

## ● RGS-IBG response to draft Geography KS3 National Curriculum

### Introduction

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft orders for the KS3 Geography National Curriculum. We note and support the comments of Alan Johnston, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, around the release of the curriculum that:

*"I want sustainable development to be given a stronger focus and for it to be covered as a key concept in the new style geography syllabus ... If we can instil in the next generation an understanding of how our actions can mitigate or cause global warming then we local in a culture change that could, quite literally, save the world. .... There can be no more important subject worthy of study in our schools today".* Alan Johnson. The Independent 02.02.07

*"It is inconceivable that young people growing up today should not be taught about issues like climate change – it has enormous relevance to their lives. Children not only learn about our future, they shape it."* Alan Johnson. The Independent 29.3.07

The following comments have been formerly approved by the Society's Education Committee which brings together a range of senior individuals with geographical interests spanning head teachers, heads of departments, ITE professionals and consultants – alongside representatives from business.

The Society welcomes the following areas:

1. that the new draft KS3 National Curriculum provides greater flexibility for teachers to choose geographical case studies that are relevant to and stimulating for their pupils
2. the focus on the key concepts of geography which identifies key building blocks of a pupil's geographical entitlement

3. the inclusion of cultural understanding and diversity as a concept; geography has much to offer this area as evidenced by the recent Ajebo Report for the DfES
4. the specific inclusion of the role of fieldwork and GIS within geographical education.

The Society, in partnership with the Geographical Association, is currently delivering the DfES funded Action Plan for Geography. Within the Action Plan the Society has lead responsibility for two key areas of work relevant to the new KS3 curriculum, namely:

- the development of new online inspiration geographical teaching resources for KS3, supported by an accompanying CPD programme.
- providing resources and guidance for fieldwork and Local Learning, including the use of GIS – which is also supported by an accompanying CPD programme.

With these two substantial projects and the CPD programmes in mind, alongside the Society's range of other relevant KS3 work, the Society is keen to work alongside QCA and other bodies to help teachers implement and embed the new curriculum to enhance the teaching and learning of geography. With such a shift in the approach to the curriculum, to a concept-driven rather than a content-driven curriculum, teachers will need substantial support, guidance and resources. The timing of the Action Plan in this regard could not be better, but it, alone, will be not be sufficient. Indeed, the current DfES funding for the Action Plan finishes in March 2008, prior to the implementation of the new KS3 curriculum.

### General comments

Notwithstanding the greater flexibility provided by the KS3 curriculum, the Society feels in a number of limited areas there is a case to be made for clearer direction to be provided for teachers. This is particularly in relation to a number of key areas, where

greater specification in the curriculum orders would provide the necessary clarification to ensure that teachers cover such (essential) work with their pupils. All of these areas are highly relevant to young people's lives and futures and are taught substantially through geography.

In short, the Society believes that some of the essential building blocks of a geographical education for KS3 pupils, particularly the need for young people to understand climate change, globalisation, migration, sustainable development and the changes that are taking place culturally, economically and environmentally in their local area and beyond, need to be explicitly stated within the curriculum. This should also include the geographical aspects of young people's lives in relation to their British identity and as global citizens.

This is in line with such specification in other subject areas. For example, we note that the draft history curriculum has clearly specified that pupils should study Empire, the Holocaust, the Slave Trade and the impact of the two World Wars.

We believe that the following subject areas should be explicitly required as aspects of study within the geography national curriculum:

- climate change
- globalisation
- migration
- sustainable development
- learning about a pupils local area
- the geographical aspects that underpin a young persons British identity and their global citizenship.

We strongly believe that the above hold a similar level of importance to young peoples' geographical studies to those areas of study specifically identified within a Historical context.

The Society accepts that such content can be taught within the flexibility provided by the new curriculum but unless they are clearly specified they may not be. We request that this limited range of six areas of content be made statutory elements of the geography National Curriculum. Even with such limited additions of specification, the Society is still confident that sufficient flexibility would remain for teachers to incorporate a wide range of other relevant case studies and content within their geography lessons.

### **Specific comments**

Taking note of the comments above, the following proposed revisions to the geography curriculum have been highlighted below.

### **Importance statement**

The study of geography stimulates an interest in, and a sense of wonder about, places and helps make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world. It explains where places are, how places and landscapes are formed, how people and environment interact, how our climate is changing and how a diverse range of economies, societies and environments are interconnected through globalization and sustainable development. It builds on pupils' own experiences to investigate at all scales from the personal to the global, helping them understand the human and physical characteristics of their local area, within the wider context of the UK and places further afield.

