

The new Education Inspection Framework – through a geographical lens

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Background

From September 2019, a new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) is being used by the school inspectorate Ofsted when visiting schools and colleges in England (Ofsted, 2019a). The new framework includes a Quality of Education judgement (Figure 1), with a much sharper focus on the curriculum and the specialist knowledge, understanding and skills required to teach and learn subjects like geography.

The authors were both members of an Ofsted geography reference group that worked throughout the summer term of 2019. The aim of the group was to help devise training guidance for Ofsted inspectors, so that they could become better equipped to apply the new framework to inspect the quality of geography education in schools. It is noteworthy that, out of approximately 2000 ordinary inspectors, fewer than 30 identify as geography specialists (Freeland, 2019).

This article introduces the EIF from the perspective of teachers and leaders of geography, to help readers understand some of its implications for their work. We hope it will help move curriculum thinking in schools forwards – an aspect of education Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, claims has been subject to 'gradual erosion' in recent years (Spielman, 2019).

The quality of geography education

Curriculum intent

The notion of intent is nothing new in geography education. Kinder surveys the roles that educational vision and moral purpose have played over recent decades and concludes that effective teachers 'share in a discourse which covers the "why" as well as the "how" of what they do' (2017). Nevertheless, the introduction to the EIF of the concept of curriculum intent as 'the extent to which the school's curriculum sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils will gain' (Ofsted, 2019a) is likely to prompt reflection among teachers and particularly subject leaders. While many schools already have a vision (or equivalent statement) that sets out the broad aims of geography in their curriculum and draws on sources such as the introductory sections of the geography national curriculum (DfE, 2013), the aims underpinning GCSE and A level geography (DfE, 2014a,b) and/or more aspirational documents (such as the GA's (2009) Manifesto for geography), curriculum intent is not expected to be evidenced through vision statements. Instead, Ofsted inspectors are likely to pursue lines of enquiry that may feel quite challenging, such as:

- why specific themes, topics and content have been included in the geography curriculum and what makes this content the most appropriate and useful
- how the sequencing of this content helps to build students' knowledge, understanding and skills in geography over time
- whether there are clear expectations around what students will know and be able to do with their geographical knowledge and skills at curriculum 'end points' (such as the end of a key stage).

The selection and particularly the sequencing of content in geography are matters on which the national curriculum has less to say than one might expect (Kinder and Owens, 2014; Kinder, 2015). A consideration of the research evidence around sequencing is beyond the scope of this article; suffice to say that teachers will want to consider the way the content they have selected reflects the goals of their curriculum and the way in which it serves their professional ideas around progression in geography. (For a useful summary of progression, see GA, 2014).

Curriculum implementation

By implementation, the EIF means 'the way the intended curriculum is taught and assessed' (Ofsted, 2019a). An important point here is that the EIF does not prescribe a geography curriculum, nor an approach to teaching it. For example, it does not define geography's key concepts. However, the EIF does make clear that key subject concepts and skills should be deepened and embedded over time, and that students should be able to demonstrate their

Here, Alan and Paula outline Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework and aim to help teachers and leaders of geography to understand some of its implications for their work.



Accompanying
online materials

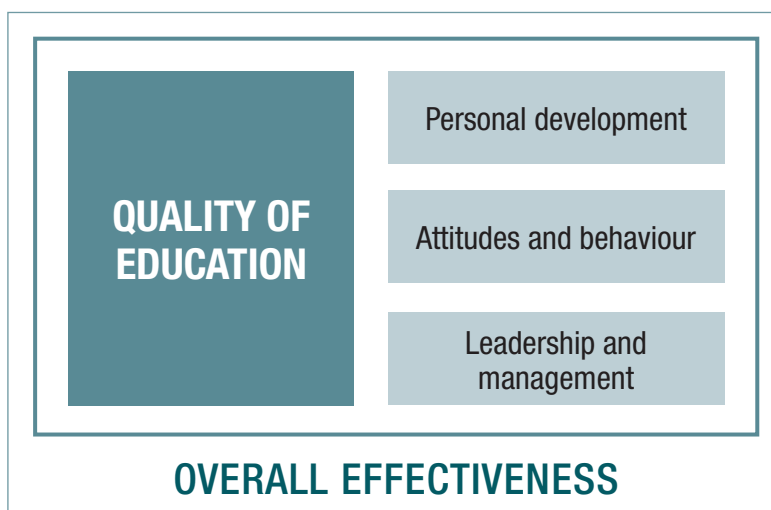


Figure 1: Key judgement areas in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, 2019.

