

THE STATE OF PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY IN ENGLAND

Professor Simon Catling, Oxford Brookes University
Rachel Bowles, University of Greenwich
John Halocha, Bishop Grosseteste University College
Fran Martin, Worcester University College
Steve Rawlinson, University of Northumbria at Newcastle

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ABSTRACT

The teaching and learning of geography in primary schools has made considerable progress since the introduction of the national curriculum, but its achievements do not yet match most of the other primary school subjects. This paper uses Ofsted evidence from the overviews of the annual inspections of primary schools, alongside the findings of a monitoring study for QCA, to examine the state of geography in primary education. Drawing on the perspectives of geography subject leaders, what emerges is that while geography is clearly part of the primary curriculum, there have been inhibiting impacts from the implementation of the national strategies for primary education in the past five years, in terms of limited time for teaching, slow development of effective schemes of work and teaching strategies, limits to resources, a lack of in-service development, and patchy and limited support for subject leaders in schools to develop the geography curriculum. While there are clear problems with many teachers holding under-expectations of primary age children's geographical capabilities, a clear set of characteristics and contexts for good and excellent geography teaching and learning can be identified from good practice. These qualities are identified and an agenda for developing primary geography is set out.

INTRODUCTION

Geography has had a long and varied history as a subject in the elementary and primary school curriculum since the nineteenth century (Walford, 2001). Recent comments in the Chief HMI's Annual Reports (Ofsted, 2001a, 2002a, 2003a) have presented rather too succinctly and critically a negative image of the state of primary geography. The Chief HMI voiced concerns about the limited amount of good and excellent achievement and teaching in geography, relative to other foundation subjects, though in most cases their standards are little better overall compared to geography. While there is evidence to support some of the criticisms raised by the Chief HMI, the contention in this paper is that such a bald and limited picture is misleading and fails to recognise what has been achieved by primary schools since the introduction of the national curriculum.

The national curriculum was introduced in the 1988 Education Reform Act, which listed geography among the nine core and other foundations subjects, with RE, to be taught to primary children in key stages 1 and 2. For more than ten years now Ofsted has reported on the state of geography in primary education (Ofsted, 1989, 1993a, 1993b, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b). This evaluative evidence is drawn on, as is a small-scale study of primary geography carried out as part of the QCA national curriculum monitoring programme in 2002 (Catling et al, 2002).

At the time of the introduction of national curriculum geography a survey of primary teachers' confidence in the teaching of the primary curriculum subjects revealed that in 1989 some 48% of primary teachers felt confident about their existing subject knowledge for teaching geography (see Figure 1). Two years later that level of confidence had fallen by a quarter to 36% of primary teachers (Bennett, Wragg & Carre, 1991). The authors comment that the substantial drop in confidence found in 1991 might have been the result of the publication of the geography programmes of study for introduction from September 1991. In effect, as primary children began to be taught national curriculum geography, less than four in ten of their teachers felt confident about doing so effectively. Only three subjects – RE, music and technology – fared worse than geography, though teachers were only a very little more confident in teaching PE, history (at 38%), art and science.

More recently, there has been a further survey of teachers' confidence in their teaching of the primary curriculum subjects (Ward, 2002). More than a decade on from the introduction of national curriculum geography, only some 50% of primary teachers feel confident teaching geography – more than RE, art, ICT, D&T and music, but fewer than PE and history (at over 60%), among the foundation subjects. Indeed, confidence in teaching maths and English is at 85% and 81%; for maths this approaches a 25% improvement on the situation in 1989, though teachers are no more confident about teaching English than at the end of the 1980s. In little more than ten years, confidence in teaching geography among primary teachers has only just managed to return to a fraction above the level of confidence found in 1989. In comparison, for both art and music, teachers appear to be less confident today than in 1989, though there is evidence of much good learning and teaching in both subjects, rather better than in geography (Ofsted, 2002a, 2003a). A variety of reasons have been put forward for this state of affairs in primary geography, including:

- the difficulties that have been evident for primary teachers in using the programmes of study to develop well planned schemes of work in geography (Ofsted, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1999);
- the lifting of the requirement to teach to the geography programmes of study from 1998 to 2000 (QCA, 1998), which certainly led to a decline in the amount of geography teaching in primary schools (Ofsted, 2000a, 2000b, 2001b, 2002b);
- the way in which many primary schools have focused strongly since 1998 on literacy and numeracy to the detriment of the foundation subjects, including geography (Ofsted, 2002c).

Figure 1: Teachers' confidence in their subject teaching: 1989 to 2002

Primary curriculum subject	1989	1991	2002
Art	48%	40%	42%
English	81%	77%	81%
Geography	48%	36%	50%
History	54%	38%	65%
Maths	68%	62%	85%
Music	27%	23%	20%
PE	47%	37%	55%
RE	45%	33%	45%
Science	34%	41%	69%
Technology: Design & Technology	14%	14%	40%
Technology: ICT			34%

Sources: Bennett, Wragg & Carre, 1991; Ward, 2002

The purpose of this paper is to examine both the critical issues in the current state of primary geography, as well as to look at the positive aspects of primary geography teaching and learning. To begin with, however, it is relevant to outline the evidence base for this analysis.

