An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Geography
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Macroom Co Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62310O
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	06/02/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	12/05/2025

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(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.

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.

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.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
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.
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

Date of inspection	06/02/2025
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal, deputy principal and Geography teachers • Interaction with students, including a student focus group	• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons • Review of students' work • Feedback to the principal, deputy principal and Geography teachers.

School context

De La Salle College is a voluntary, all-boys secondary school and operates under the patronage of the Bishop of Cloyne. At the time of the evaluation, it offered the Junior Cycle, a Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate established. 424 students were enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning, and assessment was very good.
- The classroom atmosphere was positive and respectful, and teachers displayed very good classroom management skills in all lessons.
- In nearly all lessons, students benefited from thoughtfully planned learning activities that encouraged active participation.
- A notable outcome of all lessons was the explicit development of students' assessment literacy.
- Senior management was very supportive of the subject department, and whole-school support for Geography was good overall.
- Planning and preparation were of a good standard. Teachers' individual planning was of a very high quality overall, with all lessons diligently prepared.

Recommendations

- To enhance student engagement with the learning outcomes outlined in the junior cycle Geography specification, teachers should consistently use action verbs in their lessons, as these help students actively connect with and apply their learning in a more meaningful way.
- To support senior cycle students in making more informed decisions about which optional subjects to choose for their Leaving Certificate, the TY programme should provide them with an opportunity to sample all subjects available, including Geography.
- Junior cycle subject plans need further development in order to fully align with the subject specification. The department should create non-linear units that integrate learning outcomes from multiple strands and ensure consistency by identifying key learning intentions and assessments.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning, and assessment was very good.
- The classroom atmosphere was positive and respectful, and teachers displayed very good classroom management skills in all lessons.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. To enhance student engagement with the learning outcomes outlined in the junior cycle specification, teachers should consistently use action verbs in their lessons, as these help students actively connect with and apply their learning in a more meaningful way.
- In a few lessons, students were given opportunities to reflect on their learning. In one junior cycle lesson, a reflective approach helped students assess their understanding of key terms and how it developed throughout the lesson. This method included a fun test and a traffic light system, allowing students to track their progress. The success of this approach was largely due to the teacher's effective questioning, which assessed both what students had learned and how their understanding evolved.
- In most lessons, students benefited from a scaffolded approach to learning. In one example of very good practice, a teacher successfully used a creative method to teach grid referencing in a lesson focused on map reading. This approach provided students with numerous opportunities to practice map-reading skills through enjoyable pair activities before progressing to the more challenging task of using Ordnance Survey maps to test their newly acquired geographical skills.
- In almost all lessons, effective use was made of time to maximise student learning, and the pacing of activities contributed to a very positive learning experience. In a few lessons, however, time could have been utilised more efficiently to ensure an equally effective learning experience for all students. It is suggested that teachers avoid spending excessive time on activities like note-taking, especially when these notes will also be shared with students on the school's digital platform. Indeed, the students themselves shared that they learn better when they are challenged to create their own notes rather than just copying them from the board.
- In an example of excellent practice during a junior cycle lesson, students were encouraged to tap into their prior knowledge of population by exploring the factors that influence the local population. The teacher expertly used this information to introduce and share the learning plan for the lesson. Students were then further challenged by this knowledge to inform discussions during a walking debate. This approach greatly benefited the students by helping them connect with the geographical material from the start, allowing them to engage more purposefully with the subsequent learning activities.
- In almost all lessons, students benefited from thoughtfully planned learning activities that encouraged active participation. In a senior cycle lesson, carefully crafted and appropriately challenging questions framed group work activities that allowed students to approach the questions from the perspectives of various interest groups. This provided students with the opportunity to explore geographical concepts from multiple viewpoints while also sparking engaging whole-class discussions and debates.
- In all lessons, teachers prioritised the development of students' assessment literacy. The most effective practice involved providing clear guidelines on how to succeed in assessments or tasks. This strong approach could be further enhanced by introducing a greater variety of assessments at junior cycle and supporting them with clear, co-created success criteria.
- Geographical video clips were used effectively in almost all lessons to help students understand more complex topics. In the most successful examples, the teacher guided students through the clips and followed up with key questions to assess their understanding. This approach kept students focused, encouraged critical thinking, and improved comprehension by allowing teachers to highlight key points, clarify challenging concepts, and check for understanding. It also helped students contextualise the video, making the learning experience more meaningful.