growing knowledge of these and proficiency in using them – and that the system of assessment should guide and support students in doing so. A particularly useful source of guidance for teachers seeking to embed geographical conceptual understanding is *Thinking geographically* (GA, 2012), which sets out how big ideas such as place, space and environment can help shape more concrete concepts in school geography. Well-researched support is also available addressing ways in which students acquire new knowledge, connect this to prior learning and build it incrementally into connected knowledge systems or ‘schema’ (for example, Roberts, 2013).

The EIF makes clear that discussions with subject leaders, teachers and students, as well as lesson observations and scrutiny of curriculum plans and/or student work, are potential sources of evidence for judging the quality of curriculum implementation. In the authors’ view, particular thought needs to be given to:

- how the intent for the subject helps steer the teaching and assessment
- why specific teaching approaches have been selected and how they are appropriate for all students
- how specialist aspects such as the provision of fieldwork across the curriculum help build knowledge and skills
- the subject and specialist pedagogical knowledge of those teaching geography in the school – and what is being done to support them.

A number of other documents released into the public domain by Ofsted help to ‘flesh out’ how inspections might be experienced by teachers of geography. In May 2019, it published its revised inspection methodology (Ofsted, 2019b) and in June two pilot-phase research exercises detailed findings around book scrutinies (Ofsted, 2019c) and lesson observations (Ofsted, 2019d) – see Figure 2.

Curriculum impact

There are a range of implications for senior leaders and teachers of geography arising from the impact section of the new inspection framework and methodology. One of the driving principles behind the reform of the EIF was the view that the current system had encouraged teaching ‘to the test’ and an over-reliance on data. Furthermore, in the words of the HMCI, ‘when data trumps substance, it is curriculum, teaching and learning that suffer’ (Spielman, 2019). The new framework quite rightly continues to place great importance on learning outcomes and assessment and inspectors will continue to make use of national performance information. However, it also makes clear that learning must build towards a goal and that pupils are expected to acquire knowledge and skills progressively. In relation to subject knowledge, the expectation is that pupils should make connections in their learning and use their knowledge with increasing fluency in different and more complex situations. This approach can be applied very readily to a ‘horizontal’ subject like geography, where we revisit key concepts (such as ‘environment’ or ‘interdependence’) periodically in order to broaden and deepen pupils’ understanding.

Since inspectors will no longer be making use of internal data to assess the attainment or progress of pupils, there is likely to be greater focus on the first-hand evidence available from the interviews, lesson observations and book scrutinies that are discussed in the implementation section above. This approach may help geography to evidence its positive impact, since nationally-generated data only becomes available in our subject at the end of GCSE. It may help to dismantle unwieldy internal data tracking systems in some schools since, as part of its mission to be a ‘force for improvement’, inspectors will begin to ask school leaders who require more than three

Figure 2: EIF pilot-phase book scrutiny and lesson observation research indicators. **Sources:** Ofsted, 2019 c, d.

