Primary Geographer

Number 72 Summer 2010

Focus on refreshing the primary curriculum

Geographical Association

To all teachers

Would you like to write something for *Primary Geographer*?

This is an excellent opportunity to share your ideas and experiences! We are looking for teachers to write up ideas about teaching and learning in primary geography. You would be able to write to varying lengths, and your local member of the Editorial Board (see below) can help you draft your article. Articles can be 500, 750, 1000 or 1500 words, and can include photographs, pupils' work, examples of planning, explanation of activities. They don't have to be earth-shattering – we are interested in what doesn't work, and how you dealt with that, as well as what you were really pleased with, or the pupils got excited about!

Articles will appear both in the journal and online. Material appropriate for A4 downloads (e.g. activity and information sheets), additional photos and other material will appear online. The following checklist may help you structure your article:

1. A short biography: who you are, where you work and your interest in primary geography.
2. Your teaching and learning idea. What is it? When did you teach it? What went well? What would you change if you did it again? How does your idea illustrate the value of geography?
3. What did the pupils think/feel? Include pupil evaluations/pupil voices.
4. Offer advice for other teachers/schools who might be considering similar work.
5. Please include illustrations – photographs, and examples of pupils' work. Please make sure you have permission for us to reproduce the photographs. We have permission letters if you need them; e-mail Anna Grandfield (*anna@geography.org.uk*). If you are sending photos, we need jpeg files of at least 300dpi. If you are sending pupils' work, we need the originals, which we will of course return.
6. Finally, enjoy the opportunity to share your creativity! Celebrating primary geography is important and significant in its own right, and simply sharing classroom ideas is hugely beneficial. Readers enjoy having a window into someone else's classroom, and learning from each other is what the GA is about.

There is detailed information on preparing articles for publication at *www.geography.org.uk/download/GA_GIPGGuide.pdf*. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Grandfield (*anna@geography.org.uk*).

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Contents

Forthcoming issues

- **Autumn 2010:** Stephen Pickering's, 'Messy Geography' will investigate getting messy outside and inside, as well as discuss the messy issues of our world.
- **Spring 2011:** Tessa Willy's Futures edition will encourage teachers and children to think about their futures.

Editorial

Fran Martin (left) stranded in the USA! Photo: Lynne Wyness.

Letter from America
(with apologies to Alistair Cook)

As I write this editorial I am sitting in my friends' house in Cleveland, Ohio. I arrived in the USA on 7 April for a week's vacation before attending he Association of American Geographers' annual conference in Washington DC. Three weeks and an unpronounceable volcano spewing an ash cloud over Europe later, and I am still here! The event and the fallout (no pun intended!) have demonstrated powerfully what an interdependent world we live in. It has also caused me to reflect beyond the obvious environmental effects, to the social, economic and political geographies that have affected all those displaced by recent events.

The Geographical Association has already posted a page on their website to help teachers think through how they might support pupils in understanding the events and their impact around the world (*www.geography.org.uk/resources/volcano*). It is a fantastic example not only of how crucial geography is in helping to develop understandings about the world, but also of how depth of understanding cannot be provided by geography alone – that at the very least, science, literacy (in its broadest sense), mathematics, art and citizenship all have a part to play. It is this integrated approach to learning about an interdependent world, with its focus on, and responsiveness, to real, live issues and concerns, that is at the heart of suggestions for a renewal of the primary curriculum.

Why focus on refreshing the primary curriculum?

The focus for this issue was first conceived when the findings of the *Cambridge Primary Review* were beginning to emerge. Robin Alexander and his colleagues had, during their three-year research project, taken evidence from a huge number and variety of sources.

With the announcement and subsequent publishing of the government's own review of the primary curriculum, led by Jim Rose, the rationale for this issue were strengthened. In addition, it was becoming increasingly clear that schools were moving away from the strictures of the last two decades and becoming far more creative about how the National Curriculum was interpreted at a local level. The time for a more creative, integrated curriculum seems both ripe and opportune.

So the news that the new primary curriculum was one of the casualties of the impending election, and did not get through parliament into the statute books did not cause us to reconsider our original focus of this issue – rather to further identify the opportunities presented by a refreshed curriculum.

What needs refreshing?

The articles in this issue, beginning with one by current GA President, John Halocha, identify a number of elements in need of new approaches. After twenty years the National Curriculum feels tired and out-of-date. The Schemes of Work created via QCA in 1998 do not reflect the personalised learning agenda at the heart of Every Child Matters. Schools are questioning how centrally designed curricula and Schemes of Work can respond to local needs. On top of that, a range of new approaches including Forest School (see Helen Martin's article) and other learning outside the classroom initiatives, are increasing in popularity. So this issue contains many suggestions on how primary teachers may refresh the curriculum – with a geography emphasis of course – in both creative and innovative ways.

Grasping the opportunity

My enforced extended stay in the USA has also made me think about how people respond to situations such as this. I felt sure that things would have been resolved by the time of my original flight on 18 April. When, on the morning of Monday 19 April my sister back in the UK informed me that the earliest available replacement flight was 2 May, my reaction was one of disbelief!

However, from that point on I thought about how I would spend the extra fortnight and how to view it as an opportunity rather than a problem. I contacted my friends back in Ohio who immediately said 'you must stay with us'. I have been able to access work via the internet and e-mails, and students are currently in school on their placement so I have not missed any teaching. I realise that not everyone will have been in this position, but it did cause me to think about viewing things as opportunities and making the most of them when the moment presents itself.

The moment for refreshing the primary curriculum, for taking back some control over what we teach and why we teach it, for being as creative as we choose and for invigorating ourselves, our pupils and our schools as a result, is right now. Miss this chance and who knows how long it will be before another opportunity arises?

This article in the Guardian about the future of Cambridge review makes interesting reading: *www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/apr/27/primary-education-cambridge-review-election*

A geographical opportunity?
– Taking a fresh look at the primary curriculum

John Halocha

In April it was announced that the Rose Review had been 'shelved'. John Halocha shows how this gives us an excellent opportunity to take curriculum making into our own hands.

What are our building blocks for curriculum making? There is statutory geography national curriculum which is still a legal document. There are ideas from the Rose Review and the National Primary Curriculum (2010), which are already in schools. There are the enlightening ideas contained in the publication *Children, their World, their Education*, the final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review, edited by Robin Alexander (Alexander, 2010). Up until April this important document had been marginalised by the political push to get the Rose recommendations into curriculum planning in schools.

Primary teachers now have the opportunity to take from these sources what they consider to be best for their own schools as they move forward in planning their curricula. But perhaps most importantly of all is the opportunity for teachers to think afresh about what is really important to their pupils in terms of a relevant, exciting and challenging geography curriculum. For nearly twenty years primary teachers have been told there is only one version of curriculum reality. Now they have a choice. In addition, they also have the manifesto from the Geographical Association to draw upon for ideas and support, see *www.geography.org.uk/adifferentview*. While externally proposed curricula change with the political winds, the manifesto is a statement of beliefs and priorities for geography. The curriculum does and indeed should change, but primary teachers can draw on the fundamental ideas in this document to develop their case for geography. Let's take this opportunity to ensure primary children have the best chance to understand their complex and fascinating world in the 21st century.

Some history

The Plowden Report (HMSO,1967) set the scene for much of what happened in primary education in the 1970s and 1980s. The role of subjects was acknowledged but the overall message was one of learning through topics and cross-curricular approaches. It contains numerous references to the content of these being guided by childrens' interests. Plowden was the influence behind my teacher education degree and I spent 14 years working in schools where Plowden was the driving ethos behind what we considered to be good practice. However, the quality of learning and teaching in history and geography was rather variable across the country and by 1989 HMI published a document that concluded 'the picture revealed by national monitoring is a disappointing one' (1989, p. 29). From 1991 to 2009 we had a variety of government-led national curricula initiatives stating how geography and history should be taught in primary schools. If you are interested in the detail of how we have arrived at our current position in primary education, the final report of the Cambridge Primary Review (2010, pp. 39–47) provides a fascinating table of policy milestones that chart this development of curriculum since the 1960s. The remainder of this article offers some starting points for discussion with colleagues on how you might stand back from practice developed since the introduction of the national strategies and take professional control over how you create a new curriculum model where geography plays a crucial role.

Curriculum planning and design

Working in initial teacher education I see a lot of the school planning and policy documents that are given to students. There are often many similarities between them but they make me ask a lot of questions which I would like to share with you. The national curriculum presented geography and history as two discrete subjects and to a large extent this is how many schools continue to plan their curriculum. Why? For all its faults, the Rose Review clearly encourages much more cross-curricular planning. However, if we are to avoid the sometimes muddled and un-structured planning of the 1970s and 1980s, which in many respects led to the introduction of a rigid, government-controlled national curriculum, we need to be very clear about precisely what geographical understanding, skills and knowledge are being developed, within whatever planning framework they are being implemented. This may well require professional development resources so that

Photo: John Halocha

Photos: John Halocha

teachers can deepen their understanding of geography. Certainly, the Geographical Association will be working hard to provide these.

Most of the whole-school planning that I see is blocked into half-term units. Why? Students are often asked to plan schemes of work for half a term when they really may only need three of four weeks of activity. I think schools could be much more creative in their planning and blocking of time by breaking away from planning frameworks that may not have been critically examined for some time, because teachers are busy people. If you are going to adopt the areas of learning suggested by Rose, it may well be worthwhile discussing new ways in which these might be structured at all levels within the planning processes of the school.

My next question is why does geography rarely appear in the morning timetable? Of course, we all know the answer to that question! But do we? If, as professionals, we really are to step back and consider the hidden (and often not so hidden) messages of the curriculum, we'll see that we need to present children with a picture that does not always reinforce the subject hierarchy that pervades mass systems of education across the globe. I'm not saying that geography is always more important than mathematics or English, but I am suggesting that in terms of equal opportunity, we need to expose pupils to a more balanced picture of how the disciplines can help them better understand their world.

The other issue here is the relationship between the core and foundation subjects which has developed in the context of the national curriculum over the last 22 years. In the early days of the Literacy Strategy, much of the content had little relevance to pupils' interests and other aspects of their learning in schools. I have seen that situation improve in many schools over the last five years. There is now a real opportunity for primary teachers to look across their curriculum planning to identify ways in which subjects may mutually support each other. I'm not suggesting that geography merely becomes the content for learning aspects of the English curriculum. However, I do believe that we now have the opportunity to identify ways in which a whole range of subjects may be seen as supporting other areas of learning and not just the groupings suggested by the Rose Review. This article is too short to discuss this in more detail, but Rowley and Cooper (2009) provide many innovative and exciting ideas on how such curriculum developments might be taken forward in primary schools.

Out-of-classroom activities

During my visits to numerous schools I see many levels of involvement with out-of-classroom activities. What strikes me in particular is that those schools which have a commitment to learning outside the classroom, tend to have staff who can articulate very clearly why they believe such activities are an essential part of primary education. Your school curriculum review could provide a very useful opportunity to consider how best to develop a programme of out-of-classroom activities that reflect the ways in which you hope pupils' learning will develop in the future. The Rose Review places considerable emphasis on personal development: various types of field visits can provide excellent opportunities for this to take place within meaningful and enjoyable contexts. However, while the Rose Review (2009, pp. 182–189) gives many examples of how schools might encourage physical

development, health and wellbeing, it makes very little reference as to how out-of-classroom activities might directly support its ambitions in this area. One useful staff development activity might be to audit the fieldwork provision and how it links with and supports other curricular areas, for example, physical development.

My personal view is that perhaps we have to be a little more adventurous in what we plan for children to experience. Of course pupil and staff safety is paramount, but as we move into the next decade of the 21st century, we may need to reflect on the over-protective health and safety ethos which seems to pervade so much of what we do and how we do it in this country. I visit schools in other European countries and have observed that pupils there are able to experience many activities that would currently be considered too risky in the UK. From an historical perspective, have a look at the photographs in the Plowden Report (1967) and you will see primary school pupils creating batik with hot liquids, operating large pulleys to lift tyres in science and using cement to build stone walls – all included as examples of good practice in the 1960s.

Planning issues are closely related to fieldwork activity, alongside practical considerations such as the cost to parents and carers, staffing, and time. From my own experience, if you can clearly justify the learning that will result from out-of-classroom activities and demonstrate how they are related to the whole school curriculum, you are much more likely to have support from home. It may be worth taking the opportunity to review how you plan fieldwork and how it is presented to parents as a way of enriching their children's learning experiences and extending their personal and social development.

A further aspect of planning is how a range of subjects and areas of learning may all benefit from each part of your out-of-classroom programme. You are far more likely to have support from senior management and parents if you can show how one visit will enhance learning in a variety of areas. The positioning of the fieldwork within a scheme of learning is also crucial. If you can be very clear about how prior learning can be developed and reinforced out of the classroom, you are more likely to convince others of the value and cost of such activities. Equally, work done after being out of the classroom needs careful planning in order to make the most of what the new environments gave the pupils. Finally, if opportunities are given for pupils to develop their own lines of enquiry in other areas as well as geography, you will also be developing their personal and social skills as they work with others. Many practical ideas for these can be found in other editions of *Primary Geographer*; number 70 (Autumn 2009) is a particularly good example, with its focus on connecting with landscapes.

