**St Fergus’ National School
Geography Plan 2015**

**Introduction**

This plan was drafted by the staff of St Fergus during the school year 2014/2015. This plan will form the basis of each teacher’s long and short term planning in Geography and so will influence the teaching and learning in individual classrooms. It will also inform new or temporary teachers of our approaches and methodologies in this subject area. This plan was drafted in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Primary Curriculum in consultation with all the staff. The drawing up of this policy has helped to formulate a common understanding of the purpose of Geography and how it will be implemented in our school.

**Rationale**We recognise that Geography is an integral part of the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education of our pupils. In St Fergus’ 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 of Geography plays in SESE is one of helping the child to understand and appreciate the physical and human features of their immediate and wider environments. This plan is drawn up in response to the 1999 Primary Curriculum, to conform to the principles outlined in this curriculum and to review our practices in light of these principles. As a whole school plan it guides the organised teaching and learning in St. Fergus’ National School.

**Vision**

The teachers of St. Fergus’ aim to assist the children to achieve a broad, balanced and coherent education in Geography from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. We feel this will help a child to become a confident, informed, critical and responsible member of society. We hope through our teaching of Geography to help children to understand more fully the world in which he/she now lives and how events and systems have shaped their lives, locality and wider environment in which he/she exists.

**Aims**

The aims of geography are

* To develop knowledge and understanding of local, regional and wider environments and their inter-relationships
* 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 graphics (mapping and other non-verbal, non-numerical forms of data presentation)
* 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

**Broad Objectives**The broad objectives of Geography are to

* Develop knowledge and understanding of natural and human environments in the locality, region, Ireland, Europe and the world
* Understand some of the natural, social or economic processes which create, sustain or change environments
* Study the impact of environmental conditions on the lives of people in Glin and in other areas, and come to appreciate some of the ways in which humans use, modify or influence their environments
* Engage in active exploration of Glin and other environments as an intrinsic element of learning
* Acquire the ability to use and understand appropriate investigative methods in the study of natural and human features and phenomena in Glin and other environments
* Develop a sense of place: an understanding and appreciation of the major characteristics of different places
* Develop a sense of space: an understanding of how natural and human features are located and distributed in local and other environments and how and why they relate to each other
* Develop an appropriate cognitive map of Glin and extend the process to wider geographical settings
* Acquire an ability to understand, develop and use a growing range of plans, maps and globes
* Develop an ability to acquire, analyse and communicate geographical knowledge using a wide variety of sources, including oral, written and graphical forms, models and globes, information technology and other media
* Extend, refine and apply artistic, linguistic and mathematical skills
* Learn that the sharing, responsible use and conservation of the Earth’s natural and human resources are necessary for the continued existence of life
* Develop aesthetic sensitivity to the natural and human elements of the environment and to the repercussions of human actions
* Learn of and come to value the diversity of peoples, cultures and societies in Ireland and throughout the world, acquire an awareness of human interdependence and develop empathy with others
* environmental issues

**Skills/Concepts developed:**

 As children develop knowledge and understanding of human and natural environments, they should also have opportunities to develop important geographical concepts and skills. These are delineated in a Skills and concepts development section at the beginning of the content for each level and will be fostered most effectively by activity in, and experience of, a range of environments.

* ***A sense of place and space***. Some of the most fundamental geographical concepts to be acquired by the child are those concerned with A sense of place and space. The child’s sense of place refers to his/her understanding of, and feeling for, the essential character of different places: an understanding of how landscapes have been formed and shaped by the interaction of natural processes and human activity, and an appreciation of the distinctive contribution made by the motivations, beliefs, values and attitudes of people. A sense of place enables the child to recognise the unique identity of a place and to appreciate what it would be like to live there. The curriculum describes how the child’s sense of place is first developed in the home and locality and is then extended as he/she explores a balanced range of human and natural environments in local, national and international contexts.
* ***A sense of space refers*** to the child’s understanding of where places are and how they are interconnected. As the child explores his/her surroundings he/she builds up a knowledge of where places and objects are located. Gradually, a concept of how and why these places and objects are related to each other is developed. In doing so, the child is acquiring locational knowledge and spatial awareness and is refining his/her mental image (or cognitive map) of the world. The curriculum outlines how, through the exploration and study of human and natural environments, the refinement of the child’s cognitive map is enhanced. Mere rote memorisation of the names of physical features, towns and countries contributes little to this learning process which is concerned with the development of a very distinctive geographical skill.
* ***Maps, globes and graphical*** skills The recording, communication and interpretation of spatial information through the use of maps, plans, diagrams, photographs, models, globe s and other means is a further and very distinctive skill to be developed in the geography curriculum. Understanding and using maps and other representations is dependent upon a sense of perspective, particularly an aerial perspective. The curriculum outlines a series of activities which will enhance children ’s awareness of perspective, and should help the child to use and understand a wide range of graphical (i.e. nonverbal, non- numerical) forms of data representation. These graphical techniques and the communication of geographical information in text will involve the use of conventional and electronic media.
* ***Geographical investigation skills:***  Some of the skills used in geographical investigations are common to other areas of the curriculum, for example skills of literacy y, numeracy, recording and communication. Investigations will also foster co-operativ e and group working skills. However, an important aspect of the work of many geographers is the application of scientific skills and knowledge to the investigation of geographical phenomena. The skills outlined in Geographical investigation skills, which include questioning, observing, predicting, investigating, estimating, measuring, and analysing, mirror those included in the science curriculum under the heading of Working scientifically. Their inclusion in the geography curriculum indicates not only that a critical, empirical approach should inform children’s investigations of the environment but that significant aspects of the science curriculum can be achieved through geographical topics

