

10 terrific tips to kick-start geography in your school

Finding the time and motivation for foundation subjects can be difficult, but geography now really does need a big boost. Have you thought about:

1) *Seeing if you can pair up with a colleague to take joint responsibility for the subject?*

Two heads are definitely better than one as you can bounce ideas off each other and share out the workload (www.williamshrewsbury.staffs.sch.uk have ideas from their two co-ordinators in geography).

2) *Keeping geography in the forefront of colleagues' minds?*

This can easily be done in a non-threatening way. End each staff meeting on an up-beat note by asking colleagues for any positive feedback on current geography work with their classes. Go and view any displays of pupils' work – take photos of them as evidence.

3) *Starting a 'Good work in Geography' display board?*
Ideally this should be in a shared area and would need to be changed regularly. Try to incorporate work from each year group and ability range - this might also then become the basis of a portfolio of pupil work for moderation/levelling purposes in the future.

4) *Improving your own confidence with the national expectations for the subject?*

Look up examples of pupils' work on National Curriculum in Action (www.ncaction.org.uk) (under the primary key stages) in order to get a handle on the kinds of pupil activities which contribute to outcomes at a particular level. Start a standards file by downloading and printing these examples off and use it to show to staff who may not have seen the website or to give them ideas for more creative activities.

5) *Having a look at*
<http://www.qca.org.uk/geography/innovating?>

There are lots of creative activity ideas here which can help everyone, in addition to those found in the GA's Geography from Square 1. Suggest these ideas to colleagues on a one-to-one basis or show them in a staff meeting using a data projector to let everyone see and discuss them.

6) *Using individual pupil whiteboards for literacy/numeracy for some short, fun geography assessment activities?*

Try testing pupils' map drawing skills, their knowledge of signs and symbols, 4 figure grid references or just place name identification games (e.g. name the country where you find the Eiffel Tower) using the boards. You can soon see who has got the idea and who hasn't as they hold up

their boards. And there's no fear with wipe-off mistakes or inaccurate answers.

7) *Making a cheap and useful map of the UK (or Europe)?*

Buy two copies of a cheap road atlas - you need two so you can display back and front pages together. Take them apart and laminate or cover all the pages. If you want to cover up one side this will make any activities easier as far as matching is concerned. Pin the sheets up on a wall in the corridor or classroom and build a map of as much of the UK as you want to! Sets of pages can be used as a game for pupils to match up the connecting sheets.

8) *Improving your resources boxes?*

This can be done cheaply by asking pupils, staff and parents to provide artefacts, pictures, rock samples, and small every day articles from other countries. Take a set of photographs of the local area, laminate and have ready for anyone to use when doing any work on the area. Store these with the appropriate maps both large and small scale.

9) *Setting up a fieldwork/visits folder in the staffroom?*

Collect brochures and information about places of interest that are worth taking pupils to visit. Ask staff to contribute personal recommendations on a regular basis and remind them at staff meetings to continue to update the file.

10) *Setting a challenge for pupils to carry out over the school holidays?*

Amazingly, many pupils are bored in their 'free' time and welcome something a little different to do at home (many parents/carers love some guidance on how to occupy them too). Remember to set a date for returning work and to share and celebrate any contributions brought in. If the response is particularly noteworthy, invite in the press and trumpet your schools' geography to a wider audience. Ideas can be simple, such as to invite them to record a journey that they went on in any chosen way, or to design a new use for a 2 litre plastic bottle – stimulating ideas on reusing items before even recycling them. For other tried and tested ideas, visit one school in Kent's website (<http://www.joy-lane-junior.kent.sch.uk/environment.htm>).