



Mount Anville Montessori Junior School



Geography Plan

School Year 2015/2016

Whole School Plan for SESE Geography

Introductory Statement and Rationale

Introductory Statement

We aim through this plan, drawn up by MAMJS teachers to set out our approaches to the teaching and learning of history. It will form the basis for teachers long and short term planning. It will also inform new and temporary teachers of the approaches and methodologies used in our school. The plan was drafted in the School Year 2015/2016 after a process of consultation within the staff. All class and support teachers were involved.

Rationale

We recognise Geography as an integral element of Social, Environmental and Scientific Education. . We recognise the distinct role Geography has to play in enabling the child to explore and understand the natural, human, social and cultural environments in which she lives. In our school SESE provides opportunities for the child to explore, investigate and develop an understanding of the natural, human, social and cultural environment in which he/she lives and of those in the wider world. The distinct role Geography plays in SESE is one of helping the child understand and appreciate the physical and human features of their immediate and wider environments. We view geography as having a distinct but complementary role together with history and science within SESE and as a contributor to the wider child centred curriculum.

Vision and Aims

Vision

The Sacred Heart founder, Saint Madeline Sophie's philosophy was the education of the 'whole person'. In Mount Anville we promote and foster the holistic development of each individual child. The images and words on display at the entrance express our school spirit and the values that we hold dear for our Mount Anville pupils.

Ten main themes of our vision statement are on display in our school. Among these, the inclusion of History in our curriculum will aim to implement the following:

- Active Involvement
- Personal Development
- Life-Long Learning
- Mutual Respect

Aims

We endorse the aims of the SESE Geography curriculum as outlined in the Geography Curriculum:

- 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 people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence
- To develop the ability to use a range of communicative methods, especially those concerned with the development of graphicacy
- To encourage the development of a sense of place and spatial awareness
- To encourage the development of caring attitudes and responsible behaviour towards the environment, and involvement in the identification, discussion, resolution and avoidance of environmental problems
- To develop an understanding of appropriate geographical concepts
- Achieving and retaining the Active Flags that we have been awarded
- Creating a Wildflower Garden in the school and maintaining this features
- Devising an Environmental Trail for all classes with the whole school community involvement

Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units

- Each teacher is familiar with the strands and strand units, content objectives for his/her class level and indeed for each other's class levels.
- The glance cards in the appendix support a coherent programme throughout the school.
- All strands and all strand units must be covered each year but not all the content objectives need be addressed within a strand unit.
- The three strands of the Geography curriculum are:
 - Human Environments
 - Natural Environments
 - Environmental Awareness and Care

We are aware that one of the key messages in this Geography Curriculum is that children start developing geographical concepts by exploring their local, immediate environment. In this way the children get a strong sense and appreciation of their own place. This will be reflected in our teaching at this level and subsequent levels.

We are aware that the children's knowledge and sense of awareness is extending to wider environments

at county, regional, national and international level. This then is reflected back to our own locality. This is reflected in the above curriculum.

We never forget the children’s growing knowledge of their own local environment.

When choosing countries to study under the strand “Human Environments” these are our considerations:

- Foreign nationals in our school who might welcome a focus being placed on their country of origin. If this is acceptable to them, we could use this opportunity to make them especially welcome to our school.
- Places of interest to teachers
- One European and one non-European country to be studied across all classes from 3 to 6 in any one year, thus helping each other with resources.
- Consideration of the history curriculum with possibilities of integration in mind.

Junior Infants – Second class

We implement the Montessori Development programme in Geography and our Cultural Studies which very much integrate with the Geography Curriculum at this level is

| Human Environments | Natural Environments | Environmental Awareness and care |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Living in the local community People and places in other areas | The local natural environments Weather Planet Earth in Space | Caring for my locality |

Third and Fourth classes

| Human Environments | Natural Environments | Environmental Awareness and care |
|---|--|---|
| People living and working in the local area People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland People and other lands and national centres. | The local natural environment Land, rivers and seas of my county Rocks and soils Weather, climate and atmosphere Planet earth in space | Environmental awareness Caring for the environment |

Fifth and Sixth classes

Ever increasing wider global environments are introduced at this level. This is the spiral nature of the curriculum. More complex geographical issues are explored in the above curriculum.

