Good geography teaching

As an ITE trainer, your chief purpose is to ensure that trainees become effective geography teachers – but what does that actually mean? You must be absolutely clear in your own mind about what ‘effective’ geography teaching is, and this should guide you in setting goals for trainees to achieve.

- Refer to the trainees’ webpage on Good geography teaching.
- Review the trainee support sheet Effective geography teaching.

Discussion with trainee teachers

Look together at the trainee teacher webpage and the accompanying downloads. This sets out Ofsted’s view of good geography teaching. Discuss this with geography trainee teachers and stress the importance of the teacher’s geographical expertise in both subject and pedagogical knowledge.

Observations by trainee teachers

Arrange for trainee teachers to observe some good geography teaching, and carry out some of the observation activities suggested on the trainees’ webpage. Refer to the ITE trainers’ support sheet Observing experienced teachers for further information about setting up these observations.

Encourage trainees to focus on different aspects of teaching in their observations, as suggested in the activities on the trainees’ webpage.

Discuss with trainee teachers what they observed in the lessons. Are they beginning to form a view on what makes good and effective geography teaching? Talking about this will give you an opportunity to correct any misapprehensions. It is important to have an ongoing dialogue about ‘good teaching’ with trainee teachers because they need to recognise there is not one approach that can be labelled ‘good geography teaching’. As they observe different teachers they will begin to tease out the essence of good teaching and realise that it uses a variety of styles and strategies. They also need to realise that good teaching is not easy to achieve and they will need to work at it.

Encourage trainee teachers to explore ‘what makes a difference’ as they observe good teaching in a geography department. Read what Mark Enser has written about his department in these two blog posts, What makes the difference? and What makes the difference? (Part 2). This should give you and your trainee teachers plenty to discuss and look out for in their observations.

Discussion with trainees about recent teaching initiatives

Discuss with trainees some of the generic initiatives they may have come across in schools. Ask them to research the rationale and aims of the approaches they have seen used. Also discuss with them examples of new initiatives that you know about. Critically evaluate with trainees the pros and cons of these initiatives for geography teaching and learning. Encourage trainees to seek out other views
from senior curriculum staff in schools and other geography teachers. The important point to make to trainee teachers is that there is no one ‘right’ path to good teaching and new ideas must always be critically evaluated in terms of their value for geography learning.

Reading for ITE trainers/mentors


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