- As part of the evaluation, a focus group comprising junior and senior cycle students met with the inspector to share their experiences of studying Geography. The feedback from students was very positive. Students referenced, in particular, the support provided by teachers and opportunities to experience success as key positives.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Senior management was very supportive of the subject department, and whole-school support for Geography was good overall.
- Senior management provided very good support for the Geography department, ensuring that teachers had the necessary equipment and resources to deliver the subject specifications. Every classroom visited was equipped with an interactive whiteboard, and students also had access to tablets for research and project work. Digital technology was well integrated to support teaching and learning, with both students and teachers using it effectively in most lessons.
- While whole-school support for Geography was good overall, the school should revise its approach to subject selection for the Leaving Certificate. At the time of the evaluation, students selected their Leaving Certificate subjects at the end of third year, with an option to amend these choices during TY. To help students make more informed decisions, the school should allow them to sample Leaving Certificate subjects and choose their options toward the end of TY.
- All junior cycle students studied Geography, and, at the time of the evaluation, it was a highly popular choice for the Leaving Certificate, indicating that students felt well-prepared and confident to pursue the subject at the senior cycle. Lesson time allocation adhered to the subject specification guidelines for both junior and senior cycles.
- It is commendable that the Geography coordinator's role was rotated, which supported the building of leadership capacity within the subject department.
- Senior management was highly supportive of teachers' ongoing professional learning experiences (PLE). Geography teachers have participated in a wide range of PLE opportunities, including those focused on junior cycle. They actively shared their learning with colleagues through various channels, such as the school's digital learning platform, as well as in both formal and informal meetings.
- During the evaluation, it was evident that the Geography department was actively engaged in the school’s self-evaluation process. Progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy, and the use of learning intentions had been noted in planning documentation. Ongoing monitoring by the Geography department, in collaboration with senior leadership to evaluate impacts, will be essential to ensure that success criteria are not only consistently integrated into lesson planning but are also clearly evident in classroom teaching and student learning.

3. Planning and preparation

- Planning and preparation were of a good standard. Teachers’ individual planning was of a very high quality overall, with all lessons being diligently prepared.
- Junior cycle plans were not yet fully aligned with the subject specification. The subject department should begin developing units of learning that adopt a non-linear approach and incorporate learning outcomes from multiple strands.
- Teachers should identify key learning points and align them with agreed assessments across all junior cycle units. These assessments should include success criteria to support the delivery of formative written feedback at chosen points throughout the year.
- Teachers should revise the junior cycle scheme of work to introduce a module on geographical skills and map work earlier in the programme. This will allow students to develop and apply their geographical skills across a broader range of topics throughout the three-year cycle.

- The TY plan included a small number of engaging projects on local topics, allowing students to explore the subject in an outdoor setting while developing valuable skills for Leaving Certificate Geography and beyond. However, the plan contained a considerable amount of Leaving Certificate content. The subject department should prioritise a review of the current TY plan to ensure its alignment with the Transition Year Programme Statement 2024. The goal should be to develop a revised version with distinct content and approaches that clearly set it apart from the Leaving Certificate Geography syllabus.
- The subject department worked collaboratively and effectively to create a very positive student experience of Geographical Investigation.
- The Geography teachers held regular formal department meetings to share experiences, review progress and agree on common approaches to classroom-based assessments. To further develop their collaborative practices and to support discussions on topics such as task design and success criteria, teachers should include teaching and learning as a key agenda item.
- The subject department's section on the school's digital platform showcased an excellent collection of high-quality resources. This space was used highly effectively to share well-developed teaching materials, provide department updates, and highlight valuable PLE opportunities.
- It is commendable that the subject department conducts a statistical analysis of students' performance in the junior and senior cycle state examinations each year.
- Conversations with teachers highlighted a strong culture of reflection on professional practice within the department. To further enhance this positive practice, it is suggested that units of learning be modified to promote teacher reflection at the end of each unit. Over time, the insights gained from these reflections can contribute to the development of a subject action plan, guiding department discussions on key planning priorities each year.

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 De La Salle College about their learning in Geography

Date of inspection: 06/02/2025

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?

- Learning and teaching was very good.
- Everyone was polite and respectful in all lessons.
- Teachers gave students very good support in their learning.

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

- Teachers should use different types of assessments at junior cycle.
- Students should have the chance to help create and talk about success criteria before and after completing some assessments.

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