

Geographical Association Policy for Inclusion

Introduction and rationale

The Geographical Association (GA) is the leading professional association for geography teachers. It is a participatory network of fellow professionals with a mission 'to further the teaching of geography and the value of learning geography for all'. The GA recognises that promoting inclusion is an essential characteristic of a dynamic subject in the twenty-first century and is confident in taking a lead in addressing inclusion in the geography curriculum, in geography teaching and within its own organisation. This policy will enable members to respond creatively to enhance their own work, and the GA to respond at all levels as an organisation, within the context of its overarching ethical policy.

There are significant challenges in how we define and promote inclusion. One relates to how we define inclusion. The idea of inclusion is necessarily related to actual or perceived differences between individuals or groups of people, e.g. boys and girls; children and young people from different ethnic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds (diversity); and those with specific or individual learning needs and disabilities. There is a potential tension between having a wide scope - being more 'inclusive' about inclusion – and having a clear focus, perhaps dissipating effort or weakening the impact of any action.

A second challenge relates to how individuals, groups and organisations conceptualise inclusion. Whilst most geographers would probably support diversity and inclusion as a general principle, it is important to recognise the professional and personal challenges that teachers and pupils face when tackling the understanding and values associated with diversity and inclusion. These include the significance of their own experiences and assumptions, ethical and emotive issues and the conceptual demands made on them as teachers and learners. Even the avoidance of bias, stereotyping and unintended messages, while highly desirable, can be a contested matter.

A third set of challenges concerns how we organise the curriculum, teaching and learning to develop inclusion in geography, especially related to some of the tensions inherent in the concept of entitlement. Examples of choices include those between curriculum breadth and depth; the desire to focus on relevance to the pupil, compared with the obligation to extend horizons; the selection of representative places, themes and issues and the degree to which we differentiate or personalise learning to cater for the needs and interests of individuals or groups of pupils.

Effective provision for inclusion in geography education takes account of the following dimensions, and the relationship between them:

- The pupils: their experience of people and places; interests, knowledge and understanding; their capabilities, attitudes and values, and the influence of family, culture, peer groups, communities and societies;
- Real world features and issues pertinent to developing pupils' understanding of inclusion, including the diversity of peoples, places environments, the commonality and interdependence between them, and processes of change, cooperation and conflict;
- The geography curriculum: its objectives and priorities, choice of illustrative content and resource materials, teaching and learning activities and assessment;
- The wider educational context, including the various purposes of education, and national and local priorities for schooling.

Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to promote an inclusive geography and geography teaching and to enable the GA to become an inclusive organisation.

An inclusive geography curriculum focuses on helping pupils to question and understand a range of spatial issues related to diversity, inclusion and exclusion, and on encouraging them to be tolerant towards others complete acceptance of others whom they perceive to be different from them. The interconnected nature of geographical knowledge and the diversity of human life, the study of places and issues at local and global scales and the relevance of these to human welfare, all support learners' understanding of diversity and inclusion. Also, the value that geographers place on argument, exploration and investigation enable learners to acquire the skills, values and attitudes needed to consider, engage with and apply the principles of inclusion in their current and future lives. Examples of effective strategies include reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it:

- provides opportunities to celebrate diversity in different contexts and opportunities to investigate the positive links and interdependence between a range of cultures; and
- interests and motivates all pupils to extend and deepen their understanding of the world.

Geographers are also concerned with promoting inclusion in their teaching, to ensure individuals and groups of pupils make progress and achieve success in their geographical learning. Some concerns are similar to those in teaching other subjects, for example approaches to lesson planning and classroom management. Others, such as the choice of activities, may be specific to geography. There are also links between the content and focus of the geography curriculum and teaching, for example the choice of illustrative content and its impact on pupil motivation and engagement in geography. Examples of effective strategies include:

- identifying which teaching and learning activities best promote achievement for individuals and groups - for example for boys, girls and pupils from different heritages; and
- differentiating activities to match the needs of high-attaining pupils and those with Special Educational Needs.

The GA is also committed to promoting inclusion as an organisation. Promoting inclusion should be a key aspect of its role, through the ways in which it promotes the study of geography and supports its members, through its duties as an employer, through the way it organises its committees, working groups and conferences and through its responsibilities as a publisher. The GA's place as a voluntary organisation in civil society means that promoting inclusion should be a key aspect of its role, linked to strong moral and ethical considerations related to values such as social justice.