Photo: John Halocha

Conclusion

In this article I have aimed to demonstrate how geography may be a particularly appropriate subject through which you can move curriculum development forward in your school. Whatever aspect of change you are looking at, it is essential to have a personal and professional awareness of how geographical understanding, skills and knowledge may all be used to develop pupils' understanding of their world. Perhaps the concluding words of the geography section of the Plowden Report have even more relevance today in our complex and often violent world:

'The important thing ultimately is that people should understand people, and in the primary school a significant contribution may be made to this end.' (HMSO, 1967, p.235)

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www.geography.org.uk/adifferentview

A different view is a manifesto from the Geographical Association. It makes a compelling case for geography's place in the curriculum.

A different view contains eight sets of images, each accompanied by a selection of activities for primary, secondary or cross-phase. The activities range from starters to full lesson ideas and are designed to inspire and challenge young people to think geographically. The activities are all available to download as PDFs while the image families are provided as Zip files.

Re-making the curriculum

Paula Owens

In this companion article to John Halocha's, Paula Owens gives some concrete advice about how you might approach planning for integrated learning.

In January 2008 Sir Jim Rose's review process for a new primary curriculum began, involving many consultations, meetings, conferences and submissions across the education landscape. The GA was involved from the outset during this busy period with both this and the parallel review by Sir Robin Alexander.

Both the Rose and Alexander Reviews have given us a chance to deliberate and focus on the value of geography within a curriculum for the 21st century and some key messages have emerged which can focus our thinking about how to make an engaging curriculum with quality geography at its core.

Some key messages

'It [the curriculum design] is a model that advocates direct subject teaching, complemented by serious and challenging cross-curricular studies which provide ample opportunities for children to use and apply their subject knowledge in order to deepen understanding.' (DCSF, 2009a)

The Rose Review sent out a clear message that subject knowledge matters. Teachers need to understand the essence of geography and maintain the subject's rigour and distinctiveness in order to deepen pupils' subject understanding and make productive links across the curriculum when planning.

The proposed new 'Rose' curriculum also stated that although learning might be organised in 'Areas of Learning', teachers had the freedom to plan both within and across these 'Areas'.

The proposed 'Rose' curriculum also retained Levels of Attainment for individual subject areas although these were revised and updated. The proposed changes for geography were minimal. As with the future prospects of the Rose curriculum, it is unclear at this point whether these revised Levels will be adopted or not – but the key message for the moment is that the view of progression in geography across the primary phase was seen as being enduring. (A comparison of the old and the proposed new levels can be downloaded from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*).

At this time of writing we know that although the Children, Schools and Families 2010 Bill has received Assent and passed into law there are some aspects of it such as the Reform of the Primary Curriculum (following the Rose Review) which have been omitted as it was impossible to reach agreement ahead of the impending general election. This curriculum may or not be revived, but the messages that it contains are still valid because schools have been moving towards developing a 'creative curriculum' that reflects their personal contexts for some time now and will continue to do so.

Curriculum 2000, our current statutory document, offers ample scope to personalise and develop the curriculum already and it's well worth revisiting the National Strategy *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES, 2003) to remind ourselves of the many freedoms that teachers currently have in deciding how to group and teach curricular content. These 'freedoms' are fully endorsed by Ofsted (2008). (See the online resources for relevant extracts of *Excellence and Enjoyment* and the Ofsted Report that you can share with staff as a handout.)

Although not written with a remit to provide the framework for a new curriculum that could be introduced in schools, the comprehensive review by Sir Robin Alexander (2009) of the primary education landscape makes riveting reading. In particular, Alexander (2009) stressed the importance of teachers' subject knowledge and argues for sufficient training and resources to enable educational entitlement for all – seen as access for all pupils to the highest quality of teaching and learning.

Perhaps the most important message that we can take away from recent curriculum conversations and existing statutory obligations is that teachers matter. Teachers' subject knowledge and their professional judgments are at the heart of successful planning to meet pupils' needs.

Curriculum-making

At the GA we are passionate about putting teachers at the heart of a curriculum to match pupils' needs by supporting the process of curriculum-making:

Curriculum-making is the creative act of interpreting a curriculum specification and turning it into a coherent scheme of work. The scheme of work then needs to be resourced and developed into lesson experiences .... It is a creative act that lies at the heart of good teaching. Curriculum-making heightens the enjoyment in teaching. (Action Plan for Geography, 2009)

Curriculum-making can be informed by key questions that help us decide the purpose and mode of new planning and reflect on whether it is fit for purpose (see Figure 1).

When planning a new unit of work, I find it useful to have a 'planning starter' prompt sheet where I can get down some of the key ideas under relevant headings before beginning to plan in more depth (see Figure 2). I use a variety of different templates for this starter but always find it helpful to make reference to the key geographical concepts and skills I will be focusing on, as well as opportunities for fieldwork as a way of ensuring distinctive geographical content.

I agree with Halocha (in his article in this issue of PG) that units do not have to be of a uniform length – when we developed our creative curriculum at my last school, we had topics that ranged in length from one day to a few weeks, as well as some periods of separate subject teaching. We found that this flexibility enhanced our provision for pupils.

If you were planning (or have planned) an integrated unit of work with early primary years around the theme of 'identity', you might choose to make very different links with geography than I have done here, and use different activities and resources. This kind of localised interpretation is what makes curriculum-making so exciting.

Key questions
Why do I want to teach this?
What content will I select and why?
How will I organise the learning?
What resources and activities will I use?

Figure 1: Key questions to support curriculum-making. (A full copy of this table with examples of question prompts can be downloaded from www.geography.org.uk/pg)

What do I want pupils to get out of this? (Length of unit: 2–3 weeks, blocked)

- to recognise that we all have connections to special places and people and to be able to share our stories with others
- to develop an understanding of terms such as community and place, express views about them and why they matter
- to gain an awareness of the wider world

Key questions

- Who am I? What's my story?
- Where do I go? Where do I live? Where do I come from?
- Why and how are places special to me/ to others?
- Who are the special people in my life? How do I connect to them? What's their story?

Planning focus: Identity year 1 – year 2 Special places, special people

Geography concepts

Place, space, scale, cultural understanding and diversity

Geography skills

Enquiry, mapping, using sources and ICT, using appropriate geographical vocabulary, fieldwork

Fieldwork, other opportunities and links

- Investigating special places in the school grounds and meeting special people in the community
- Sustainable schools
- Social cohesion
- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)

Other curriculum links

Geography – Developing a sense of place and location, e.g. exploring human and physical characteristics of our own localities and making links with other places in the UK and beyond.

History – Developing a sense of how the present has been shaped by the past, e.g. recognising and sharing significant life events.

Citizenship and personal development – Knowing how identities develop, e.g. exploring how different people and places help shape who we are. Listen to and show consideration for others' views. Recognise and express different emotions. Identify special relationships.

English and communication

Use talk effectively to convey meaning with appropriate vocabulary. Read and discuss stories.

Drama

Use role-play to enact stories about special places and people.

Resources

- Children's own stories and feelings
- Globes, atlases, laminated maps of the UK/world
- Free mapping software,e.g. Scribble Maps; GA free resources, e.g. *www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/myplaceyourplaceourplace/*
- Books, e.g. *Belonging and Window* by Jeanne Baker; *Grandfather and I* by Helen E. Buckley & Jan Omerod

Figure 2: A planning prompt sheet (a blank version of this prompt sheet can also be downloaded from www.geography.org.uk/pg)

As a subject leader, you are in a position to contribute to whole-school planning by revealing the perspective that a geographical dimension brings – not just to other subject areas, but to whole-school issues such as sustainability, the global dimension and social cohesion.

GA support

The GA recognises the need for teachers to have confident subject knowledge in geography in order to teach it well and make sound links across the curriculum. There are a number of teacher support mechanisms in place already and more are planned. It would be great to have some feedback about how your school is meeting the challenge of the curriculum and how, or if, your geography provision is changing. Please join our Champions Ning and let us know.

Signposts on page 33 of this issue shows some of the many ways the GA is supporting primary teachers.

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Download from *www.geography.org/pg*: Martin, F. (2006) 'Everyday Geography', *Primary Geographer* (Autumn 2006) pp. 4–7.

Download from *www.geography.org.uk/gamagazine*: Martin, H. (2010), 'Children, their world, their education', *GA Magazine*, (14, Spring 2010), pp 16–17.

Download from *www.geography.org.uk/pg* (click on summer 2010):

- the comparison of levels for the geography attainment target
- a blank version of Paula's planning sheet
- some reminders of existing and planned freedoms
- a full version of Figure 1: Key questions to support curriculum making.

Developing an enquiry-based approach to geography

Karen Clark

In this article, Karen Clark shows how off-site fieldwork experiences led to a school-based geographical enquiry that integrated learning with maths, English and ICT.

I am currently a year 4/5 teacher at Thornton Dale C. of E. Primary School in North Yorkshire. I am the Geography Coordinator who successfully put together evidence that led to the school achieving the Silver Primary Geography Quality Mark earlier this year. I have always been inspired by the outdoor environment and spend much of my leisure time orienteering in both natural and urban areas.

Starting point

In evaluating the teaching and learning of geography in our school I recognised that pupils were most enthusiastic and could best describe the learning that had taken to place when their geography lessons were connected to outdoor activity.

One outdoor activity visit that is hugely popular is our year 6 visit to Humphrey Head outdoor activity centre in the Lake District. I felt this had huge potential for developing geography but I did not want to detract from the active fun experienced on the trip. I worked in conjunction with the centre to plan activities that would develop and extend pupils' geographical thinking. One example of the work was a gorge walk. I took a large number of photographs and directed discussion, questioning and experimentation towards exploring the environment we found ourselves in (see Figure 1).

Later, pupils were given the photographs and we brainstormed questions about what we had seen and done. This led to an enquiry linking to the class's experiences of flooding in Thornton Dale and Pickering, which had caused the school to close earlier in the year.

Figure 1: Questions raised by pupils on the gorge walk: How could this stream move this tree? Why do the rocks near the water have no vegetation? What is the stream-bed made up of? How and when does sediment move? Photo: Karen Clark.

We followed a mountain stream. The best bit was getting wet and jumping in to see how strong the water was.

We tested what the stream could move by dropping different sizes of material into the water. There was no way we could move the bigger branches and the stream was not moving them.

There was nothing growing on the sides of the stream and so we thought that the water could sometimes be a lot higher. When we got back, we decided to look at the rainfall to see if there could be more water in the stream. We knew that when Pickering and Thornton Dale flooded and the school shut there was a lot of rain so we decided to look at the rain in the Lake District.

When we looked at the monthly rainfall figures we could see that there was a lot of rain in summer as well as winter. That did not tell us why the trees were there as we were there in May and there was not a lot of water. We would need to see if a lot of rain fell in a short time, which would then make the river rise.

We had trouble trying to find measurements that were not averages. The one we used was from Cumbria House that showed daily rainfall. We could then see if there were several days when it rained a lot and there would be more water in the river. News reports of flooding where cars were washed away mentioned flash floods when a lot of rain fell in a short time. So we think this is how the trees got here.

Figure 2: Humphrey Head by Tom and Michael. Photo: Karen Clark.

As can be seen from the paired work of two year 6 pupils (see Figure 2), the pupils' experience led them into an enquiry which highlighted the difficulties of researching daily, rather than average, rainfall figures. They developed their ICT and literacy skills as well as extending their geographical knowledge. This was a vast improvement on the usual daily diary approach, challenging and encouraging them to drive their own learning forward.

Embedding the enquiry approach

The high quality of this work then developed into a pupil-led enquiry with a group of year 4 and 5 pupils. These pupils were new to a mixed age group setting and had a wide range of abilities. I felt it was important to find a challenge to help them develop their cooperative and group work skills in addition to their geographical understanding.

Activity

We started with an affective mapping exercise that helped the class express their feelings and views about areas in and around school. This was based on some ideas described in 'Valuing Places' (*Primary Geographer*, Autumn 2005). We discussed the use of facial expressions to express their feelings and views about a location (e.g. a smiley face to represent feeling happy/comfortable in a place). Using a map of the whole school and a more detailed plan of the school's internal layout, pupils had to decide how they felt about different places. This flagged up concerns about arriving at, and departing from, school. Using maps of their journey to and from school helped the class to pinpoint the area where there were most concerns. Using this information, we decided to collect evidence that would identify the problems, and then decide what we could do about them (see Figure 3). We undertook a traffic survey towards the end of the school day. Since everyone left school at approximately the same time, the end of the day was identified as being more problematic than start of the day, when arrivals were staggered.

This black car should not park here because it could block someone's view and they could crash.

Figure 4: Traffic photos and comments from Jade and Joshua. Photo: Pupils of Thornton Dale C. of E. Primary School.