**Approaches and methodologies:**

The use of a variety of approaches and methodologies will be an essential component of a successful geography programme. This section of the guidelines outlines some techniques which have been found to be particularly suited to geography activities in the primary school. Of course, the circumstances and needs of pupils, teachers, classes and schools will vary and some methods will suit particular topics better than others. The suggestions which follow can provide only general advice which should be adapted and modified to suit individual needs and circumstances. In some of the sections the examples used are linked to particular classes in the school. However, this is by way of illustration only; most of the techniques described can be used profitably at all levels. Other methodologies, some of which are suited for use in geography lessons, are discussed in the Teacher Guidelines for History and suggestions for the treatment of topics in the strand Environmental awareness and care are to be found in the Teacher Guidelines for Science.

Irrespective of the approaches selected, children’s learning in geography 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 to draw conclusions

• engage pupils in lively, purposeful activity in the classroom and in extensive exploration of the local environment

• build upon the geographical information about their immediate and other environments which children bring to school

• introduce pupils to geographical concepts in a structured and systematic way and provide plenty of opportunities for concepts to be revisited and refined

 • arouse enthusiasm and curiosity about the environment

 • develop skills of co-operation, communication and problem-solving

• develop an appreciation of and sense of responsibility for environments

• encourage the development of attitudes of mutual respect and tolerance.

**Equal Opportunity**
We are committed to providing a teaching environment conducive to learning. Each child is valued, respected and challenged regardless of ability, race, gender, religion, social background, culture or disability.  Equal opportunity will be given to all children to experience all strands and to participate in all class activities. Provision will be made for children with physical/learning difficulties so they can access the Geography curriculum. Children whose first language is not English will be supported to access the Geography Curriculum

**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 techniques 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 and oral reports
* All children benefit from active involvement in the environment so all will be encouraged to participate in fieldwork
* The child with exceptional ability 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.

**Teaching and Learning**In Geography class teachers strive to:

* Use the child’s personal knowledge and experiences as a starting point to develop a lesson.
* Design activities which help pupils answer the geographical questions such as:- Where is it? What is it like? How has it changed? Why has it changed? How will it change next? What will happen to it? How might it be better? What can be done? How do I feel? What am I learning?
* Share with pupils what they are expected to learn and how to learn it.
* Provide a variety of learning activities that are used regularly including observation, enquiry, investigation, games, puzzles and problem-solving.
* Encourage pupils to critically evaluate information, ideas and different viewpoints.
* Encourage pupils to describe, explain, predict and evaluate geographical patterns, processes and environmental changes.
* Plan for pupils to make and use maps, to research through atlases and globes regularly, in order to locate places being studied and make use of models for exploration.
* Provide plenty of opportunity for pupils to work individually, in pairs and in groups.
* Encourage discussion so that pupils clarify their thinking.
* Provide pupils with regular feedback about their work and about what they need to do next in order to improve and further understand.
* Use assessment, through teacher observation, correction of pupils’ work and the use of focused questions to determine the pupils’ knowledge and understanding, before, during and after units of work.
* Expect pupils to record their work in a variety of ways, including diagrams, illustrations, pictures, letters, posters, annotated drawings and maps, reports and accounts. As appropriate, pupils make oral presentations of their 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 by:

* 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.