Examples of effective strategies for organisations such as the GA include:

- supporting inclusive practices in employment and encouraging action from its members and staff to promote inclusion, e.g. by including an equal opportunities statement in all job advertisements;

- encouraging inclusive practices in its committees, working groups and conferences;
- monitoring its publications to ensure that the way it represents itself and geographical education is inclusive; and
- striving to work with other organisations with similar policies, for example, by promoting joint action with fellow subject associations to promote inclusion and diversity within the geography community.

The GA is committed to working with individuals and groups to support this policy. It will:

- encourage and support inclusive geography in all publications and curriculum development projects, giving substance to inclusion in the curriculum;
- raise awareness by making information about inclusive geography teaching available to members and the wider community of practice;
- include inclusion targets in the Association's development plan to guide a programme of activity by the GA, e.g. developing membership targets for hard to reach groups such as recently qualified teachers;
- value the diversity it already has as an organisation, using that diversity to become more inclusive, e.g. a systematic involvement of staff across the organisation in key policy decisions; and
- work to influence educational decision making on inclusion issues; for example, through its links with government organisations such as QCA.

Linked policies:

- Ethical policy
- Policy for sustainable development
- Staff handbook: equalities policy

Review date

The Governing Body should review this policy in March 2010.

Exemplification: inclusion in the geography curriculum

Relevant knowledge and understanding can be introduced in many of the themes studied in the geography curriculum at all key stages, in particular; place studies, population (including migration), settlements, economic change, and development.

Key geographical concepts

Diversity and commonality

Appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places, and cultures and the contribution these make to the dynamic functioning of societies and environments, e.g.

- studying common experiences among diverse environments and people, and so exploring learners' personal identity and confidence about their place in the world;
- examining and challenging stereotypical views of people, places and environments; and
- ensuring that activities and resources reflect diversity in Britain and global society.

Place

Understanding the characteristics of places: what places are like, how they became like this and how they are subject to change, e.g.

- by studying places selected to illustrate the beauty and complexity of our world, which extend pupils' experience and horizons, illustrate different types of environment and economic development, and which have cultural relevance to pupils' lives; and
- investigating the diversity of different places, understanding that there are differences within as well as between countries and that people in other places have much in common with people in the locality and UK, reflecting universal human values, questions and concerns.

Space: location, spatial interaction, interdependence and scale

Understanding the interactions between places and the networks created by flows of information, people, goods and other phenomena; knowing where things are located and why; knowing reasons for the patterns and distributions created; understanding how and why these are changing and the implications for people; and understanding the interconnections and inter-relationships which are significant in explaining and managing change, e.g.

- investigating what personal and local connections pupils have with people and places at different scales – local to global, near to distant;
- investigating the geographies of inclusion and exclusion created for different groups of people in rural and urban spaces;
- developing opportunities to make direct links with a diversity of people and places; and
- investigating how a diverse range of cultures and societies interact and contribute to each other, stressing common elements and concerns in different cultures which reflect universal human values.

Changing processes

Understanding the interrelated physical and human dimensions of environments and how and why they change, understanding that societies are continually changing and that these changes are the result of a range of processes, and understanding creative approaches to resolve issues, e.g.

- investigating how processes such as demographic change and migration impact on the lives of people in different societies, and understanding that these are common features of life in many countries;
- investigating environmental change and its impact on inclusion and exclusion, for example global warming and its impact on migration;
- investigating successful examples of managing environments and sustainable development in a range of places, and how people in different places and cultures can learn from each other; and
- relating geographical concepts to current social issues and controversies.

Examples of teaching and learning strategies

When investigating issues, developing the ability to think critically, identify and detect bias, opinion and abuse of evidence, e.g.

- critically examining images of people and places in media such as textbooks and the Internet, and comparing them with other sources of evidence.

In decision-making, appreciating how people's values and attitudes differ and may influence social, environmental, economic and political issues, and considering their own values and attitudes, e.g.

- valuing investigating issues relevant to their lives; and
- involving different members of local communities in geographical enquiry, investigating their own experience and views.

Developing as responsible citizens with responsibilities to others, who can make a positive contribution to society, challenge injustice and show commitment to human rights, e.g.

- working in teams to consider current geographical and inclusion issues relevant to them and taking responsible action.

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