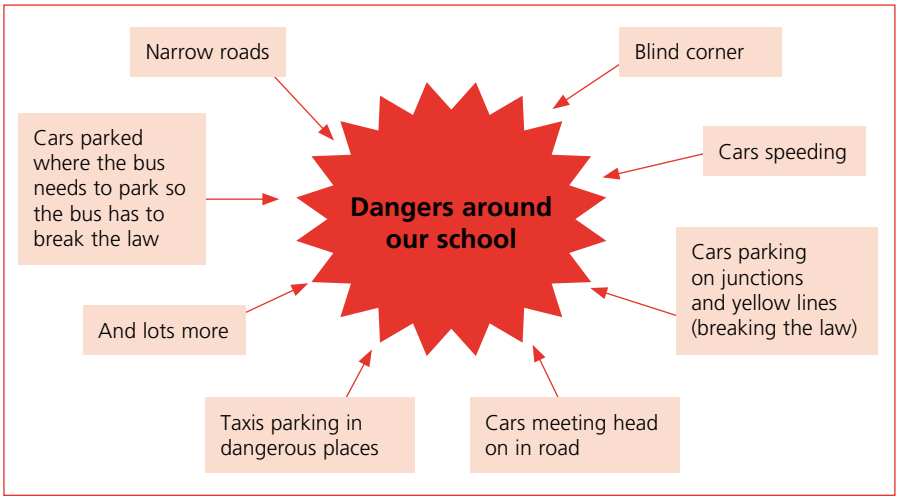

Figure 3: Class ideas about the dangers around school from Sam and Ceridwen.

The pupils were involved at every stage of planning what data needed to be collected, where groups would stand and even in risk-assessing the survey activity. Each group decided to take a camera for photographing the dangers, and they also counted cars, pedestrians, buses and commercial vehicles. Because this was an investigation, the groups predicted what they expected to discover before conducting their surveys.

As each group graphed their results, various anomalies were identified: parents coming to pick up pre-school children arrived earlier than those collecting primary pupils – therefore contributing to the problems of parking for parents of primary pupils. Perhaps the most interesting results were the photographs that highlighted problems with the road being narrowed by parked cars: poor vision around corners (the school is located in a cul-de-sac running off a blind bend with no pedestrian crossings or lollipop ladies); and, in some cases, poor driving. The pupils' evidence confirmed that leaving school was very dangerous, (see Figure 4).

The children used mathematical and ICT skills to present the data and this in turn led to much discussion on what could be done to resolve the problem. The culmination of this work was the children deciding to highlight concerns, informed by their fieldwork, in their own letters to parents and local councillors. A letter is available as a download, from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*.

Outcomes

This project improved the pupils' ability to work with each other and provided a purpose for their written work, which also improved. Even after the work was completed the pupils had no difficulty in articulating what they had learnt and the steps they had taken to achieve success. It was the ability of the pupils to share their experiences with Wendy North (from the GA), who moderated our application for a Quality Mark, which ensured we were awarded the Silver level.

The whole unit was driven from start to finish by what the children wanted to discover, and by their improved skills using maps, graphs and annotation of photographs. Their final piece of written work is testament to how successful this approach was. I believe that an enquiry-based approach is both engaging and challenging to all learners – whatever their ability – to ensure that their work is relevant to themselves and the community in which they live.

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To accompany this article you can find the following downloads at *www.geography.org.uk/pg* (click on summer 2010):

- Part of Karen's submission for the Primary Geography Quality Mark showing how outdoor pursuits and geography fieldwork can be linked.
- A pupil's letter to parents and councillors about her concerns about traffic that were highlighted by the traffic survey.

Place: Part 1

Geography's place in a refreshed curriculum

Sari Huhtala

2010 provides an opportunity to refresh the curriculum using key concepts or ideas to provide the focus for planning, teaching and learning. In this article, Sari Huhtala explores the concept of place, which – along with space – is a central part of understanding the world geographically.

Why place?

Places are part of our everyday life: we are born to a place; grow, interact and live in places; transfer and move from place to place; hear and learn about places; people and things exist in places, and so on. Places have meaning and are individually experienced through our own unique attitudes and circumstances. Through 'place' studies, pupils learn to understand and become aware of: where and how things are located; spatial patterns and patterns of location; relationships between different features and how places developed their particular 'character' (Wiegand, 1993). In the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2008) children should observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live, the natural world and the environment, and talk about features liked or disliked. There is now an opportunity for us to ensure children build a secure knowledge of how and why places and environments develop, how they can be sustained and how they may change in the future (DCSF, 2009).

Early place awareness

From birth we develop a sense of locational awareness: a baby reaches towards the mother's face. Growing, children realise they are separate from others and learn to have favourite places; they gain a sense of territory, gradually extending to my home, my street, my town and so on. Interlinked with this is the daily interaction with places that builds their knowledge of the area. Inevitably comes the vital aspect of associating people with places: places are of interest because of the people who live there. Places are linked, through people, with events experienced by children. Imagination (play worlds) and feelings are important in the gradual process of place awareness. Children are by nature curious about the world around them: 'not only the familiar, but also the dramatic and new which draws them to find out about, to discuss and to remember places only known at second-hand.' (Mills, 1988, p. 13)

Places have physical characteristics as well as a human dimension. The result of place awareness is the development of two key concepts: children's sense of place, (which they can then apply to other places) and the expanding ability to represent places in cognitive/mental maps.

Mental maps

What we learn about places depends on spatial or environmental cognition. Scoffham (2004, p. 78) states that, 'knowing where something is, either in relation to other things or on an abstract grid, is a key geographical idea'. Environmental knowledge that an individual has already acquired is described as a 'cognitive map': a mental model – not like cartographic maps in either form or content. The more familiar a person is with a place the more accurate and detailed their cognitive map will be: as people mature, the more refined their map becomes.

Starting point?

Scoffham (2004) claims that the skills young children have are varied and often underestimated. He uses examples of a number of pieces of research, which demonstrate that children younger than five can use maps (if aligned properly) and read aerial photographs, and that spatial reasoning is universal. Research also reveals the ease with which young children can accurately trace a route, having only walked it once before, and that children's memory for a route significantly improved when their attention was drawn to appropriate landmarks.

The message here is that it is feasible to start using map-work from an early age. Already in nursery schools children draw journeys associated with stories: the fact that they can draw maps long before they can read or write suggests that spatial understanding is fundamental (Scoffham, 2004).

Children become familiar with their local places. Photo: Ruth Totterdell.

Private and everyday geographies

As children explore their surroundings they construct private geographies that meet their physical and emotional needs. To Martin, (2006) the purpose of local studies is to create new meanings about children's everyday worlds, which can then be applied to other places, and to see the familiar in a new light – 'to apply a geographical imagination' (Martin, 2006, p. 17). Large (2003 in Scoffham, 2004) found that children who talked to an adult about their journey (even if travelling in a car) were much more aware of the route than those who did not.

Geographical fieldwork has an important role in local studies. It provides a multi-sensory experience and enforces place attachment (Martin, 2006), which 'provides the individual with a sense of stability amid change … involving the individual's behaviour, cognition and affect', sometimes operating at several levels. (Spencer, p. 81 in Catling and Martin, 2004)

Though what children generally like and dislike about their communities remains fairly constant over time, their access to local surroundings has decreased in recent years because of traffic, environmental changes, crime and the effects of migration. (Bowles, p. 31 in Catling and Martin, 2004) Research into children's understanding of locality revealed the following: if to reach amenities a car is required, then children's idea of locality expands from an earlier age; inner city children have more restricted spatial understanding than children in rural areas; understanding of locality is more vivid and detailed among children than adults; and, often, primary school teachers 'do not understand the geographies pursued by children,' because they do not live locally – and this reflects in the planning of their school's geography curriculum. (Bowles, p. 40 in Catling and Martin, 2004).

Places near and far

Understanding about distant places develops alongside the knowledge of the local area and can be complex. Some of the most important sources of evidence about far-away places are visual images: they can have a powerful effect on children. Younger children cannot often distinguish between real and imagined (e.g. Disneyland) places. Distance can be being confusing as well, and younger children tend to associate countries with food and animals (and possibly football), albeit with some confusion. Older children have a wider range of responses, as a result of their familiarity with images of war, poverty and famine (Scoffham, 2004).

Weldon (in Martin, 2006, p. 45) states that pupils should study distant places: 'to recognise their interdependence with the rest of the world; build positive attitudes towards people around the world; build a global perspective and value diversity in places, people, environments and cultures'.

Map making of the route to Barrow Bridge from St Peters, Smithills.

Place stereotypes

Reciprocity – putting yourself in the other person's shoes – is an important aspect of both local and distant place studies. Stereotypes, which can lead to prejudice, can be formed early. Aboud (1988) found that children over the age of seven are capable of making their own judgements on racial issues providing they have access to the right information.

When teaching about distant localities, teachers need to know about their pupils' existing and alternative ideas – before planning ways to present them with evidence to form better concepts: effective, probing questioning before a topic is introduced works well. Use should be made of pupils' 'authentic' travel experiences and family connections. When selecting materials, such as books and photo-packs, care should be taken that they don't stereotype.

Conclusion

The concept of place is central to geography. Teaching about places involves sensitising children to the worlds they live in. It is about the physical facts – but also about discussing feelings and attitudes, and shaping identities. Children's curiosity should be aroused to explore and find out what a place might be like and why that place might be like it is. Teachers need to work hard to provide pupils with balanced, unbiased views and to help them form appropriate concepts. Enquiry-based, creative, and fun teaching, with open questioning and a wide range of resources and possibilities for in-depth case-studies, leads to long-lasting and meaningful learning that enables children to become responsible global citizens, caring for the environment and the world we live in.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Emily Rotchell, Primary Geography Tutor at Roehampton University, for her informative, innovative, and inspirational geography lectures.

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Place: Part 2

Challenging perceptions of place

Sarah Haynes

Sarah Haynes explores how our perceptions of different places in the UK are affected by our prior experiences – many of which are mediated by another source. She explains how a developing awareness of her own (mis)conceptions of 'The North' challenged her ideas of teaching about the United Kingdom in primary schools. Her example shows how learning can be integrated in a focused topic on place – with geographical understanding taking the lead role.

Introduction

'It'll be cold in The North.' Living in Eastbourne, this is my initial reaction upon discovering that the GA Annual Conference is in Manchester. Having never been to Manchester before I'm not sure how well I could qualify making or believing such a remark. 'Ooh Manchester, that's a long way' comment friends and family, some of whom have been to Manchester, but again perhaps an equally unjustified comment.

One's perception of places in Britain is dependent upon so many factors. Many people's only experience of locations within Great Britain is based on current news stories and a few sketchy memories of a geography lesson. Their knowledge of the outline shape of Great Britain comes from a quick look at the weather forecast at the end of the news. I am proud to say that I am able to locate many places on a map of the UK, provided they are on the coast or near to a distinctive 'shape' on the map. Ask me to place an inland town or city, like Manchester, on a map and it is more like 'pin the tail on the donkey'.

Pupils' perceptions

Upon returning to school, I tell my class that in the holidays I've been to Manchester. No response. Then there is a glimmer of recognition as someone asks, 'Did you see Manchester United?' I guess this is my starting point and, perhaps, it's not such a bad one. But how do we teach our pupils about their own country? Although I'm not advocating hours spent colouring in maps, there is a great deal of value in children spending time studying a variety of UK maps. Children love maps, and will happily spend a lesson looking at them; spotting features they know, locating their house etc. Having a map of the UK up in the classroom helps: it gives both pupils and the teacher an easy reference when discussing news items, weather or sporting events.

Maps as representations of place

In class, we have spent time looking at maps of the UK, completing tasks such as finding the town in which we live, finding London and talking about places where we have spent holidays. We have used Google Earth to plot our home town of Bexhill-on-Sea on a map of Great Britain. This was very interesting. Some children had no idea where Bexhill was, even though there is a clue in the name 'on-Sea'. Other children went straight to it. We then completed various tasks to help the children to become more familiar with the shape and geography of Britain. We tried making plasticine maps of Britain – see Figure 1 (Scoffham, 2009). The children used atlases to help them to get their outline accurate. The finished maps varied a good deal.

Locational thinking

Back on my journey, my understanding of Manchester's location increases slightly once I have studied the rail map – but is this the way I should be finding out about my own country? I consider looking at a 'proper' atlas map of Great Britain, but this brings with it the rather embarrassing admission that I don't know where Manchester is. I begin to call to mind

Figure 1: Children making plasticine maps. Photo: Sarah Haynes.

some other places I have visited in 'The North' and find myself starting to use some more logical locational thinking such as, 'I've been to the Lake District and we went over the Manchester ship canal so it must be up that way,' and 'I have family in Appley Bridge and you change trains at Manchester to get there'. Although these lines of thinking are helping, this knowledge is still based on my own experiences, experiences that many children do not have. No one has taught me these things.

Stereotypes and prior experiences

The train journey provides an excellent opportunity to see where I'm going and I begin to match the views from the window to the place names we pass. Once out of Euston, we pass the new Wembley Stadium. As the trains speeds up, we whizz through Hertfordshire and I start to feel a little out of my depth; I'm no longer

on 'home territory' as we pass canals and beautiful farmland, complete with newborn lambs. We're in the Midlands and, as the train crawls through Rugby, I realise that this isn't what I was expecting. But where has my stereotypical image come from? I start mentally clutching at bits of information floating around in my mind: Spaghetti Junction, the M1, Rugely Power Station, the Wedgewood factory. As I start trying to put them in order of location it's as though I'm expecting to pass them neatly lined up along the trackside. How do I know about these places? Hasn't everyone heard of Spaghetti Junction? It's becoming clear that a lot of my knowledge, accurate or otherwise, stems from childhood holiday experiences.

Perhaps all primary children should take a train ride around Britain. Would this help them to develop a greater understanding of their own country? Would it help to dispel myths of 'The Industrial North', or of the Midlands being full of car factories? The scenery starts to change. There is the hint of distant hills, a long, sustained ridge of much higher ground. Now I'm beginning to wonder whether I have my rather limited knowledge of Britain because of, or in spite of, my brother's obsessive knowledge of football. I feel confused – this is my own country of birth, I'm a geographer, and I thought I was reasonably well travelled, but now I'm not so sure.

