

# Mary Sandell, Geography Advanced Skills Teacher

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Mary Sandell, an Advanced Skills Teacher at The Windsor Boys' School, was awarded Chartered Geographer status in 2006. Here's what she has to say about Chartered Geographer (Teacher).....

## **Why did you decide to apply to become a Chartered Geographer?**

I felt that after working as a geography teacher for 23 years it was about time I got some professional recognition for it! Also, I was keen to make the right moves towards having a greater influence on the teaching of geography in this country through whatever means, and to become a Fellow of the RGS-IBG.

## **How did you find the application process?**

The application process was both as painful and painless as a job application or filling in a UCAS form! Luckily, I was able to use a lot of the work I have carried out as a geography AST to meet the set criteria, so once I got writing it took no longer than a few hours. It was a useful experience because it made me bring together all I've done over the last few years; this gave me an enormous sense of achievement and made me feel quite exhausted as I recalled all I've done over the last few years!

## **What sort of experience and activities did you include in your professional self evaluation report?**

I have worked closely – in a variety of ways – with the secondary, middle and primary schools in my local area, essentially to promote geography, so I was able to include much of this work in my self evaluation report. For example, I have been re-writing the schemes of work with the geography department of a local middle school, with a view to bringing geography alive and making it vital and fun. With two primary schools, I have developed geography weeks – one taking the form of a cross-curricular study of India, with everything from hand-painting to sari printing to packing a suitcase for the Monsoon season, and the other focusing on the breadth and depth of geography, with model making, volcano poems and Fair Trade wrapper designs. I have also worked with colleagues in the area on learning styles, multiple intelligences, thinking skills and literacy, both generically and with particular reference to geography.

## **How have you benefited personally from gaining the accreditation?**

Believe me, I have never lost my enthusiasm for geography, but this application process and accreditation have only served to deepen my passion and reinvigorate my attempts to give geography in my school and the local area a real boost; I'm determined to 'earn my keep'. Personally, I have received congratulations and recognition from colleagues and friends and that has been good and people in the local area are calling on me to help out in a number of different fields.

## **How have your department and school benefited from you gaining the accreditation?**

The school and department have had a rise in status. Our numbers at A level continue to grow, with 30+ students in Year 12 and another 30+ in Year 13, with about ten students last year going on to read geography at university. Of course, our popularity is not just about having a Chartered Geographer in the department; we have an inspiring, passionate young geographer, we offer the Advanced Extension Award in geography and our A level field trip is to Iceland, but the pupils have confidence in and respect for the accreditation, so it

plays its part. As a result, several of our pupils have been inspired/encouraged to join the RGS-IBG and we have attended a number of Monday lectures as a group.

**How have your Headteacher and senior management team responded to you gaining the accreditation?**

At The Windsor Boys' School, there is a culture for looking both ahead and sideways, meaning that we are always looking for ways to move ourselves and other schools forward, so accreditation such as CGeog has been both encouraged and welcomed by the SLT. My Headmaster, Jeff Dawkins, has made it very easy for me to take time for the application and to attend events at the RGS-IBG as and when necessary. He has the opinion that the professional recognition that comes with people being committed to their subject can only have positive effects, allowing for the spread of good practice, high expectations and improved response and attainment from pupils.

**Any words of advice for aspiring Chartered Geographer (Teachers)?**

Just believe you are good enough and go for it! If you are working hard for young people and for geography, with passion and commitment, then you are a potential Chartered Geographer (Teacher). Good luck!