacher led instruction and student led activities.
- Pair and group work: In lesson planning, the subject department will introduce more opportunities for students to engage in structured group/pair work to further enhance the learning experience.
- Individualised written feedback: The subject department will agree and plan for further regular pathways for improvement.
- A regular formal review of the enactment of the subject plan: The subject plan will be more formally reviewed bi-annually with identified areas for improvement.

## 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 |