Book scrutiny research indicators	Lesson observation research indicators
<p>Building on previous learning – consistent, coherent and logically sequenced knowledge development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth of coverage – suitably broad range of topics within a subject • Depth of coverage – independent thinking, subject-specific concepts and connections to prior knowledge • Pupil progress – acquisition of knowledge and understanding appropriate to starting points • Practice – opportunities to revisit, deepen and solidify subject understanding and to demonstrate this 	<p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subject expertise and skills to provide learning opportunities • equality of opportunity – lesson as building block to the wider curriculum • strategies to support reading/ vocabulary/numeracy • suitably demanding content • logical sequence • recall and practise previously learned skills and knowledge • assessment of the current skills and knowledge of learners <p>Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good communication skills • students build knowledge and make connections • relevant and appropriate resources to clarify meaning • good questioning skills and effective checks for understanding • explicit, detailed and constructive feedback <p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supportive classrooms focused on learning • focused classroom through high expectations for students • clear and consistent expectations that are understood and followed • students’ behaviour contributes to the focus on learning

data collection points per year in subjects like geography to justify their approach in terms of teacher workload. Curriculum structures will come under scrutiny if students are unable to demonstrate they can recall and make good use of their knowledge. Secondary schools with a two-year Key Stage 3 or primary schools that do not teach geography in every term and year group may need to review the breadth and ambition of their curriculum and its impact on learning over the long term. While the potential advantages of these changes for geography are clear, concerns have also been raised that the new EIF may create unintended consequences – such as senior leaders requiring teachers to focus on recording learning in student workbooks at the expense of other approaches to learning (Enser, 2019).

Geography and Personal Development

Geography makes distinctive and vital contributions to personal development. Through our transactions with places, people and environments, we develop our identity and sense of place in the world. Geography, when taught well, can help us better understand ourselves, our relationships with others and with the world in which we live. Thus, the EIF section on Personal Development (Ofsted, 2019a) provides a wealth of opportunities to demonstrate how the subject can contribute to the wider curriculum.

What is it like to be a student at your school? What kinds of experiences does your school offer? How are these built into the curriculum? A robust geography curriculum will offer varied, planned-for and rich experiences such as fieldwork (perhaps with residential opportunities), environmental engagement and meaningful collaboration with local and global communities (including school links). A geography curriculum that builds on relevant and current context – from debating a planned closure of a local shop to investigating impacts of rapid climate change – will contribute to personal as well as academic development when knowledge, skills and values are integrated.

A high-quality, robust geography curriculum will have planned opportunities to explore identity, cultures and countries sensitively: celebrating difference but also recognising what we have in common; learning and remembering facts but also developing skills of empathy to augment core knowledge. Such geographical experiences deepen students' understanding of concepts such as diversity and interdependence as well as foster critical thinking; enabling students to 'understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common' (Ofsted, 2019a).

Geography contributes to spiritual development: whether it is marvelling at the grandeur of the Rocky Mountains or the Taj Mahal or the colours of Earth as seen from space, geography has awe and wonder in abundance. Those 'wow' moments provide deep and lasting impacts on students. Moral and ethical issues are supported

by the application of a geographical lens: who gets what, where and when? And who decides? Should we buy local or global? Why do people become refugees? What do we mean by a climate crisis? Geography, therefore, teaches students 'how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way' (Ofsted, 2019a).

How does geography 'support students to be confident, resilient and independent' (Ofsted, 2019a)? Resilience is generally agreed to be both a trait as well as a dynamic process (Ofsted, 2019e), indicating that it can be affected by learning processes; and there are many opportunities for subject leaders to flag up where this is happening. For example, students become more resilient in dealing with change as their understanding of impacts, causes, adaptation and mitigation of environmental issues grows. Geographical knowledge gives students confidence and empowers debate, and even something as straightforward as involving students in risk assessment before fieldwork teaches them self-reliance and independence.

Geography 'provides students with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society' (Ofsted, 2019a). Through their enhanced world knowledge and geographical skills (such as digital mapping), students gain confidence. Widening their vision not just for the present, but also for possible futures (e.g. investigating where in the locality bat boxes might be sited or how the use of floating farms can help farmers in Bangladesh adapt to monsoon flooding) and the idea of what might and could be.

Overall, geography can contribute much to the section on Personal Development, provided there is a carefully thought-through, rigorous curriculum in place whose aims are realised by careful and knowledgeable teaching. A good subject leader will help teachers to develop that rigour, accentuating the geography and making it visible.

