



Ofsted Subject Conference Report: Geography

Title: Developing subject leadership in primary schools

Venue: Royal Geographical Society, London

Date: 22 June 2004

Speakers:

- David Bell HMCI,
- Stephen Twigg MP, Minister for Schools
- Leszek Iwaskow HMI, Specialist Subject Adviser for geography
- David Lambert, Chief Executive, Geography Association (GA)
- Helen Martin, Deputy Headteacher, Shelley Primary School, Horsham
- Philip Maudsley, Special education needs co-ordinator and Key Stage 2 leader, St John the Baptist CE School, Teesside
- Louise Chantler, Class teacher Year 6 - Sandgate Primary School, Folkestone
- John Westaway, Consultant for geography, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- Pen Haddow, Polar explorer

Workshop presenters:

- Alison Ryan, Sheffield Hallam University
- Shirley Harrison, Acting Deputy Headteacher and Geography co-ordinator, Hunters Bar Junior School, Sheffield
- Elaine Jackson, Chief Adviser for Primary Education, Trafford LEA
- Linda Pickwell, Headteacher, Partington Primary School, Trafford LEA
- Peter Bloomfield, Senior Lecturer, University of Hertfordshire
- Sarah Roberts, Newly qualified teacher, The Thomas Coram Middle School, Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire
- Paula Richardson, Goldsmith's College, University of London
- Paula Owens, Deputy Headteacher, Eastchurch Primary School
- Judith Mansel, Education Officer, Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers (RGS/IBG)

Synopsis

Ofsted evidence points to the fact that, nationally, geography has the weakest leadership of all subjects in primary schools. One reason for this is the lack of subject specific support. This conference attempted to address this issue and raise

the profile of the subject in primary schools. The conference targeted primary geography co-ordinators and those aspiring to subject leadership. 103 delegates attended.

Summaries of conference sessions

David Bell HMCI opened the conference and welcomed delegates.

Stephen Twigg MP stressed the need to boost geography, particularly primary geography, at a time when the evidence was showing that the subject was being marginalised and undervalued in many schools. The minister stressed that 'in primary schools, geography needs to come to the forefront of curriculum development, and to take a much larger share of professional development time'. He offered encouragement by outlining possible ways this could be achieved.

Leszek Iwaskow HMI identified the key issues impacting on the teaching of the subject in primary schools. He also encouraged subject leaders to be positive and pro-active in re-gaining the 'high ground' and identified approaches which could support this.

View from the classroom

This session was chaired by **David Lambert, Chief Executive of the GA**, and provided insights into classroom practice from teachers with a wide range of experience

Helen Martin (experienced teacher)

In this brief introduction to co-ordinating geography within a primary school, Helen explored bringing excellence and enjoyment into the classroom. Issues of planning, a connected curriculum and the role of geography within this format, the contribution which geography makes in extending thinking skills, and the introduction of new technology into the primary classroom were all discussed.

Philip Maudsley (teaching for 5 years)

In considering the co-ordination of geography at primary level, Philip discussed the development of school-wide schemes to promote certain areas of geography, including locational knowledge and routes of geographical enquiry. He also considered the adaption of the QCA units to fit the circumstances of the individual school and the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the teaching of geography.

Louise Chantler (new teacher)

Louise has been teaching a class of 32 Year 6 children since September 2003, whilst completing a full time postgraduate course at Christ Church. She discussed how she found mixing teaching and research particularly rewarding. She discussed her current research around the area of emotional development, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in relation to fieldwork.

Workshops

Delegates participated in two of the following workshops during the course of the day:

(i) *Planning – providing flexibility within the scheme of work, Shirley Harrison & Alison Ryan*

This workshop explored how planning for geography can be demystified for non-specialist class teachers. Participants considered how to plan a range of geographical topics which would interest and motivate children, as well as make effective links with other area of the curriculum. QCA and Ofsted evidence provided a context and the QCA schemes of work were briefly discussed, highlighting the fact that they pre-dated many current initiatives, especially speaking and listening, creativity and innovations in information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers identified planning processes and each group planned a unit of work from a list of topics, using cue cards. The session concluded by reviewing the planning process and discussed possible ways forward. The units of work produced are to be made available to a wider audience, possibly using the GA website.