Challenging my perceptions

The ultimate shame comes when I begin to notice changes in the buildings. Now I see what are obviously old mills (Figure 2), tall industrial chimneys and rows of terraced housing with backyards and children playing in the streets. It's all so 'Catherine Cookson'. I feel embarrassed that I'm stereotyping in such a way. But if I'd never sat with Granny and watched the dramatised versions of Catherine Cookson stories, would I even recognise these buildings for what they were? I certainly never learnt about them at school, I was too busy studying the economic growth of Brazil and the industrial zones of Western Europe.

Figure 2: An old cotton mill in Manchester. Photo: istock/stuarttaylor.

My confusion only deepens when I hear people talking about driving to Manchester. Someone comments that the drive from Sheffield is easy 'if the passes are open'. Passes? I thought these were exclusively alpine phenomena. Anyway, it's April, why shouldn't the passes be open? Where am I?

And yet, somehow, it's exciting. I live on the South Coast. We don't have passes, industrial chimneys or shipping canals. Our only evidence of the nineteenth century is the Victorian glorification of the seaside resorts. It's rarely cold in winter. At school we go outside for PE all year round, we have an outdoor swimming pool, we walk to the local beach. That's normal for us, but is that the impression others have of southern England? I wonder what people from other parts of Britain think?

Stereotyping at home

It seems as though the potential for us to stereotype life in various parts of Britain is as great as the potential to stereotype life in countries abroad. We are nervous about the way that we teach distant places – anxious that we don't provide children with stereotypical images of African mud huts or Eskimos living in igloos. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of genuine resources to support the teaching of distant localities.

But how much does this insistence on 'getting it right' translate to the teaching of contrasting UK localities? Is our teaching sensitive to the huge contrasts that exist on our own doorstep? What impressions are children forming about places in Britain? Are seaside holidays in the UK really all about donkeys and ice cream? Are British mountain environments really full of sheep farmers and crofters? Is it really cold in 'The North'? In our preoccupation with distant localities, are we doing our own nation a disservice by portraying people and places in a stereotypical way? Do we lack resources, knowledge and an understanding of our own country and varying ways of life?

The New Zealanders have a saying: 'Don't leave town till you've seen the country'. Perhaps our job as teachers is to help our children to see both town and country. If applied to local study, some of the extremely powerful teaching strategies that we use to teach about distant places could transform our pupils' understanding and knowledge of Britain. We should be able to provide them with the best insight possible – we live here! We can lead pupils towards a less stereotypical view of Britain. The resources we need are here on our doorstep, quite literally.

Manchester University, the location of the GA Conference 2009. Photo: Bryan Ledgard.

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Geography and Art: Part 1

Local area work

Chris Barlow with Andrea Brook

Following the Alexander and Rose Reviews many schools are combining subjects. The following three articles look at how the creative arts can be used to support children's geographical learning.

How would Van Gogh see your place?

What would your locality look like through Picasso's eyes?

For me, a keen geographer now working in initial teacher education, combining with other subjects raises a complex mix of challenge and opportunity. Will geography become diluted? Watered down in time and value? Lacking real substance and left a victim of tenuous links and tokenistic learning? Or, will it result in exciting cross-curricular integrated learning routes?

In 'Geography and Art' (Barlow, 2009), I used a variety of case studies to show how exploring your own place with new eyes can help pupils to explore their values towards their community and the wider world, while also allowing creative and discussional confidence to grow.

Essential to any cross-curricular approach is the idea that one theme may offer wide opportunities for quality learning in several subject areas (saving time and avoiding repetition) and, at the same time, create wider and more cohesive learning experiences, with greater consideration of how pupils learn.

'Using local geography as a resource to support learning in other curriculum areas is a fantastic way to motivate pupils because the learning is real, relevant and exciting.' (Owens, 2007)

St Luke's Church of England Primary School lies two miles North of Lancaster, in the small leafy location of Slyne with Hest. A short walk from the school gates takes you through woods and fields, towards breathtaking views over Morecambe Bay. The school actively seeks ways in which curriculum entitlement in all areas can be enhanced, providing exciting and meaningful opportunities for all. Every year in May, 'Art Week' develops this through an intensive cross-curricular week for the whole school.

Celebrating place

The pupil's own locality is unique, it is a place that is always changing, it is 'their' place and their place is special. But how, as Williamson and Hart (2004) suggest, can the 'ordinary', be made 'extraordinary?'

Developing a sense of each pupil's own place is essential to geography and it provides the necessary skills and a solid sense of identity and community to flourish. This acts as a springboard to further investigation, offering the pupil a comparative case study from which to explore the wider world. From a foundation of curiosity, empathy and appreciation, pupils can consider their own values as well as their roles and responsibilities as members of society.

'Children and young people develop their understanding of their role as citizens within local and global contexts and extend their knowledge of the wider world…they realise the importance of taking action and how this can improve the world for future generations.' DfES/QCA (2005)

Geography and art

Geography and art work well together. Like geography, art is about thinking creatively, solving problems, working cooperatively, and developing observant and curious young people. While having discrete skills and knowledge, it allows for divergent thinking and the development of confidence and empathy across the curriculum. According to the National Curriculum for Art and Design it provides 'a unique way of understanding and responding to the world.' As such it is an excellent subject to link with geography. To engage pupils with the key values of both subjects allows them to respond to ideas such as 'concern for the environment,' 'valuing places,' and 'awe and wonder,' through working with practical materials to represent and develop them. 'Developing a sense of your environment involves observing and talking about its main characteristics, becoming articulate about what you like (or dislike) about it, maybe recording it in drawings, plans and models,' QCA (2000, p. 96). With thoughtful planning, art can become the vehicle through which pupils demonstrate their understanding and present their findings in geography, while developing their skills and knowledge of the art curriculum.

Representing place

Throughout art week the variety of opportunities included:

- sessions with local artist Chas Jacobs
- work inspired by established artists
- work inspired by more contemporary artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Friedensreich Hundertwasser
- location-specific art styles such as canal art
- local area board-game design.

Living in a dream – Friedensreich Hundertwasser

Using the architecture of Friedensreich Hundertwasser (see Figure 1) is an exciting way of linking the work of an artist to the local environment. A year 4 class used drawings and photographs from a walk around their village as a stimulus for 3D model-making (see Figure 2).

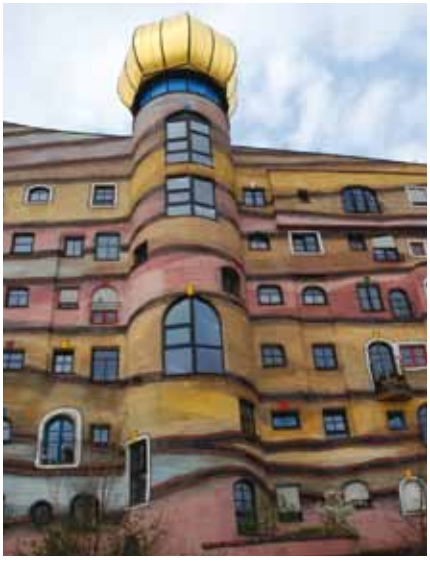

Figure 1: Artistic architecture of a Hundertwasser house. Photo: ©istock/adel66.

Figure 2: 'We made models of buildings in our village. We could totally change them and add different colours and patterns. If buildings were really like that it would be like living in a dream.' Max Molinari (age 9), St Luke's Primary School. Photo: Chris Barlow.

Before leaving the classroom, pupils considered how artists might see a place differently, and how they might represent it in their own distinctive style – this became a fascinating investigation for all concerned. How would Van Gogh paint the playing fields? How would Picasso paint the church? Or your house? What would a Hundertwasser village look like?

Hundertwasser is an Austrian artist and architect, well-known in his own country for his quirky, colourful buildings. In the classroom, looking at posters of his work encouraged lots of discussion regarding the shapes, colours and patterns used in his work. The class discussed their attitudes towards his style, why his buildings had wobbly horizontals, not to mention trees appearing to be planted in unusual places! They made sketches of the shapes, recording the colours, and then had to imagine how they might construct their own village if they were to work in his style. This led to great excitement and lots of discussion as pupils considered the variety of materials available to support their work – collage materials, collections of coloured papers and fabrics, differently-sized boxes, feathers etc. Soon basic constructions were completed using initial sketches for inspiration.

Later in the morning, using thickly mixed paint, the painting began.

'How about purple here, light green there…?' 'I'd like a wonky yellow window', 'Is that OK – an orange door?' 'How Hundertwasser is that?!'

In the afternoon the children added the special 'extras' to their buildings.

Working over a whole day was very satisfying – it meant that the children could remain focused on one task; they were able to see the fruits of their labour at the end of the day without the worry of clearing away for the afternoon.

Other artists that could be explored include Gaudi, whose buildings inspired Hundertwasser's use of colour and pattern. A Lowry interpretation might be interesting, as would more contemporary urban architects such as Norman Foster.

Art Week: Quotes from Slyne-with-Hest St Luke's C of E Primary School,

'Art Week was cool. I got to make an acrylic painting of my part of the village with Chas Jacobs and the walk down to the sea was brilliant – my painting is on the wall in the hall – come and have a look.' Molly Forrest, (age 10)

'In Art Week you never know what's coming – but it will be good.' Lauren Pilkington (age 10)

'The difference in approach often sparks children's interests in a way that a set standard lesson presented in a similar way does not.' Paul Bowden, Headteacher

'I think that many of the children enjoyed Art Week because it linked strongly with their emotions, they were proud of their achievements and they had the opportunity to express how they felt about things in their community.' Dawn Shuttleworth, Art Subject Leader

How do art and geography support each other in local area study?

As well as encouraging cooperative skills and creative problem solving, this kind of work can help children empathise and understand that there are different ways of seeing the world and representing or recreating it. Through this work and the other activities outlined in Art Week, pupils were encouraged to connect with their environment; to see it as a valuable resource, a place of inspiration and wonder, a place they can have opinions about; a place to value, respect and hopefully cherish. 'On the doorstep' fieldwork was essential.

Children hold strong views with regards to the quality of their environment. From a very early age likes and dislikes, 'good' and 'bad', what is held precious and what they would like to change can be explored. In addition they may not make connections between people's actions and the quality of the environment and so undertaking work that explores their place can be of infinite societal value as well as of great variety and interest.

For pupils, local area investigation can, through combination with a visually sensitive subject such as art, help children, as Barnes (2002) suggests, to become 'awake' to the appearance of their surrounding world. Perhaps such work offers them a sharpened visual and emotional sense, so as Barnes (2002) suggests, they learn to see much more and to see with greater insight than they otherwise would.' …and it was fun!

Thanks to all at Slyne-with-Hest St Luke's C. of E. Primary School.

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This can be downloaded from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

Geography and Art: Part 2

Happy spaces, happy places – exploring pupils' personal geographies using scrapbooking

Sharon Witt

This article examines the potential of visual representation techniques to explore the personal geographies of children aged 7 to 12 in a geography club.

Why use scrapbooking as an educational tool?

As Catling suggests, the 'essence of building a motivating and effective primary geography curriculum' is one that focuses on working with children' (Catling, 2005, p.340). I was keen to ensure that my project was pupil-centred and sought individual emotional responses and ideas about places. Scrapbooking is a popular hobby for many people, especially in the United States where 'academic scrapbooking' is also used in schools as an assessment tool that demonstrates a pupil's understanding of a concept or subject (Burnley, 2004, p. 245). Pupils recognise that scrapbooking in the form of a travel journal is one method used to record memories of holidays and places visited (see Figure 1). It is seen as an authentic learning experience, which enables pupils to make connections between their real lives and the school curriculum (Burnley, 2004, p. 245.).

Activity

Scrapbooking was just one of several activities completed in the Autumn term (see Witt, 2009). The session began by sharing a description of Galleon's Lap, Winnie the Pooh's enchanted place, and this was followed by a discussion about special places that made the pupils feel happy. Pupils were encouraged to consider the following key questions: What is your place like? What do you think about your place? What do you like to do in your special place? I shared a scrapbook page of my own happy spot: a birthday trip with friends to Lapland (see Figure 2).

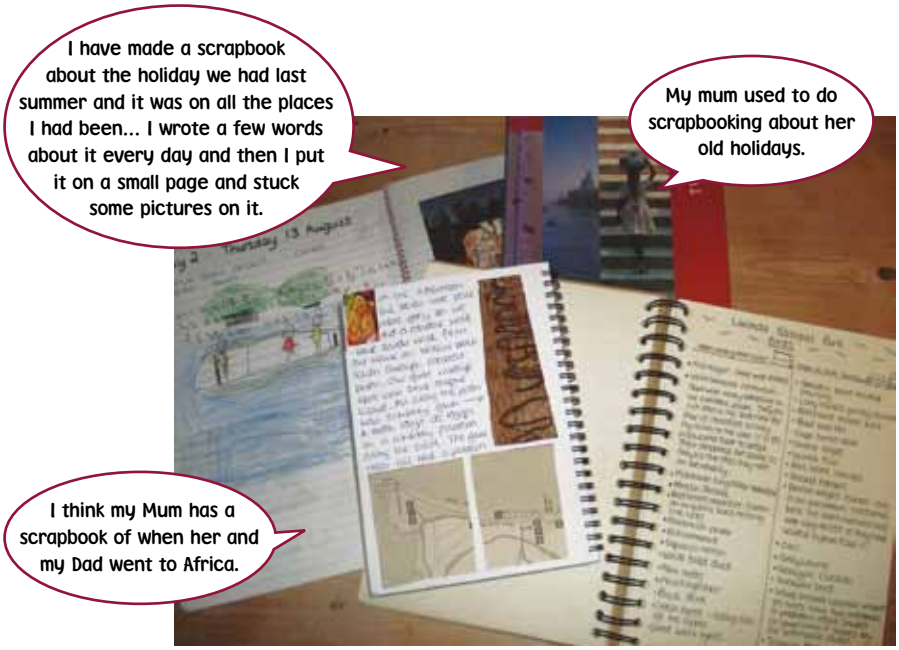

Figure 1: Children recall previous experiences of scrapbooking. Photo: Ruth Totterdell.