We are aware that undue repetition of content is to be avoided so the children will be taught different content objectives in each class. To this end, teachers in our school co-operate in the choice of content objectives, contrasting places within Ireland and countries. In as far as possible, opportunities are provided to individual teachers to study locations of interest to them.

| Human Environments | Natural Environments | Environmental Awareness and care |
|---|--|---|
| People living and working in the local area People living and working in a contrasting part of Ireland People and other lands County, regional and national centres. Trade and development issues. | The local natural environment Land, rivers and seas of Ireland Rocks and soils Weather, climate and atmosphere Planet earth in space Physical features of Europe and the world. | Environmental awareness Caring for the environment |

Skills Development

We are aware that the development of Geographical skills is of equal importance to strand content in this curriculum.

The skills working as a Geographer are

- A sense of place and space
- Maps , globes and graphicacy
- Geographical investigation skills
 - Questioning
 - Observing
 - Predicting
 - Investigating and experimenting
 - Estimating and measuring
 - Analysing
 - Recording and communicating
 - Evaluating

These skills will be developed through the content of the strands and strand units. Strategies for development of these skills will involve the children being actively involved in fieldwork, trails and outdoor investigations. MAMJS have Environmental trails and an Integrated Mathematics Trail for senior levels

By following the content of this curriculum and by developing the geographical skills, the MAMJS pupils are given opportunities to work as geographers at every class level.

- A sense of place and space will be developed through direct and indirect experiences first in

relation to the child's own home and immediate surroundings but will later extend to include wider environments.

- The use of maps, globes and atlases will be used in age appropriate way from infants to 6th class and will encompass a wide range of graphical activities
- The geographical investigation skills will be included in various indoor and outdoor investigation work.

Children's ideas

We plan to use the children's ideas of places and spaces as a starting point for all geographical activity. We find out what the children already know through

- Talk and discussion
- Play and experimenting
- Enquiry process and Questioning
- Brainstorming
- Concept maps

We do this to build on the children's previous knowledge or to challenge the existing ideas if they are not accurate.

Approaches and Methodologies

Our teachers will follow the recommended sequential approach for Geography whereby local areas are first studied followed by regional, national, European and global studies.

We plan to use the key methodologies in the teaching of Geography :

- Active learning
- Problem solving
- Developing skills through content
- Talk and discussion
- Co-operative learning
- Use of the environment.

In learning about our own natural and human environments we will use methodologies specific to Geography:

- Fieldwork and trails
- Survey
- Interview
- Models
- Maps
- Photographs
- Artefacts

IN MAMJS, we are very fortunate to have fabulous grounds where nature is just outside our classroom doors and surrounding our view from every aspect of the school. We have a Walled Garden, bee-keeping and Mount Anville House that ensure the richness and variety of features and resources to support our teachings in SESE

Linkage and Integration

Linkage

When we are studying the local environment, we will study both the natural and human environments and the effect one has on the other.

When we are studying distant places under the Human Environment strand, we also learn about the natural environments of these places.

The strand Environmental Awareness and Care is by its nature, linked strongly with the other two strands.

Integration

We will explore possibilities to integrate the SESE subjects at all class levels and document this in our fortnightly plans.

In particular the use of MAMJS environmental trails in Geography will complement the study of living things in Science while the strand of Environmental Awareness and Care is common to both curricula. The use of trails will also lead to the study of how places and features have been shaped by the actions of people in the past and so integrate naturally with Local studies in History.

Opportunities that exist for integration with other subject areas are :

- SPHE : The development of the child's sense of identity and citizenship
- Mathematics ; The skills outlined in mapping and graphicacy
- Visual Arts: Aesthetic awareness in the environments and Making drawings.
- Physical Education: Outdoor and adventure activities.
- Language: Discussion of ideas and relationships in Geography. The language of location, direction and position.