(ii) *Geography: Framing the Learning, Linda Pickwell & Elaine Jackson*

This workshop aimed to develop activities and ideas to promote geographical enquiry and a sense of place. Teaching and learning styles, and strategies, were modelled to help teachers motivate and enthuse primary children with the desire to learn geographical knowledge and skills, through involvement, fun and creativity. Thinking-skills frameworks were reviewed and the use of key skills and cross-curricular links promoted. This proved to be a very popular, hands-on, practically focused workshop with numerous ready to use ideas for teachers.

(iii) *Leading Geography in the primary school, Peter Bloomfield & Sarah Roberts*

Geography in the primary school starts in the locality and works outwards. This workshop highlighted that geography subject-leaders must engage with this concept and should encourage colleagues to develop their expertise and enthusiasm for the subject. It stressed that subject leaders should also empathise with those less committed, and help raise their expectations, so that they ensure the children's entitlement to good geography. Personal, staff and curriculum development was considered around the concept of the Six 'Es': Expertise; Enthusiasm; Empathy; Encouragement; Entitlement; and Expectations.

(iv) *Fieldwork - the outside classroom, Paula Owens & Paula Richardson*

This session examined why and how the 'outdoor classroom' supports and extends

children's learning across the curriculum, with emphasis given to geographical fieldwork.

The content included:

- practicalities such as provision, maintenance and risk assessment, with regard to statutory constraints and guidelines
- examples of young children using the school grounds, the locality and venturing further afield
- identification and development of good practice, that uses challenging outdoor learning
- consideration of a range of contexts to promote creative and critical thinking skills and build positive attitudes.

(v) Using on-line resources for the learning and teaching of geography, Judith Mansell

This workshop allowed teachers to explore a wide range of on-line resources that are available to support the subject. These included the recently established 'Unlocking the Archives' resources provided by the RGS.

John Westaway, Consultant for Geography at QCA, opened the afternoon session with an informative talk that highlighted issues, curriculum developments and sources of support for both subject leaders as well as classroom teachers.

Pen Hadow (Polar Explorer) brought the conference to a close by giving an inspirational and personal view of the importance of geography, linked to photographic evidence of his own experiences as a youngster and as a polar explorer. He stressed how geography had inspired his curiosity in the world around him and stimulated his interest in exploration.

Outcomes and next steps

The difficulties facing the subject in the majority of primary schools were acknowledged by Stephen Twigg MP. He announced a number of measures being put in place to raise the profile of the subject, especially in primary schools. These included:

- funding (the Geography Development Fund) to enable the geography associations to develop materials and provide continuing professional development;
- the establishment of a geography focus group which will help to take the subject forward at a national level;
- the appointment of a Chief Adviser for geography to work with the Minister, the Department's geography team, the RGS, the GA, Ofsted, QCA and other partners to make a difference to Geography; and
- funding for the Geographical Association's 'Getting Started with Primary Geography' project, which will soon provide help both for non-specialists

teaching geography in primary schools, and for primary geography co-ordinators to work with the other teachers in their schools.

In addition, all delegates received a CD Rom containing all the materials from the conference including presentations and workshop papers.

Further information

'Innovating with Geography' website, developed with the subject associations, www.qca.org.uk/geography which gives real examples of innovative teaching

The RGS-IBG's website www.geographyinthenews.rgs.org provides up to date materials for teachers on real issues in the news that relate to Geography.

The RGS-IBG's new public archive and exhibition space with specially designed pathways and materials for schools has been described as a shop window for Geography. The accompanying website www.unlockingthearchives.rgs.org is almost a mail order catalogue for Geography with downloadable resources.

Ofsted Subject Report 2002/03 Primary Geography

Ofsted, Inspecting subjects 3 -11 Geography

Ofsted, 'Expecting the unexpected - Developing creativity in primary and secondary schools'

Ofsted Subject Conference reports 2003/04

QCA, Geography 2002/03 - annual report on curriculum and assessment
DfES, Teaching geography at Key Stage 1 and 2

A limited number of CDs containing all the materials from the conference including presentations and workshop papers are available from:

Lynda Hammond:

Ofsted
Ringway House
Preston
PR1 3HQ
Tel: 01772 565305
Fax: 01772 565292
E-mail: lynda.hammond@ofsted.gov.uk