This enabled me to share my expectations regarding presentation and to provide a scaffold for pupils' learning.

Once the pupils had completed their happy spot pages, they discussed their work. Some examples with the pupil's own commentary can be found in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 2: My happy spot scrapbook page.

Figure 3: Two happy spots with the pupils' commentary.

Findings

Scrapbooking helped the pupils recognise that places are locations with meaning (Cresswell, 2008, p. 134). They seemed to value the opportunity to celebrate the joy of places and to become 'connoisseurs' of their own personal geographies (Eisner 2005, p.107). Within their scrapbook pages were a range of unique places linked to family and friends, home and school, special occasions and activities (see Figures 3 and 4. Pupils were able to identify that their happy spots provided them with a sense of well-being and tranquility; a sense of awe and wonder; an appreciation of places; an opportunity to use their senses; and time to be on their own and reflect. When one pupil was asked if they had talked about their happy spot to anyone before, they replied, 'No not really. So it was nice to have a chance to talk about … my secret happy spot which is not secret anymore!' The class valued the opportunity to share their private geographies with others. Another pupil commented that their happy spot 'was private and it was mine. It wasn't anyone else's to have and it was different. It would always be there on paper that I had been there with my cousins. I had
been there and it was so nice there and it really was just great!' So the pupils felt that the scrapbooking activity made their secret geographies public; there was a sense that they were documenting places for the future leaving a personal legacy of their special connection with their happy spot.

Conclusion

So how did the use of scrapbooking help to support geographical learning? Working with a form of representation like scrapbooking provides pupils with the opportunity to stabilise what is ephemeral and fleeting, to hold on to their thinking about places, to externalise the internal, and to explore and discover (Eisner 2005, p. 108). Although this was a limited, small-scale study, I think there is a lot of potential to use the creative arts to explore pupils' personal geographies through a relevant and meaningful activity, which is enjoyable and motivates. In the future I would like to develop the journaling aspect of the scrapbook page and also explore possibilities of recording pupils' experience of places through digital technologies.

In conclusion, scrapbooking can be successful when linked to clear geographical learning objectives. Without these clear learning intentions there is a danger that the scrapbooking could turn out to be a cutting and sticking exercise. Recording their happy spots through scrapbooking is one way that teachers can respond to the challenge of personalising the primary curriculum and recognise each pupil's unique way of seeing the world and to formally recognise their immediate sensory encounters with places.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Headteacher, staff and pupils at Swanmore C. of E. (Aided) Primary School.

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Figure 4: A cold happy spot.

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Witt, S. (2009) 'We are happy geographers', *Primary Geographer*, Spring 2009, pp. 21–24.

Download the articles above from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

You can also download the 'Happy spot' examples for a closer look at them.

Geography and Art: Part 3

A sense of place at Bishop's Waltham Junior School

Sharon Witt and Jo Sudbury

As Art and Design Leader, Jo Sudbury wanted to explore her class' response to, and emotional connection with, their own locality. She trialled two activities that encouraged pupils to use the creative arts to support their geographical learning.

Geo-doodling

Jo introduced 'Geo-doodle' books to her year 5 class, following a 'Geography is Magic' course at the University of Winchester, led by the Hampshire County Inspector for Geography, Jeff Stanfield. The Geo-doodle books took the form of a simple A5 scrapbook and were used to record pupils' personal responses to various creative geographical stimuli. These were used during morning/afternoon registration task time, on average twice a week.

Geo-doodle prompts included:

- photos from the local area
- images from Google Earth
- world music
- landscape art
- webcam streaming
- sound clips from the local area
- newspaper articles relating to global issues
- artefacts
- scents
- visits to the locality – observing/ smelling/listening
- reflecting on stories/picture books with a geographical theme
- games such as 'Compare a Pair' on *www.geograph.org.uk*

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show some examples of the class' geo-doodles.

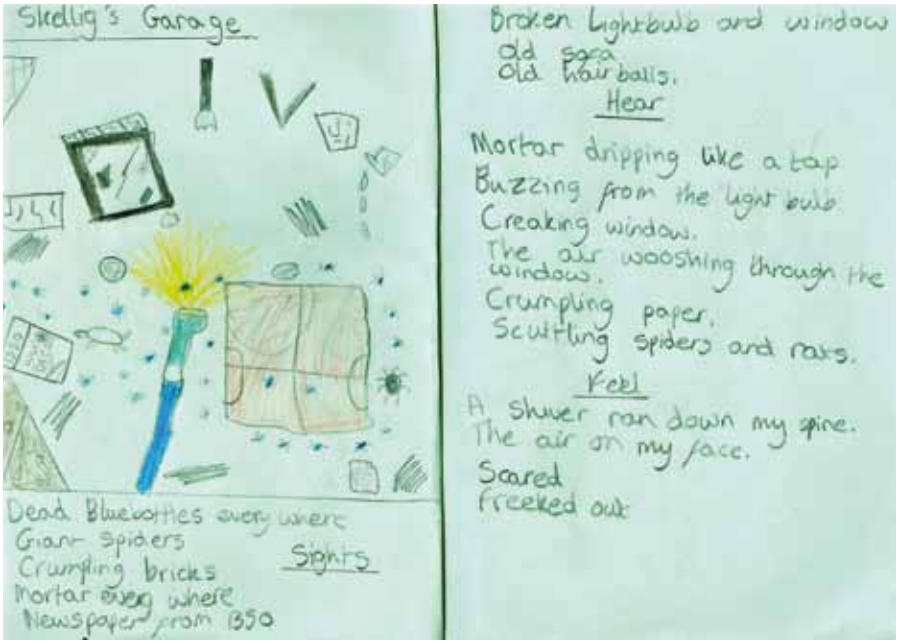

Figure 1: This represents a pupil's thoughts about Skellig's garage and was inspired by Skellig, a children's novel by David Almond.

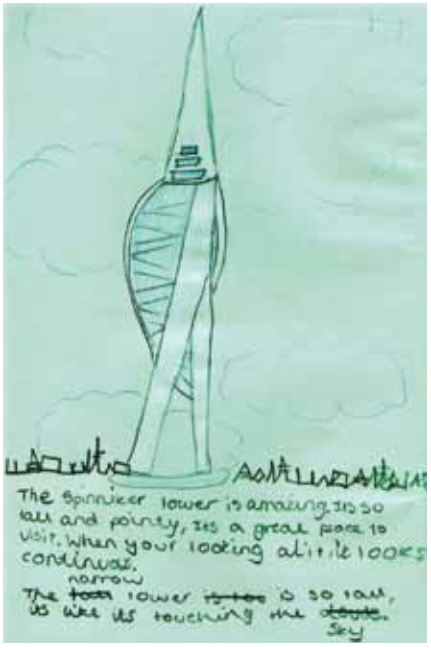

Figure 2: Inspired by a trip to Portsmouth.

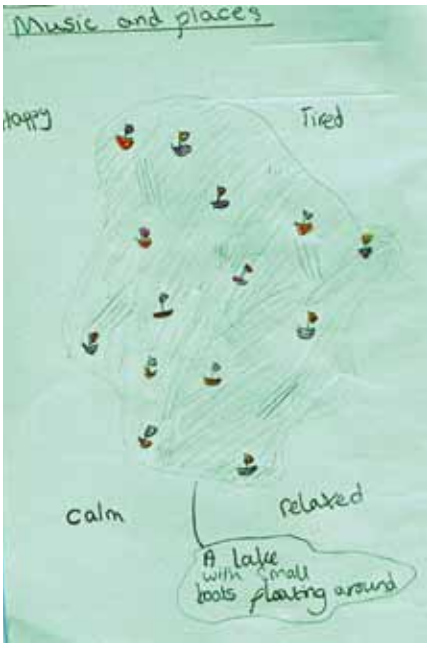

Figure 3: Inspired by a piece of music.

Arts Week

Following on from the success of Geo-doodling, Jo attended the 2009 Hampshire Art Conference for Teachers, where the focus for the day was scrapbooking, visual journals and collage. She combined these ideas with the theme of 'a sense of local place' to plan an Arts Week in her school. The week was introduced to staff, who were asked to think of a special place and express it using the art materials provided.

For the week itself, each year group was allocated a local area and a creative theme. They were:

- our school grounds and special places (year 3)
- Ridgemede Estate and the built environment (year 4)
- the moors – a walk with nature (year 5)
- hidden secrets of Bishop's Waltham (year 6).

Prior to the official start of Arts Week, pupils created their sugar paper scrapbooks by embellishing the flat paper to fit their theme (e.g. they painted bricks in year 4 and collaged colour-filtered maps, photos and tissue paper in year 6).

Arts Week was launched with a fieldwork visit for each year group, including activities such as digital photography, spotting differences between housing frontages around the estate, and a blindfolded sensory journey in the moors.

The fieldwork was followed by opportunities for the children to explore their experience through art, music, dance and drama. Below are a few of the art activities completed:

- Emotional mapping: sketches, abstract paintings and collages of the same places, where colour has been used to express feeling (year 3).

Figure 4: A sensory journey. Photo: Jo Sudbury.

Figure 5: Arts week work. Photos: Jo Sudbury.

- Printing: using a range of man-made items to create the textures and feel of the built environment with year 4.
- A large-scale, collaborative 'mobile mural' (chalk on Manila paper), embellished with grasses and other items from the moors, plus wool stitching with year 5.
- Willow structures that represent 'hidden' items and places seen in Bishop's Waltham, including woven and collaged elements with year 6.

Across the school, pupils practiced each of the major art skills (drawing, painting, printing, textiles, sculpture and collage). Many were combined, and the pupils experienced great pleasure working individually, in pairs, and in larger groups towards a shared outcome. Every afternoon the classes worked on their scrapbook journals. Each teacher made available a range of resources for this activity, including printed photos from each morning, different papers, yarns, a range of drawing materials and sometimes paints. Pupils were taught specific skills, such as working cleanly, making good use of available space, thinking about colour balance and impressions, how to successfully cut, tear and glue, and how layering can be used in collage work. Some teachers, particularly lower down in the school, scaffolded the work by framing the pages around given activities. However, beyond this, decisions were very much up to the individual pupil. Jo stated that 'far from the end results looking 'scrappy', each and every child could be really proud of what they produced. This came from the high expectations and enthusiasm of all involved, and the way the children embraced the challenge to be truly creative.'

Crucially, Arts Week provided the pupils, teachers and support staff with the time and space to consider their feelings towards the locality in a relaxed and explorative manner. They had certainly developed a 'sense of local place'. This project demonstrates how schools might respond to the challenge of the new primary curriculum in providing cross-curricular learning to meet the needs of their pupils within a local context.

Acknowledgements

This article is adapted from 'A sense of place' written by Jo Sudbury for *Hampshire Arts News*. Many thanks go to Jo and all those at Bishop's Waltham Junior School for sharing their work.

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Almond, D. (1998) *Skellig.* London: Hodder.

Further details of the Bishop's Waltham Junior School Arts Week, including film clips from each year group can be found on the school website: *www.bwjunior.hants.sch.uk/homedir/news-2009-09-artsweek.htm*

Forest School Diary Part 3

Helen Martin

Photo: Helen Martin.

In this final article of the three-part series, Helen Martin describes how her two schools' experience of Forest School has developed towards the end of the first year, and what their plans are for the future.

The next phase for Forest Schooling...

One year on, Forest Schooling is now an integral part of my schools. As Headteacher of two rural schools in West Sussex, we have now developed Forest Schooling into our school improvement planning; curriculum; and the social and emotional development of every pupil from 2 to 11 years. Forest School provides pupils with exploratory experiences in local woodland, such as fire lighting, plant and animal identification, shelter building, outdoor cooking and whittling. The challenge now is to sustain this amazing start and, in this final article in the series, explore how to take this new focus to the next level; to retain its sustainability and to look at some excellent activities that any teacher can try!

The challenge for Forest Schooling is that everyone wants to do it! In our schools, we now have two members of staff training for their level two Leader training – myself and Sally Bloomfield, my brilliant Assistant Headteacher. As leaders in our school, we are able to move the direction of the school together, to a unique and exploratory level. One major issue with the use of woodland is maintaining the sustainability of the environment: the impact of excessive use of dry firewood, materials for shelter building, cutting and coppicing of wood and disturbance of the environment for flora and fauna all take their toll. To counter this, we have recently found another beautiful piece of woodland, on the slope of the South Downs above Graffham Infant School. Sally will take Nursery and Reception pupils onto the new site next year and, since it is only five minutes walk away, they can visit for an hour or a day – depending on the weather and the age of the children. This is where the community cohesion of your schools plays a vital part in discovering woodland to use: the gamekeepers of our new woodland are only too keen to enhance outdoor learning. They both went to our school in their childhood, in a time when children played on the South Downs every night after school!