Assessment and Record Keeping

As in all subject areas Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning of SESE Geography We as a staff have a common understanding of its purpose and the ways in which the progress of children in geography will be assessed, documented and reported.

Assessment in geography in our school will fulfil the following roles :

- A diagnostic role – to identify areas of difficulty in order to respond to the needs of the child.
- A summative role- to establish the outcomes of learning after completing a unit of work.
- An evaluative role – to assist teachers in assessing their own practice, methodologies, approaches and resources.

We recognise that assessment techniques used in Geography must seek to assess progress in

- Children's knowledge of the environment and of the world.
- Children's ability to use geographical skills
- Children's development of attitudes

The assessment tools we will use will range from the informal means to the more structured

approaches.

- Teacher observation of the children's learning as the geography curriculum is implemented
- Teacher designed tasks and tests at the end of units of work.
- Work samples e.g. finished projects and investigations.

These records will inform the teacher of the progress of the child, the effectiveness of teaching methodologies employed and will also inform future planning.

The assessment records will form the basis for reporting and discussing the child's progress with parents.

This information will be relayed at Parent Teacher Meetings and in annual school reports.

Children with Different Needs

It is important that all children experience a rounded environmental education. Geography plays a pivotal role in this education and so we will do our best to ensure that every child will have opportunities to engage in learning activities appropriate to their abilities.

- Teachers will use a mixture of whole-class teaching and group work, with different groups set tasks of various complexities.
- Teachers will develop their questioning techniques spanning from simple recall to more complex and analytical skills so that all pupils will have opportunities for success.
- Map work will be graded for the less able and the more able students.
- Different ways of recording and communicating findings will be encouraged: drawing, ICT, written records, oral reports and models.
- All children benefit from active involvement in the environment so all will be encouraged to participate in fieldwork.
- The exceptional ability child will be encouraged to undertake additional research and recording their geographical findings in a variety of ways.
- Content, methods of recording and desired learning outcomes will be differentiated for children with general learning difficulties.
- Teachers will consult with their partner teacher and Support teachers for advice to provide the optimal support to pupils in their classes.

Equality of Participation and Access

- Equal opportunity will be given to girls to experience all strands
- All girls will be have equal opportunities to participate in geography lessons and activities.
- Provision for children with physical difficulties will be made so that they can access the geography curriculum.
- Children whose first language is not English will be supported in accessing the geography curriculum also.
- Parents and professional are asked to visit the school ad address groups of pupils either at class level or at assemblies.

- The Geography programme in our school will allow children to learn of and come to value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in Ireland and throughout the wider world and so promote cultural awareness.

Organisational Planning

Timetable

A minimum of two and quarter hours per week is devoted to SESE in infant classes and a minimum of three hours per week for classes 1st to 6th.

One hour of this time will be spent on Geography.

On occasion, time will be blocked as appropriate. This might occur when

- working on a integrated project
- exploring the local environment

Teachers will use discretionary curriculum time for SESE if needed and appropriate.

Resources and ICT

The Green Committee have completed an environmental audit of the grounds of Mount Anville and have decided how to use it as a resource.

Ms Hadden's Garden provides a wonderful natural environment to watch birds and investigate mini-beast.

There is an out-door classroom base in Ms Hadden's Garden

5th class have created and shared a mathematical booklet, using MAMJS grounds as the 'spreagradh'

5th class have created and shared a mini beast booklet, using MAMJS grounds as the 'spreagradh'

We use text books as a resource/reference book in our teaching of geography from 1st to 6th classes

We have a stock of photographs of the local human and natural environment which will be used as a methodology for teaching Geography.

Environmentalists in the community will be asked to talk to the children and share their knowledge with them (MAMJS gardener, MAMJS bee-keeper)

The Green Committee organise for surplus vegetables to be shared with parents, due the reduction of needs by the Sacred Heart Order.