 **Individual Teachers Planning and Reporting:**

* Teachers will consult the whole school plan and the curriculum documents when drawing up long and short term plans.
* Individual teachers will decide on strands and strand units to be covered in their class each year.
* Where it is meaningful and useful Geography will be taught in a thematic way to integrate with other SESE subjects and other areas of the Curriculum.
* Cuntas Míosúla will assist in recording work covered in evaluating progress in Geography and informing future teaching. It has been agreed to tick short term plans as a means of indicating work covered.
* 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 websites dealing with Geography. Staff will be encouraged to research and try out new approaches and methodologies. Teachers will be encouraged to attend in-service workshops and courses in Geography. All classes have access to Interactive white boards which will have access to the internet so the world wide web can be used for Geography resources.

**Assessment**Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning in St Fergus. Both Assessment Of and Assessment For learning will be integral to all planned Geography classes. Assessment may be based upon teachers’ judgements of pupil attainment and progress. It is built in to the planning of learning experiences and clearly related to the learning outcomes that are proposed. Assessment activities will be wide ranging and matched to the pupils’ ability. It will be differentiated by task or by outcome, through appropriate support and resource provision.
Activities resulting in written or oral work, project material, models, practical fieldwork, role-play, video/audio presentations, factual recall, observations and display work may provide a basis for assessment. Pupils will be encouraged to evaluate their own work as this is a most beneficial learning progression.

The assessment of pupils’ work will provide information for pupils, teachers and parents:

1. To enable pupils to reflect upon and celebrate achievement.
2. To help plan for progression, continuity and to inform planning for future work of whole classes and individual pupils.
3. To communicate achievement and identify areas for future development to pupils, parents and teachers.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The assessment tools we will use will range from informal to more structured approaches. They will include:

* Teacher Observation
* Teacher designed tests and tasks.
* Work and Projects
* Curriculum Profiles

 **Time Allocation**The time allocated to the teaching of Geography **for Infant Classes is 45 minutes per week** and for all other classes, **First – Sixth Class one hour per week.**Geography is a cross curricular subject and is integrated with most subjects throughout the day. On occasions, time for all SESS subjects will be blocked as appropriate. This may happen when:

* Using a thematic approach
* Working on a project
* Exploring the local environment

 **Display of Pupils’ Work**Stimulating and interesting displays of Geography topics covering all abilities and ages will communicate learning processes and celebrate pupils’ achievement. Our notice boards, website and newsletter will often portray the children’s work.

**Organisation**All our classes are double classes with mixed ability and lessons are planned from the strands and strand units from the Revised Primary School Curriculum for Geography. Within these lessons there will be a good balance between whole-class work, group teaching and individual practice.

**Homework**Geography lessons will provide opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills and knowledge, to develop and extend their techniques and strategies, and to prepare for their future learning. These may be extended to homework. These activities will be short, focused and relevant. They will often be referred to and valued in future lessons.

**Health and Safety**In their planning of activities, teachers will anticipate likely safety issues. They will also explain the reasons for safety measures and discuss any implications with the children. Children will always be encouraged to consider safety for themselves, others and the environment and the resources they use, when undertaking Geographical activities. Outdoor work will be based in areas that are accessible and safe for all children, teachers and helpers. Preliminary visits to sites by teachers may be necessary to identify possible hazards. We will consult the schools safety statement for advice on safety during such activities.

1. **Environmental Education**Environmental Education forms an integral and important part of the Geography curriculum. Within the strands and strand units there are units that lend themselves to developing the children’s knowledge, understanding, concern and care for the environment.
Staff and pupils began working towards the acquisition of the Green Flag in the school year 2012 and have since been awarded two Green Flags. Our good work in developing an awareness of environmental issues is ongoing and is encouraged and developed in the wider community.
2. **Parental Involvement:**

Parents/guardians/grandparents have an important role to play as custodians of local knowledge that can be shared with children. Parents are encouraged to help in the delivery of the Geography programme by:

* Participating in interviews/questionnaires, etc.
* Helping out with supervision during fieldwork when/if needed.
* Talking with their children about the local area

Parents from other countries will be encouraged to share their knowledge of their homeland if it is appropriate.

1. **Community Links:**

People in the local area who are interested and have a knowledge of its Geography will be invited to speak to the children. The work of some national agencies in relation to the Geography Curriculum will be discussed and visiting speakers will be welcomed. E.g., Heritage Council, N.R.A.

**Geography Integration with other Subjects**

**English**Work in Geography provides opportunities for pupils to apply their language and literacy skills. In Junior Classes (Infants – Second Class) pupils are expected to extend their technical vocabulary, to talk about what they see and read and communicate this in different ways. They are expected to look for similarities and differences and engage in finding out answers to questions about where and why.
In the Middle and Senior Classes pupils are expected to use technical vocabulary in their oral work, reading and writing. They are expected to use the index of atlases in order to locate places. They apply their writing skills in reports and accounts for different audiences. They read fiction and non-fiction to find out about different places and apply their comprehension skills to drawing inferences and locating information which is particularly relevant to the work in hand. They use geographical language and draw maps and diagrams to communicate geographical information.