Meanwhile, through February and March, I take year 5 pupils back onto our original site in Leconfield Estate. In cold weather, I am sure we will get very good at lighting fires quickly and boiling water for hot chocolate! Every other class in the school should also have their own Forest School experience before the end of the year. As a headteacher, there is no better way to know every child properly, to know their needs, their friendships, and their abilities at first hand – in a place that is special to them.

In our locality, we also have plans to provide these experiences to a wider audience. Sussex Wildlife Trust have recently bought a beautiful coniferous plantation between my two schools, which they are keen for us to use. This site may be perfect for groups from the other six schools in the Petworth Area, using another talented Forest School Leader, funded by the locality.

What can you do in your school?

- If you are interested in becoming a Forest School Leader, search for a trainer in your local area. You may need funding outside your own school or setting, so possibly look into network funding through local groups of schools.
- Find out if there is a bush-craft expert or a Forest School leader that you can bring into your school to provide an experience for some classes. Many residential trip centres are now adding bush-craft experiences into the courses they offer.
- Try some of the activities below in your locality – your local park, woods, school field, beach or fields!
- Try some of the activities listed below – they will keep you going forever!
- Start an after-school geography club. My club (Geog-ers) is very popular and we complete mapping, environmental sculpture, local walks, shelter building and tracking activities in an hour after school in our grounds.

Activities that are brilliant to try!

In order to complete the full range of Forest School activities, including fire lighting and whittling, you must have a trained leader to work with your children. Forest School training has a very strong emphasis on safety and assessing risk and should always be followed carefully, by a trained member of staff. However, the activities listed below can be led by any teacher, student, teaching assistant or parent – the most important components needed are to be outside and to have fun!

- Make woodland champagne – use plastic glasses and ask the children to add layers of interesting things – soil, leaf litter, leaves, stones etc. Always make sure you talk about not putting your hands into your mouth after you have started a session outside and wash them carefully on your return to school.
- Make elf houses – pupils love making houses for animals or for imaginary friends within the forest.
- Environmental art – pupils can make pictures in the leaves and stones. A word of warning – queen wasps sometimes overwinter in leaf piles, so be careful when collecting leaves in autumn and winter.
- Make a shelter for a woodmouse – pupils need to make a shelter that will keep a woodmouse warm and then be given a little glass jar with warm water (to represent blood) inside. Can they keep the animal alive by providing a warm shelter for them?

Photo: Helen Martin.

Have a go! Get outside and explore your locality! Wherever your school is, there will be a tiny or large piece of woodland to explore – it will become a special place for your learning and the learning of the children in your school.

Helen Martin is Headteacher of Lavington Park Federation of Graffham Infant and Duncton CE Junior Schools, West Sussex. She is also a Primary Geography Champion and Chair of the GA Early Years and Primary Phase Committee.

Books to help you:

Chris Holland (2009) *I love my World*. Otterton: Wholeland. This is a brilliant book which gives hundreds of fantastic ideas for use in your outdoor environments including tracking, shelter building, and mentoring play.

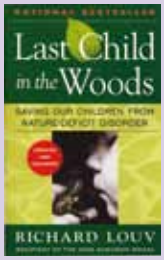
Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (2005) *Nature's Playground – Activities, Crafts and Games to encourage children to get outdoors*. London: Frances Lincoln Ltd Publishers. This book is organised into seasons and gives activities and crafts to find out more about your local plants and places. It is excellent and will provide any teacher with countless adventures to have with their class – either in the forest or on the school field throughout the year.

Parts 1 and 2 of Forest School Diary can be downloaded from the GA website at *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

For information about forest schools go to *http://forestschools.com*

Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (2009) *Go wild! 101 things to do outdoors before you grow up*. London: Frances Lincoln Ltd Publishers. Once again a superb book providing specific bush-craft skills, whittling, foraging and cooking outdoors for the advanced Forest School adventurer!

Micheal K. Stone, Zenobia Barlow (eds) (2005) *Ecological Literacy: Educating our Children for a Sustainable World*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. This is a fascinating book that is thought provoking and makes us think as leaders and educators about the direction of a sustainable education for all primary children.



Richard Louv (2005) *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. New York: Algonquin Paperbacks. This is a superb read and will make you think about the changes that have happened to children's outdoor opportunities in the last couple of decades and how we can offer all children a passport to their freedom of the outdoors.

Map sandwiches: creating digital maps from layers

John Clarke and Matthew Edwards

It is very easy for children to view digital maps on the internet and have no idea how they are produced. In conjunction with Matthew Edwards, an HLTA with a specialism in IT, John Clarke describes how Google SketchUp was used to conclude a topic on map work. Primary pupils investigated how modern maps are produced and were able to redevelop an old cattle market in their town using their own designs.

Layering up!

Digital maps and charts are now produced in a series of layers, each map object is given its own layer, allowing different features to be shown or hidden. Our main task was to mimic the map-making process. The class had been learning how Ordnance Survey maps were built-up using different layers, e.g. one layer consisting of the road systems, another of rivers and streams, etc. The pupils had also designed some of their own map symbols. This 'layering' was a difficult concept for some pupils to grasp. To help them understand the way in which the symbols they had made could be used on a real map, we decided to use a visualiser (a powerful digital camera that points downwards) to make a 'layered' map.

What we did

The visualiser can be connected to a projector or an interactive whiteboard to display documents or objects with clarity. Visualisers are easy to use for both teachers and pupils. We used transparent acetate paper and pens to draw the features of the map. Each layer of the map was recorded using Smart Notebook and related software.

An advantage of using the visualiser here was that the class could easily watch their teacher draw each layer and explain how they would fit together. The live

Figure 1: A visualiser.

image was displayed on the whiteboard. Watching live, as the teacher was able to mimic the process of making maps and developing road layouts, the class gained an understanding of some of the issues and processes involved in putting maps together.

After each layer was drawn, a screen shot was taken using Smart 'screen capture'. Instructions based on Smart software version 10 can be downloaded from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

The class had a go at this and everyone was able to complete the activity successfully. However, we found that it was more effective to keep all the acetate layers, place them back together physically and then take another picture with the visualiser. This gave a much clearer final image.

Googling Earth!

With this process of layering now understood by the class, we introduced them to Google Earth. We asked everyone to familiarise themselves with it, which was great fun. The download with this article shows how Google Earth was used.

Design your own buildings

After using the tools on Google Earth, we focused on the pupils' final task of redeveloping the old cattle market.

A series of IT lessons provided an introduction to using Google SketchUp (SketchUp can be downloaded for free from *http://SketchUp.google.com/*). This software enables you to create virtual buildings and 'place them' on Google Earth. Getting the buildings and the aerial views in scale was the main problem.

Sketch it up!

Google SketchUp is a simple 3D modelling programme. It was originally designed for use by architects, film-makers and game developers, but the basic version has widely been used in schools to extend opportunities in control and modelling. The programme is intuitive and fun to use. We introduced the programme to the pupils by giving them the opportunity to explore the tools and simply make a house. The online guidance at *www.geography.org.uk/pg* describes how the children used this package.

To give the class a real idea of how the mapping software worked, we looked at building projects nearby and at town development work. We then gave them all the opportunity to create their own plans for a sustainable development using Google SketchUp. We showed everyone the website of a local building development in Taunton, including a video of proposals to regenerate a disused area. We then used Google SketchUp to redesign the same area in a similar way. We found that this enriched the experience for the class by giving them a real-life context to work within.

How to SketchUp on Google Earth

Using Google Earth, we asked pupils to find the old cattle market in the centre of town and import the map into Google SketchUp. The children spent three lessons designing a range of buildings to improve the disused area, taking into consideration ways to utilise the river running alongside the site, access to roads and railways, proximity to local amenities, local community needs, and designs appropriate to the character of Taunton.

Since this area is planned for future development, it made their work more meaningful. Exporting their finished plans back into Google Earth gave the class a sense of how each of their developments fitted into the existing landscape (see Figure 2). This was achieved simply by using the 'place model' icon on the SketchUp toolbar.

Final results: Grand Designs – here we come!

This project motivated and engaged the class to take more interest in their local area and to explore how mapping can be used in real-life situations. Throughout the project there were opportunities for pupils to put their newly learnt skills into practice. Through practical experience, they gained an understanding of how maps are put together and how ICT can be used to improve the making, using, and applying of maps in modern society.

John Clarke is an experienced classroom teacher and Geography Coordinator at Trinity C. of E. (V.A.) Primary School, Taunton.

Matthew Edwards is an HLTA with a specialism in ICT, working towards a degree in Teaching and Learning and to becoming a qualified teacher.

Figure 2: Examples of the pupils work.

The instructions for using Smart software, Google Earth and Google SketchUp can be downloaded from *www.geography.ork.uk/pg*

The school website shows examples of the pupils work: go to *www.trinityprimary.co.uk/trinityhome*

Making geography accessible to a pupil with a visual impairment

Some professional and personal perspectives

Carol Newby, Martin Lang and Karina Lang

An understanding of geography helps children to make sense of their surroundings. However, it is a subject that many consider difficult to teach to a pupil with a visual impairment. There are many children with a visual impairment integrated into mainstream classrooms and their eye conditions vary widely. What specific problems might a visually impaired pupil encounter when studying geography? What can teachers do to ensure that the curriculum is fully accessible? The intention of this article is to raise questions about issues that may need to be addressed in teaching of geography in primary schools. Some solutions are offered here, but it is recognised that the needs of the individual are often highly specific, and that visual impairment is varied and complex.

The majority of pupils with a visual impairment are educated within mainstream schools. These include pupils who are both partially sighted (who generally use print) and those who are educationally blind (who generally have insufficient sight to use print and instead use touch). Many pupils in the latter group still have some useful vision and so may be able to see things if they are held very close to their eyes. Those who are completely blind may have had some sight in the past and so may have had some direct visual experience of their surroundings.

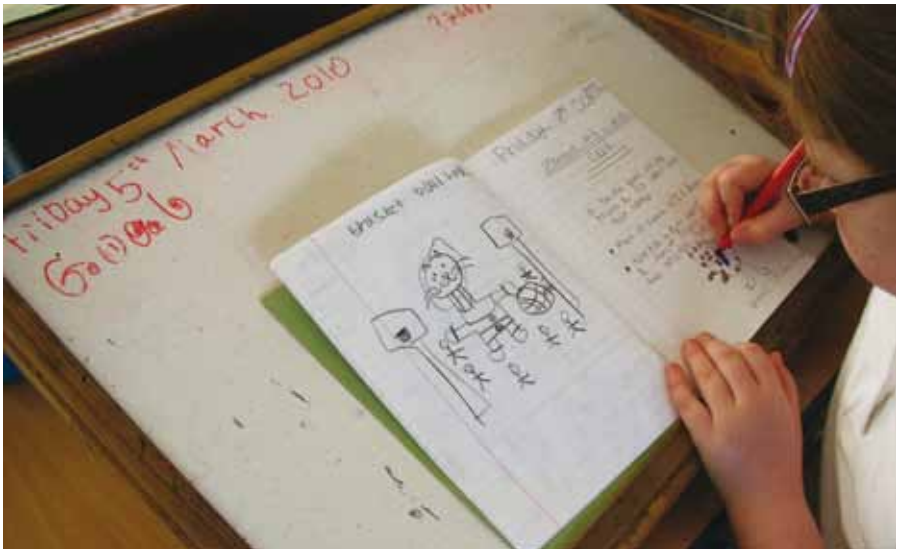
Although there are many different kinds of visual impairment and each pupil will have their own specialist needs and preferences, common problems experienced include:

- difficulty in seeing distance e.g. whiteboard
- difficulty in seeing close work e.g. font size 12 on a worksheet
- central vision loss e.g. difficulty in seeing fine detail when observing something closely
- peripheral vision loss e.g. difficulty in moving around
- colour loss e.g. difficulty in reading choropleth maps
- difficulty in adapting to variations in light e.g. moving from outside to indoors
- difficulties in focusing on an object or changing focus e.g. from distance to close work.

Hence it is important for a teacher to find out the pupil's level of vision, its functional implications and the pupil's individual preferences to ensure that the teaching strategies adopted are most effective in meeting the pupil's individual needs. As well as asking the pupil directly, the SENCO and/or Qualified Teacher for Visual Impairment from your local authority can provide the information required. Further information on general issues of teaching a pupil with a visual impairment in a school can be found in McDonald (2000, pp. 5–30).

Geography is a subject that has difficult aspects for students with a visual impairment. Maps and graphical information can be challenging. But there are a variety of classroom strategies, which teachers can adopt to encourage a pupil with a visual impairment to enjoy and succeed in geography.

Here are some suggestions on how to fully include a pupil with a visual impairment in the geography curriculum:



Child using a sloping board on the table to bring the work closer to her eyes. Photo: Carol Newby.

1. Graph work

An ability to draw graphs is an important skill. Pupils with a visual impairment may experience difficulties in seeing the lines on normal graph paper because they are too faint. The Partially Sighted Society produces a selection of bold-lined graph paper as well as lined paper suitable for pupils with a visual impairment.