In order to create a map rich environment we intend to use the following resources for mapping

- Maps or plans of classrooms
- Map of our school
- Local Street plan

- Ordnance Survey maps of County
- Ireland Wall maps
- Europe wall maps
- World Wall maps
- Atlases – a variety of different ones is a good idea – each have their own strengths
- Globes
- Satellite Images : [www.met.ie/google maps](http://www.met.ie/google%20maps)
- Leisure maps / Tourist maps showing trails etc
- Transport route maps : those found on bus timetables
- Aerial photos particularly of local areas
- Historical Maps or previous OS versions

Health and Safety

We have a Health and Safety policy and Tours Policy in place in our school which covers safety concerning the handling of equipment and out of school activities such as fieldwork which should be consulted

Teachers will consult with the Principal/Deputy Principal whenever it is proposed to engage in fieldwork.

During practical work teachers will be aware of the safety implications of any exploratory or investigative work to be undertaken. Successful and enjoyable investigations require sensible planning, good supervision and adherence to safety rules.

Outdoor work will be based in areas that are accessible for children, teachers and helpers and that are safe. Preliminary visits by teachers to the site will be necessary to identify potential hazards. If there are apparent dangers then a more suitable habitat will be selected for study.

Habitat studies involve children in working with plants and animals, and teachers will be made aware that some children may be allergic to some animals and plants by the emergency Form that is filled in annually by parents and any specific allergies are identified to the class teacher.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

- Teachers will consult this whole school plan and the curriculum documents for Geography when they are drawing up their long and short term plans.
- Each teacher will have a long term plan for the year drawn up collaboratively with teachers of the same class level, from this teachers will tailor them according to the individual needs of their own classes.
- Where it is meaningful and suitable Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with the other SESE subjects
- Parents are informed of children's progress in Geography at parent teacher meetings and in end of year report cards

Staff Development

- Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and Environmental Trails dealing with Geography. Staff will be encouraged to research and try out new approaches and methodologies.
- The school will be responsible for keeping resource material up to date and will arrange for opportunities for resources to be assessed for purchase and for new approaches to be piloted in the school.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend in-service workshops and courses on Geography in order to enhance their understanding and teaching of the subject. They will upskill other staff in what they have learned by sharing the expertise acquired at these courses during staff meetings.
- The culture in our school is one that encourages the sharing of experience and good practice.
- In MAMJS, we will collaborate on specific aspects of Geography: trails, shared workshops, links with DLR, Green Committee projects.
- All teachers have access to our 'p drive' with a variety of resources.

Parental Involvement

Parents have an important role to play as custodians of local knowledge that can be shared with their children as they explore the various aspects of the local environment.

Parents are encouraged to come to the school to help out in the delivery of this programme by

- Being members of the Green, Ethos, Active Flag and Sports Committees
- participating in surveys and interviews
- Talking to their children about the content of noticeboards around the school
- By helping out in supervision of fieldwork when/if needed
- Talking to the children about their lives, work, cultural and leisure interests.

Parents are invited to celebrate and view results of projects, surveys, investigations in the school or read about them in the school newsletter.

Parents will be encouraged to invite the children to view places of interest like orchards, farms or distinctive natural environments with which they are familiar.

Parents from distant lands will be encouraged to share their heritage with the rest of the school if they so wish or if it is appropriate.

People in the local community who have an interest and knowledge in the environment will be invited to speak to the children.

The school and local library will be a source of knowledge for the children.

Local businesses will be approached to host a visit to a factory or other work –place

The work of some national agencies relates to aspects of the Geography programme. As well as accessing materials produced by these agencies specifically for schools, we will welcome visits by speakers from these organisations. i.e. DLR, Tree Council

Personnel from Concern/ Trócaire / Fair Trade will be invited to speak with the senior pupils about trade and development issues.

Review and Success Criteria

We shall review this whole school plan on a regular basis and as the need arises

Means of assessing the outcomes of the plan will include

- Revisiting the aims of this plan as a staff
- Teacher / Parent feedback
- Children's feedback
- Inspectors reports / suggestions
- Results of class assessment

Implementation

The plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff members.