Subject leadership – conclusions

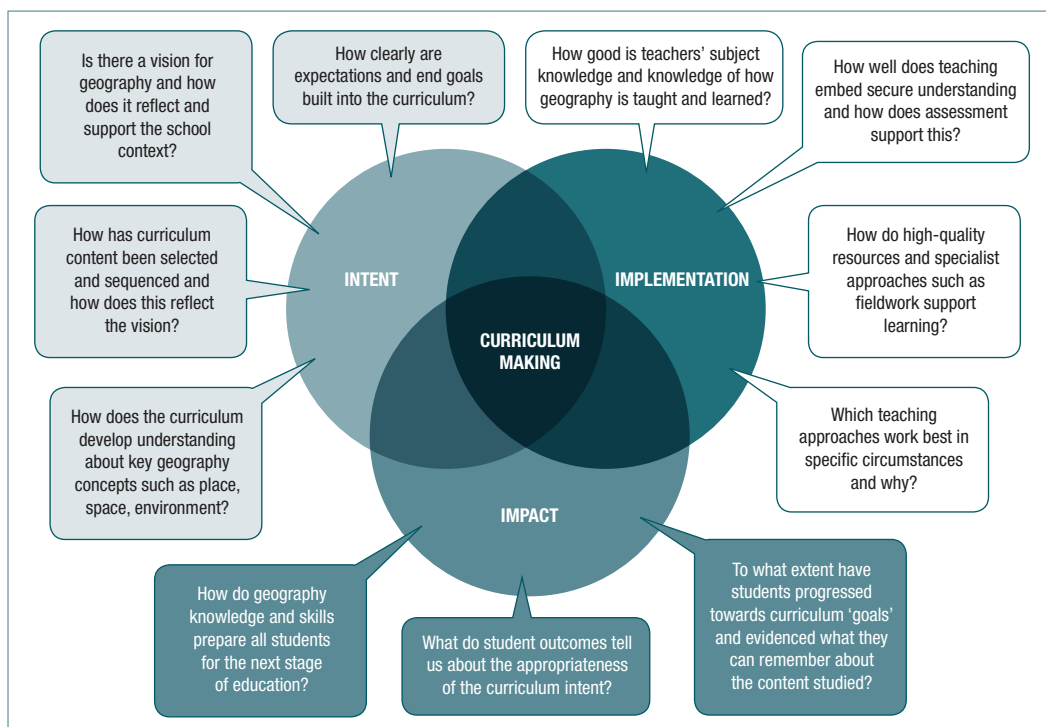
Reference has been made throughout this article to the implications of various EIF sections for both teachers and leaders of geography. Subject leaders should note that, overall, the EIF is built around the idea of the connectedness of curriculum, teaching, assessment and standards. In that sense, it echoes the GA's take on curriculum making, which suggests that effective teaching draws on the rich resources offered by the subject discipline, specialist pedagogies and students' own experiences (GA, 2009). Figure 3 illustrates this thinking by showing how curriculum intent, implementation and impact come together around the notion of curriculum making.

Of course, the 'quality of education' judgement is itself a component of the overall effectiveness of a school (Figure 1). Subject leaders may therefore want to reflect on their effectiveness by drawing together the evidence around the school's geography curriculum, the teaching

of, assessment of and standards in the subject alongside student behaviour and subject leadership (see web panel). This is something the GA's Primary and Secondary Geography Quality Marks have been redesigned to assist with (GA, n.d.).

While the new EIF does not mean changing the curriculum overnight, it does imply reflecting on its cohesiveness and effectiveness, being able to articulate why you teach what you do, and understanding the impacts on all students. | **TG**

Figure 3: Key questions link intent, implementation and impact around the notion of curriculum making.



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Online resources

Download the GA 'Policy Matters' summary of support: www.geography.org.uk

Leading Primary Geography (includes EIF geography framework): <https://www.geography.org.uk/Shop/>

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