2. Watching videos and DVDs in class

Pupils often enjoy watching geographical DVDs in class since it helps them to understand geographical ideas. However, a pupil with little or no vision can find it difficult to comprehend, especially if the soundtrack is of poor quality and it relies on a lot of visual images. Pupils with some vision may find it useful to sit at the teacher's monitor to watch the DVD. Alternatively a laptop can be connected to the interactive whiteboard so that the pupil is able to view the DVD at a much closer distance.

3. Fieldwork

Geography in the classroom is becoming much more accessible for pupils with visual impairments, but what about fieldwork? Careful thought and planning is required if a pupil is able to participate fully. For example, although the pupil may be confident in their everyday school environment, adult help may be required when they are in unfamiliar surroundings or on uneven terrain. Students with a visual impairment need to hear detailed descriptions of what can be seen since they may be unable to see objects at a distance. This can be done by an adult at the time and/or by the pupil listening to a pre-recorded description on an iPod/MP3 player. A buddy system can also help pupils with a visual impairment, where sighted friends can be encouraged to help describe what can be seen.

4. Using and understanding plans and maps

Many maps are too complicated to be understood by a pupil with a visual impairment. Original ones need to be adapted, for example, by simplifying information and removing unnecessary information to reduce visual confusion. A clear, bold font for labels improves visual access. However, adaptation of maps, even simple ones, can be time consuming and technically tricky. Simple enlargement is frequently not the best solution since managing the increased paper size outweighs the advantages of the magnification. Think about trying to unfold and fold a concertinaed Ordnance Survey map and you should recognise that this is a skill in itself. Indeed, Ordnance Survey maps present many special problems relating to their layered information, faint contour lines, difficult fonts and symbols, as well as the need to sometimes sit back to see the 'big picture'.

Child using an electronic magnifier. Photo: Carol Newby.

With the advent of GPS mapping systems, maps are now becoming more accessible. Maps can be expanded or contracted on the interactive whiteboard, and the pupil can move up close to examine detail in a shared way that was once very difficult. Viewing maps on a computer screen with the student enlarging the map to their own preference, either by using accessibility functions on the computer or a magnifying mouse, can make the information clearer. Accessible maps can be downloaded from a number of websites. Google Maps is a free online resource with uncluttered, clear maps and satellite images with a zoom facility. Google Earth has maps and satellite images. Distances along a straight line or a route are easily calculated. Ordnance Survey has a 'Get a map' service where teachers can download free extracts that can be saved and enlarged for teaching purposes. The Tactile Library has a selection of diagrams for key stage 1 and 2 geography, which can be downloaded for free. Further information on making maps, including making Ordnance Survey maps accessible is provided in Cyf, G (2007, pp. 61-63).

Teachers can download free Ordnance Survey map extracts and enlarge them at www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/getamap.

5. Atlas work

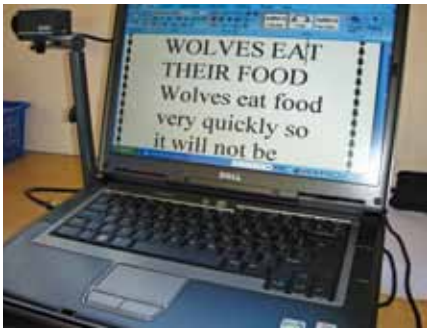
Using atlases in the classroom may be problematic for a child with a visual impairment because text size is often too small to be visible. The large-print atlas that is good for one, may not be best for the rest of the class and so a compromise may be needed. Increasingly, the use of a magnifier and a traditional atlas is being replaced by the use of electronic maps to access required geographical information.

6. Accessing textbooks

Accessing geography textbooks can also be difficult for a pupil with a visual impairment since they often contain lots of detail, font sizes and text over patterned backgrounds. Using low-vision aids such as a magnifier can be useful. Increasingly, publishers are producing textbooks on CDs – these can be viewed on a computer screen at the required degree of magnification or can be printed off in the preferred font size.

7. Adapting printed material

Any printed material should be of good quality with good contrast between text and background. Text should be enlarged to the appropriate size with optimum line spacing and kerning (spacing between individual letters) on paper no larger than A4 size to avoid difficulties in scanning across the page. Text is usually easier to read if it is broken up into short paragraphs with plenty of space. Some pupils may prefer their work printed onto coloured paper, e.g. cream or pale blue, especially if they find it difficult to cope with the glare given off from white paper. Further suggestions are given in the leaflet 'Making it Clear' produced by Action for Blind People. (This leaflet can be downloaded from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*). Information viewed on a computer screen can easily be adapted for display in the pupil's preferred font size, colour, style, and other preferences.



A laptop with a display modified with an enlarged font. Photo: Carol Newby.

8. Using the computer

It is possible to modify a computer to make it more accessible to a pupil with a visual impairment, for example, by changing the display set-up to enlarge the text, desktop icons and mouse pointer. The use of a magnifying mouse (which can be used with and without the magnifying function) can be useful to improve visual access to information displayed on the screen.

9. Using calculators

A standard calculator can be too small to be accessed by a pupil with a visual impairment. The RNIB produce an affordable desktop calculator with large clear keys and display. It performs standard mathematical functions and percentages.

Carol Newby – Formerly Head of Geography and now a Teacher of Children with a Visual Impairment, Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service.

Views from a parent of a pupil with a visual impairment (written with the help of his daughter)

Looking from a parental perspective it is sometimes very difficult for staff to understand the needs of the pupils in their class. If you go for a walk with a family that includes a child who is visually impaired you may notice that the adults give a commentary of hazards interspersed with normal conversation. Families develop strategies for such situations as walking along a cycle path, where the parent might say the child's name and 'Stop!' so that a bicycle may negotiate around the stationary child. When outside the class the adult should attempt to engage a commentary as they walk outside, not just eyes for hazards, but to describe the surroundings. This was beautifully illustrated by a Mobility Officer, who pointed out that if you don't explain about the style being a break in the fence, and you can't see the fence, the style's purpose is not obvious, it is just an obstacle to clamber over.

It is sometimes very difficult for a parent to understand what their own visually impaired child sees and how they see it, more so for the teacher or support staff. Many children develop sophisticated coping strategies for their everyday lives, they may know every inch of their own safe school environment, but will flounder in unfamiliar outside surroundings. They sometimes beguile the adults in understanding their needs. As a parent collecting my daughter from school I used to stand in a different place in the playground, she homed in on the colour of my shoes and close up, used my beard as confirmation that she had found me. On the one occasion that I was dressed in a suit she brushed straight past me. My point here is that staff need to be wary of the coping skills exhibited within the school grounds and are right to be cautious for their pupils outside. There is a balancing act of protecting from danger, accessing the curriculum and acknowledging the social aspects of allowing independence to thrive.

Fieldwork adaptations

There are many opportunities for fieldwork. At my daughter's primary school she engaged in an architectural project that mapped and recorded the various houses and buildings in her neighbourhood. This involved making field sketches and taking pictures. Binoculars were an essential piece of equipment to study windows, roof tiles and the odd fire-badge fixed high up on a wall. A digital camera with good magnification makes many more features easy accessible.

A five-day residential trip presented staff with some risk assessment calculations. A walk in the Derbyshire countryside along a winding footpath needed some consideration, uneven ground, overhanging branches and brambles are hazards. Simple strategies worked out beforehand with the pupil's peers can also work well. Some consideration needs to be given to the character of the individual. People are different: while some are timid, others lack caution.

My daughter, Karina, has now moved on to secondary school and we are continuing to negotiate the level of intervention and independence she requires in a dialogue that involves the student, staff and parents. This approach, which began in her primary school (along with being prepared to try different technology in and outside the classroom) has given Karina a really good grounding in geographical understanding and skills, which she is now building on in her secondary school.

Martin Lang is a secondary geography teacher in West Berkshire. His daughter, Karina Lang, is a student at St Bartholomew's Business and Enterprise College, Newbury.

References and further information

McDonald, S. (2000) *One of the Class*. London: RNIB.

Cyf, G. (2007), *Teaching Pupils with Visual Impairment. A guide to making the school curriculum accessible*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Making it clear: guidelines to producing printed material for people who are blind or partially sighted is available for a download at *www.geography.org.uk/pg* or on the Action for Blind People website: *www.actionfor blindpeople.org.uk*

Other links:

Google Earth (*http://earth.google.co.uk*)

Google Maps (*http://maps.google.co.uk*)

Ordnance Survey: 'Get a map' (*www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/getamap*)

Oxford University Press (*www.oup.com*)

Partially Sighted Society (*www.partsight.org.uk*)

RNIB Online Shop (*http://onlineshop.rnib.org.uk*)

Tactile Library (*http://www.tactilelibrary.moonfruit.com*)

THE Primary Geographer INTERVIEW

Anita Ganeri

Anita Ganeri. Photo: Walter Swann.

Anita Ganeri is a full-time author of children's information books, specialising in geography and natural history. She has just finished a new *Horrible Geography* title, *Horrible Geography Handbook: Polar Survival*, and is in the middle of writing a series about how animals are adapted to life in the desert.

What does geography mean to you?

I am not a specialist geographer – I feel that I must say this from the start. But, over the last ten years, since I have been writing the *Horrible Geography* series for Scholastic, geography has come to play a very important part in my life. In the course of researching and writing the books, I have met many extraordinary people, visited many extraordinary places, read many books of extraordinary adventures and had many adventures of my own. They have all added to my knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the world around me, which, after all, is what geography is all about.

What is your most memorable experience of school geography?

My first memory is of drawing a map of our classroom – earth-shattering stuff! Then there was the project on coal mines…we stuck a real bit of coal into our exercise books with horribly messy results. My best memory, though, is of my geography teacher, Mrs Gosling. When I met her again recently, after many years, she was horrified to hear that I was writing books that described geography as 'horrible' but recovered when I explained that this was actually a good thing!

Where is your favourite place?

Can I have three? They would be Madagascar (seeing lemurs was a dream since childhood), Iceland (ice and fire is an unbeatable combination) and Namibia (desert, wildlife and wide, open spaces). I appreciate these places so much better now that I have a better knowledge of geography. Closer to home, Ilkley Moor is always stunning, rain or shine. Sorry, that's four.

What is your favourite geographical activity?

Apart from writing the *Horrible Geography* books, it has to be visiting volcanoes, particularly if they are active. It is absolutely thrilling to see the Earth in action, literally. If anyone thinks geography is boring, it should be compulsory for them to visit a volcano. They would never complain again.

How important do you think geography is today?

Increasingly and vitally so. The world is changing so fast, and global warming is casting such a strong and dangerous shadow, that geography is crucial. The more we can understand about the world around us, our place in it and our responsibility towards it, the more likely we are to be able to preserve it. This isn't an option anymore, this is critical, but I am cheered by how many young people are so eco-aware and interested.

What has geography taught you?

Above all, it has taught me to truly appreciate the world around me. This sounds rather grandiose but it doesn't just mean volcanoes, it is also what I can see from my office window. The difficulty, it seems to me, is that geography is not deemed to be a glamorous or popular subject, and this can only be, I think, because it is misunderstood. When I visit schools, especially primary schools, I am often shocked and disappointed to find out that some students don't even know what geography is. It seems that geography has an image problem, and it is a terrible shame. How can volcanoes, earthquakes and icebergs be boring, especially when you are only eight? (NB This is NOT a dig at teachers who do a brilliant job!)

More widely, there seems to be a lack of connectedess. There are so many wonderful TV programmes being made, from *Planet Earth,* to *Coast,* to Michael Palin's brilliant travelogues. The odd thing is that, while people watch them avidly, they don't seem to make a connection between what they are seeing and geography.

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Anita Ganeri lives in Yorkshire with her husband, two children and two rescued greyhounds. Anita has a website www.anitaganeri.co.uk

Action Geography 10:
A conceptual approach

Colin Bridge

In this occasional series Colin Bridge explores some classroom-based approaches to integrated learning. Four activity sheets accompanying this article are available as downloads.

Many schools are moving towards a more integrated curriculum, following the ideas in the Rose Review. The Review suggests fairly discrete areas of learning that are recognisable in terms of traditional subject areas and has put geography along with history, sheltering under the humanities umbrella.

What is possibly a new slant on the Review is the suggestion that teaching might be subject-based, cross-disciplinary, or thematic; taught directly or through activity and investigation. The implication is that there will be more choice and freedom for the teacher to decide what is appropriate to teach. However, this carries with it a responsibility to appreciate the nature of geography and what constitutes geographical understanding, and a responsibility, too, for having a view about the nature of the child and patterns of learning.

How children learn

The thoughtful teacher will reflect on the nature of the children they meet and the ways in which they see children learning. They will reflect, too, on how to assess the effectiveness of their teaching. Awareness of how children learn is at a much higher premium in integrated and informal learning situations.

Probably the best assessment of their teaching is for a teacher to know that a pupil has made an idea their own and can express it to others in their own way. Both pupil and teacher need to acknowledge that this may involve effort, application and sheer hard work!

Ideas for integrating subjects

What sort of things do we need to know about the nature of the subject disciplines, especially if we are to see them as a resource rather than a body of knowledge to be imparted?