Geographical enquiry encourages questioning, investigation and critical thinking about issues affecting the world and people's lives, for the present and future. Fieldwork, in the local area working in and beyond the school's grounds, is an essential element of this. Pupils learn to think spatially, using maps, visual images and new technologies, including geographical information systems, to obtain, present and analyse information. Geography inspires pupils to become responsible British and global citizens by exploring their own place in the world, their values and responsibilities to other people, to the environment and climate, and to the sustainability of the planet.

### **Key concepts**

#### **Place**

- understanding the physical and human characteristics of real places, including your local place and environment.
- developing geographical imaginations of places.
- understanding global patterns of places and environments



### **Space**

- understanding the interactions between places and the networks created by flows of information, people and goods
- knowing where places and landscapes are located, why they are there, the patterns and distributions they create, how and why these are changing and the implications for people

### **Scale**

- appreciating different scales - from personal and local to national, international and global.
- making links between scales to develop understanding of geographical ideas.

### **Interdependence**

- exploring the social, economic, environmental and political connections between places and particularly the impact of increasing globalization.
- understanding the significance of interdependence in change, at all scales.
- appreciating how globalisation and migration impact on the economy and society in Britain
- environmental interaction, sustainable development and climate change
- understanding that the physical and human dimensions of the environment are interrelated and together influence environmental, including climate change.
- exploring sustainable development and its impact on environmental interaction and climate change.
- physical and human processes
- explaining how physical and human processes shape places, landscapes, climates and societies.
- appreciating that processes change over time

### **Cultural understanding and diversity**

- appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places, environments and cultures to inform their understanding of societies and economies.
- understanding the cultural connections between the UK and other places in Europe and the wider world.

Appreciating how people's values and attitudes differ and may influence social, environmental, economic and political issues, and develop their own values and attitudes about such issues.

### **Key Processes**

#### **Geographical enquiry**

Pupils should be able to:

- ask geographical questions, thinking critically, constructively and creatively
- identify bias, opinion and abuse of evidence in sources when investigating issues
- collect, record and display information
- analyse and evaluate evidence, presenting findings to draw and justify conclusions
- find new ways of using and applying geographical skills and understanding to create new interpretations of place and space
- plan geographical enquiries, suggesting appropriate sequences of investigation
- solve problems and make decisions to develop analytical skills and creative thinking about geographical issues.

#### **Fieldwork and out-of-class learning**

Pupils, working in the local area in and beyond the school's grounds, should be able to:

- select and use fieldwork tools and techniques appropriately, safely and efficiently.
- graphicacy and visual literacy

Pupils should be able to:

- use atlases, globes, maps at a range of scales, photographs, satellite images and other geographical data
- construct maps and plans at a variety of scales, using graphical techniques to present

### Geographical communication

Pupils should be able to:

- communicate their knowledge and understanding using geographical vocabulary and conventions in both talk and writing.

### Range and content

This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes. The study of geography should include:

- a variety of scales, from a pupil's local area and region, through to the UK, international and continental, to global
- a range of types of study, including studies based on a place or region, a theme, an issue or problem. Studies should develop pupils' knowledge of the location of places and environments studied and their relationship to each other. Each study should include a range of scales
- the consideration of different parts of the world in their wider settings, and contexts. This includes local areas, the UK, the European Union and regions or countries in different states of development. The studies should be placed within a regional, continental and/or global context and include selected coverage of the key aspects of the world's physical and human geography. Selections should show different types of environment and levels of economic development, and in some cases have cultural, economic or political relevance to the lives of pupils
- undertake study of the UK and learn some key aspects of its changing human and physical geography, current issues, place in the world today

- investigate climate change and other people-environment interactions at different scales and in different parts of the world, highlighting consequences, impacts and planning/management responses
- studies that involve physical geography, physical processes and natural landscapes
- studies that involve human geography, urban and managed environments, and human processes including migration.

### Curriculum opportunities

During the key stage pupils should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject. The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to:

- use a range of enquiry approaches
- use varied resources, including maps, visual media and geographical information systems
- participate in informed responsible action in relation to geographical issues that affect them and those around them
- examine geographical issues in the news
- investigate important issues of relevance to the UK and globally, using a range of skills including ICT
- undertake fieldwork investigations in different locations outside the classroom, individually and as part of a team
- make links between geography and work in other subjects and areas of the curriculum including citizenship.