**Mathematics**
Geography provides an excellent context for mathematical investigations. In addition, many tasks in geography require numerical skills such as collecting numerical information, data processing, data presentation. Pupils apply their numerical skills in the use of grid references, scale, distances and bearings in map work and analysis of data.

**ICT**
ICT is used in various ways to support teaching and motivate children’s learning. We have interactive whiteboards, visualisers, cameras, computers, and laptops. The Internet is used by staff members to find information, to expand on research and to enhance the learning experience.

**Religious Education**
Geography provides many rich opportunities for spiritual development, for example, to appreciate the beauty and scale of geographical features of the world in which we live, the influence of natural phenomena on our lives and in the lives of others.

**SPHE**
Geography contributes significantly to the teaching of social, personal and health education. Firstly, the subject matter lends itself to raising matters of citizenship and social welfare e.g. children study the way people re-cycle material and how environments are changed for better or for worse. Secondly, the nature of the subject means that children have the opportunity to take part in debates and discussion. Geography in St Fergus promotes the concept of positive citizenship.

**Staffing**
The school’s curriculum for Geography is implemented by the individual class teachers. There is frequent co-operation and sharing of ideas and resources amongst the staff.

**Success Criteria**

We will review this whole school plan for Geography in the future using the following criteria:

* How individual teacher preparation, planning and teaching reflects this plan
* How methodologies listed in this plan are working in the classroom
* Resources—adding additional resources as necessary to assist the delivery of this programme
* How well are geography concepts learnt by children
* How well are children’s geographical skills progressing

Its success will be gauged based on the answers of the above questions.

**Implementation**

(a)   Roles and Responsibilities:

This plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff members who aim to:

* Lead the development of new methodologies listed in the plan
* Liaising with community organisations and relevant agencies
* Continue with the development of ICT as a learning tool in Geography

The Principal will co-ordinate the progress of the plan, encourage and accept feedback on its implementation and report findings to staff.

(b)Timeframe

This plan will be implemented in St. Fergus’ as and from January 2016

**Review**: It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimal implementation of the Geography Curriculum. We aim to review this plan in January 2018. The Principal and staff will be involved in this review.

**Ratification and Communication**

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Chairperson of Board of Management

**Overview of the Strands and Strand Units for each Class Grouping**

***Human Environments Strand Units***Infant Classes
Living in the local community
People and places in other areas

First & Second Class
Living in the local community
People and places in other areas

Third & Fourth Class
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

Fifth & Sixth Class
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 & development issues

***Natural Environments Strand Units***
Infant Classes:The local natural environment
Weather
Planet Earth in space

First and Second classes:
The local natural environment
Weather
Planet Earth in space

Third and Fourth class:
The local natural environment
Lands, rivers and seas of my county
Rocks and soils
Weather, climate and atmosphere
Planet Earth in space
Fifth and sixth class:
The local natural environment
Lands, rivers and seas of my county
Rocks and soils
Weather, climate and atmosphere
Planet Earth in space

***Environmental Awareness & Care Strand Units***Infant classes:
Caring for my locality

First and Second class:
Caring for my locality

Third and fourth class:
Environmental awareness
Caring for the environment

Fifth and Sixth class:
Environmental awareness
Caring for the environment

**Resources in School**

Atlas, Mapwise 1, Small World

Ireland/World Map, Globes.

Primary Planet, Geography Quest.

Earthlinks, Magnetic Maps, Aerial photos of Ireland.

Information texts available on SESE in Learning Support Bookshelf.

Encyclopaedias available.

**Local Resources**

Curragh Chase Woodlands
Local Farms
School Environment
Library

**Websites**
BBC Schools What is weather
Google maps
www.barnabybear
scoilnet
ask about Ireland
Ordinance Survey
EPA
Oxfam
Woodlands

Askaboutireland

Scoilnet

Triola Plaza

Smallworld website

**Local Areas of Interest:**

* Knights Walk
* Shore Walk
* Pier
* Glencorbry River
* Local placenames e.g. Tullyglas – An Tulach Glas; Tullyleague – An Tulach Liath; Clonoughter – An cluain Uachtair
* Information Panels from Knights Walk
* Playground Area
* Glin Castle
* Pol an Éas
* Lime Kiln
* Ice House