There was a perceptive project a few years ago, led by Alan Blyth and called Place, Time and Society (PTS). This set out to integrate geography, history and the social sciences, and was based on a great deal of research into the nature of each of the subject disciplines, the nature of the child and of the learning process itself. The project clearly states that to be educated involves having an acquaintance with, and some understanding of, the society's past; an awareness of the relationships of the society to its location on the Earth's surface; and an understanding of the processes at work within the society.

North Reddish Junior School. Photo: Ruth Totterdell.

Fieldwork at Perton First School. Photo: Ruth Totterdell.

However, there are words of warning. If the subject disciplines are to be integrated and used to produce a teaching programme then an understanding of the processes and methods of those disciplines is presumed. If the disciplines are to be used as resources, then teachers may well be uncertain as to exactly what those resources are.

Alan Blyth doesn't suggest that teachers become scholars within each discipline, but rather mediators with sufficient knowledge to be aware of the main ways in which geographers, historians and social scientists ask the questions that direct their enquiries. The insight of the PTS project was to offer teachers a view of the inner structure of the subject disciplines through certain

key concepts that encapsulate ideas and principles inherent in the humanities. These concepts enable teachers to see subject matter from a new and more coordinated standpoint. This, in turn, underpins the way in which a coordinated and coherent teaching programme might be planned.

The PTS project's key concepts are worth thinking about. The first four are based on possible curriculum content:

- communication
- power and how it operates in society
- values and beliefs
- conflict/consensus.

The remaining three concepts are to do with the methods of investigating the first four:

- similarity/difference
- continuity/change
- causes and consequences.

Geographers argued that there were other concepts, but there was little dispute that the selected seven represented core values. Around the same time, Philip Sauvain was also producing teaching materials. In an excellent box of resource cards called *A Local Studies Kit*, he too looked for concepts to underpin the coherence and progression of the programme. Some of his concepts are similar to those in the PTS project, others are slightly less abstract:

- arguments for and against
- identification of change
- sense of chronology
- making comparisons
- cause and effect/inter-relationships
- concept of place/locations/distributions
- using criteria (ugly/attractive etc.)
- what is average, typical, the norm?
- conservation & pollution
- the function of systems in settlements and communities.

I offer these ideas as tasters of some inspiring, research-based, child-centred, teaching projects that aim to develop historical, geographical and social understanding through specific teaching strategies.

So what do you teach?

Throughout my time in the classroom and as a curriculum planner I was interested in the demands of integrating learning so that pupils might experience associations and relationships. I tried to help them to understand that there were distinctive ways of looking at the world, and to provide progression and continuity to the learning process. One of the drawbacks of the topic approach is that it may be superficial and unrelated. For instance, if pupils undertake a project on birds, they will probably, at the end of it, believe they have learnt about birds. It will take enormous skill on the teacher's part for pupils to be conscious of the specific history, geography or science that their teacher may have planned for them to learn.

I found the idea of a concept-based curriculum particularly attractive because it can operate at various levels and in many situations. The idea of, say, 'distribution' may be used to analyse the way items are placed on a desk, or where settlements occur in the UK. Even more usefully, these key concepts are a dynamic for creating enquiry questions.

For the four years of key stage 2, here is a sequence of four key concepts that allow for links between major aspects of subject disciplines, but need the resources of each of these disciplines to give them clarity and detail. There is increasing abstraction to match the maturity of the pupils in each year. The concepts are:

- protection (a basic human need, provided by homes, settlements and social systems across the ages)
- communication (the particular quality of humans to store and transmit information and find ways to travel which outstrip the capabilities of the body on its own)
- change (how things have changed, are changing and might change in the future)
- interaction (our actions, attitudes and use of resources are influenced by, and influence, others).

Finally, here is a set of key questions that provide a context for applying the concepts and a geographical, historical or social focus to an investigation:

- How might I describe this place or situation?
- How did this place or situation come to be like this?
- What is it like to live in this place or experience this situation?
- How are things changing?

In moving to an integrated approach to humanities teaching it is vital to be clear about the transferable skills that children should be taking away from the topics in which they are involved. As an HMI report some years ago bluntly concluded: if children are not aware that they are doing science, then they won't learn any science. It applies equally to geography and history.

References

Blyth, A., (1976) *Curriculum Planning in History, Geography and Social Science*. Bristol: Collins ESL.

Sauvain, P. (1979) *Local Studies Kit*. London: Macmillan.

Colin Bridge is a teacher and environmentalist and co-author of the Worldwatch Primary Geography Scheme (Collins).

Learning about local change at St Peter's, Smithills. Photo: Ruth Totterdell.

Colin has designed four activities based on the four key concepts outlined above. These can be downloaded, along with accompanying activity sheets, from *www.geography.org.uk/pg*

The 2010 Primary Geography Quality Mark framework

Wendy North

In this article Wendy North describes some changes to the Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) framework, and features good ideas from a PGQM gold school.

Changes to the PGQM framework for 2010 take into account the revised statements of the OFSTED Self Evaluation Framework (SEF), which is now an even better match to the four sections of our own PGQM framework.

We are very keen to make the PGQM framework a tool that supports both experienced and inexperienced subject leaders, so the new framework includes these statements to strengthen the focus on geographical thinking and learning:

2a) Fieldwork, active enquiry learning and the use of ICT have a clear impact on the way children learn geography.

2c) Geography is seen as a key subject to engage creative and critical thinking about 'people & place', 'change '(local and global) and 'possible futures'.

The panel opposite features ideas from Ryde Junior School on the Isle of Wight that exemplify aspects of statement 2a. Ryde Junior School was awarded a PGQM Gold Award in October 2009.

Wendy North is Curriculum Development Leader (Primary) for the Geographical Association. She leads the Primary Geography Quality Mark.

Many thanks to subject leader, Julie Edwards who submitted these annotated photographs as part of her application and also to all who helped the school achieve their award.

More of Julie's submission can be seen at *www.geography.org.uk/pg*. Click on summer 2010.

Ryde Junior School

Year 4 enquiry. Photo: Julie Edwards.

Before their field trip, year 3 asked these questions:
Can I find the places I saw on the aerial photos? Where do I live? Can I describe the location? Can I descibe my journey between the places? Where is Portsmouth? Which part of the island will I see from the Spinnaker Tower? Photo: Julie Edwards.

Using ICT to develop geographical thinking. In their Water unit of work, year 5 use the Met Office site to investigate wetter and drier parts of UK. The children's favourite sites are the BBC, Quikmaps and Sheppard software – for the map games. Photo: Julie Edwards.

In this issue, Signposts points you to the ways that the GA is supporting primary teachers in their planning and resourcing of the curriculum, and in their CPD.

- An industrious body of volunteers in various working parties are collaborating to offer support and advice – check on the GA website to find out how you could help as a volunteer.
- *A different view* is the GA's manifesto for geography, and is freely available to order if you are a member, or can be downloaded from *www.geography.org.uk/adifferentview*. It includes a range of activities written by teachers to use the a host of stunning images.
- The Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) is a tool that can be used to help you self-evaluate and improve the geographical provision in your school. Wendy North explains more about the PGQM in this issue on page 32.
- The GA website (*www.geography.org.uk)* has a wealth of free resources for all, plus additional benefits for members. There are examples of projects carried out with teachers, (see *www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers*).

- The GA's *Primary Toolkit* will be launched in Autumn 2010. Called *Geography Plus*, it will demonstrate how geography as the lead subject can combine other subjects and initiatives in creative, purposeful and exciting ways.
- The Geography Champions Network (*http//:geographychampions.ning.com*) is a lively forum for discussion and sharing where members and non-members are welcome.

Free online CPD courses

Have you seen the new online CPD courses on the GA website? visit *www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/*

All teachers are subject leaders in their own classroom and these courses encourage critical selection and use of the subject resources for **curriculum-making**. All courses contain a variety of materials and resources and were funded by the TLA and TDA. You can 'adopt, adapt and innovate' these to suit your needs. For example, you may wish to pursue the TLA award (the GA is a TLA support partner) to use as work towards an MA for your performance management or simply to refresh and invigorate your classroom practice.

My Place, Your Place, Our Place

What do sustainability and community cohesion really mean for learners in primary education? This family of courses explores the relationships between identity and place by drawing on some key geographical processes and understanding.

Primary Subject Leadership

How can primary subject leaders help 'lead' the development of geography in the curriculum? This course will develop and extend geographical expertise in both stand-alone and inter-disciplinary contexts. This course shows how quality geography can contribute to excellence and enjoyment, the wider curriculum and whole school ethos.

Young Geographers Go Local

This course is focused on how we can help children explore their own **personal geographies** in a local context. You will find out about **digital mapping** and how this technology can help children to show 'how they feel' in a particular locality and enable them to make better sense of their world.

Young Geographers Go Global

Helping children to develop their visual literacy by encouraging them to 'read' images of children in other places.

Young Geographers Go Green

This course focuses on the role geography plays in enabling the Sustainable Schools agenda to be carried out. The teaching and learning activities in this course have been chosen to demonstrate active pupil participation through real issues such as sustainable energy and climate change, and use of the outdoor classroom.

Primary National Conference

Central London: Tuesday 8 June 2010
Manchester: Tuesday 15 June 2010

Would you like the opportunity to think creatively about the geography and history that you teach and how this can support learning across the wider curriculum? Are you enthusiastic about developing primary geography and history and keen to be part of a growing initiative that wants to inspire all young people? If so, then this is the one-day conference, jointly presented by the GA and the HA, for you.

Further details and online booking available at *www.geography.org.uk/primaryconference*

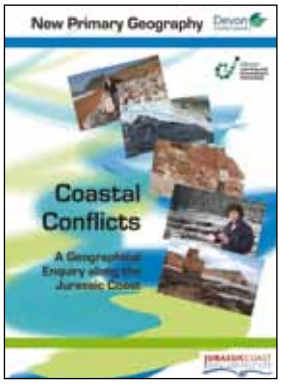
GA Awards 2010

The GA Awards are given to resources which the judges consider are most likely to make a significant contribution to geographical education.

SILVER AWARDS

Coastal Conflicts: A geographical enquiry along the Jurassic Coast

David Weatherly and Anjana Ford
Devon Learning and Development Partnership, 2009 – £39.99



Coastal Conflicts has been given this award for its high quality content, flexibility, relevance and ease of use. It provides primary pupils with engaging and challenging geographical enquiry based on real events and processes. Its content is well suited to the new primary curriculum because it includes cross-curricular links between geography, science, literacy, citizenship and ICT.

Coastal Conflicts will help pupils understand the processes at work in coastal erosion and how these create particular landforms. It introduces them to the ways in which humans attempt to manage coastal erosion and the impact this has on the environment. The clear video and computer graphics encourage them to think about how conservationists, home-owners and engineers have to negotiate in order to find sustainable solutions to the effects of coastal erosion. It also introduces them to the story fossils can tell us and what we can learn from them about environments in the past.

The two DVDs include a decision-making exercise on the creation of a sustainable management plan for part of the Devon coast. This software is an excellent resource for introducing pupils to a part of the British coast they may not have visited but which represents many of the processes and issues that are found around our shores. The software also includes detailed, up-to-date and easy to understand background information for teachers and ideas for planning within the primary curriculum.

Coastal Conflicts is a rare example of high quality geographical software designed for use in primary schools which involves pupils in real and relevant geographical enquiry.

Rainforests iPoster

Catherine Slade
BBC Active, 2009 – £39.99

The *Rainforests iPoster* received the Silver Award in recognition of the high quality resources for both teacher planning and pupil research.

The teacher's area provides information about the contents of the software as well as suggesting a logical order in which to approach the topic. The background information is extremely informative and provides teachers with knowledge about all the issues addressed. Planning information is provided in detail. For example, from a selected 'hot spot' there are suggestions about how class discussion can be led, video material that will provide interest that will stimulate debate and relevant pupil activities. Links to other areas are suggested so that the topic can also be covered in a cross-curricular manner.

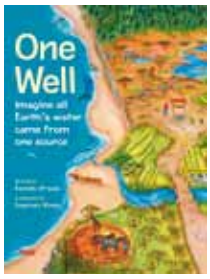
This is a well thought-out package that deals with a very important world issue. It has strong cross-curricular links and contains excellent material for pupils to view and interact with.

Reviews

Pupils/KS2/Book

One Well: The story of water on Earth

Rochelle Strauss
London: A&C Black, 2007
32pp, Hb, £12.99
ISBN 978-0-7136-8761-3



One Well is a non-fiction book aimed at confident junior readers, although it would be suitable for infants if shared with a teacher. It would be best used as a stimulus for a lesson or for topic work. Every page has questions to focus thinking and promote discussion. A useful section at the end gives ideas for children and how they can help by looking after the environment. This gives them responsibility for their own learning. It focuses on activities for home rather than in class.

Illustrations are clear and colourful, giving an excellent view of life in other areas. All are designed to look like children's drawings which should attract pupils.

One Well follows a sensible route from the well, water sources and the water cycle to its problems and pollution, ending with ideas explaining how you can help.

The book's strengths are its content and thorough approach from start of the well to how to help save water.

Its weakness are amount of text on each page. Some of the information could easily be put in a different form whether it be a chart or pictures. This could make it more child-friendly and suitable for use with younger children. A glossary would also be useful for the non geography specialist as it would explain the key terms and provide additional inofrmation. The book is hardback but the pages are not very strong and perhaps would not last if many children handle them.

Overall, at £12.99 this is a good book with many links and a wealth of information to add to topic work.

Emma Thickens
Austrey CE Primary School, Warwickshire

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