SOURCES OF DATA ON PRIMARY SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

This review of the state of primary geography covers, particularly, the schools years 1998 to 2002. There are two main sources of information, judgements and data on which this paper is based. One key source is the *Ofsted annual reports* on teaching and learning in geography in primary schools (Ofsted, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b). The other central source is a small-scale monitoring study of the views of primary *geography subject leaders* on the state of geography in their schools (Catling et al, 2002).

In primary inspections, Ofsted's role is to evaluate the quality of geography teaching and the achievements by pupils in their geographical learning, as well as to note the various factors that might influence this, such as resources for teaching, geography subject leadership and staff development. This is undertaken through thousands of inspections every year, by doing such things as observing teaching, evaluating pupils' work and learning, examining geography policies and schemes of work, talking to pupils and teachers, particularly the subject leader, and noting the nature and quality of teaching resources, based on guidelines about identifying and recording differing levels of quality (Ofsted 1995c, 1999c, 2000c, 2003c, 2003d). This leads to judgements about the state of geography in each school inspected, where geography is sometimes well evidenced and in other schools little in evidence. An overview analysis is completed annually by the HMI responsible for geography, and this has led to the publication in recent years of summary primary geography subject reports (Ofsted, 1999b, 2000b, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b). It is from these annual Ofsted subject reports, containing assessments of the state of primary geography, that evidence is drawn for this paper.

The monitoring study was commissioned by QCA in 2001, as one of their sources of information about the state of geography in primary schools during the year 2001/02 (Catling et al, 2002). It focused on the perspectives of geography subject leaders about:

- the impact of changes and developments in government requirements on geographical education, such as national curriculum 2000;
 - the impact on primary geography of other recent government initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies;
 - geography subject leaders' sense of their own situation and of the standing and status of geography in their primary schools;
 - the support for geography through the services and resources for primary geography subject leaders and teachers, and the resources available for children.
- These were matters that QCA specifically wished to have addressed.

The monitoring study involved twenty-five schools in five areas of England: the North-East, Eastern England, the West Midlands, south Central England and South-East England. The sample covered one first school, twenty-three primary schools and one middle school. It included ten schools with nursery classes. Two schools were inner city schools, seven others were urban schools, seven were suburban schools and nine were rural schools. The schools varied in their quality of geography

provision from highly rated providers to one in special measures, according to advice from LEA advisors, higher education teacher trainers and Ofsted school inspection reports. The survey was conducted through detailed and extended interviews with the geography subject leaders. Inevitably a dimension of the study, while as balanced as possible, depended on the willingness and interest of subject leaders to give their time to be interviewed (Wiegand, 1996).

A research approach using interviews was selected as the most appropriate means to gather data from geography subject leaders because it provided the opportunity both to pursue the particular enquiries that were the focus of the study and to enable probing questions and discussion to elicit greater detail and understanding, in which ways it is seen to be more effective than the use of questionnaires (McKernan, 1996). In view of the focus of the research, a *respondent interview* approach was chosen. This approach enables the interviewer to manage the interview process, based on a predetermined agenda (Wiegand, 1996). A *structured* interview approach was used, in which a set of pre-specified questions were asked, with responses recorded on a questionnaire-style form (McKernan, 1996). The study involved five interviewers working in different areas of England. A structured approach was essential to provide for consistency in data gathering (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The interview schedule that was devised contained questions that sought information and personal perspectives. Hence both closed and open-ended questions were included. While some were succinct, others were extended, and the interview approach enabled these to be followed through more effectively than the use of a questionnaire would have allowed (McLafferty, 2003). *Informational questions* sought, for example, data about the school, the geography subject leader's qualifications and length of time in role, on whether s/he knew of particular QCA and other documents, in-service courses attended, and particular resources bought and used in school. *Perspectival and opinion-focused questions* sought the views of subject leaders on matters such as the value of aspects of the national curriculum 2000 geography documents, the benefits and limitations of changing approaches to geography in the school's curriculum and with colleagues, on the status of geography in the school, on the geography subject leader's sense of strengths and weaknesses of geography, and on the standing of geography in the coming years. Guidance notes were provided for the interviewers to indicate ways to explain the questions to help the interviewee understand their focus if this was needed and to encourage them to probe further where answers were not clear to them. The *interview schedule* that was devised was extensive and each interview took between two and three hours, usually at the end of a busy school day. Funding did not enable any alternative timing, for though teachers were paid for their time it could not stretch to purchasing supply cover for classes. While such timing can be considered problematic, the interviewers reported that both they and the respondents were fully engaged throughout, in an atmosphere that was both as cordial and as informal as possible.

While such intensive and structured interviews can be seen to be artificial and dependent upon interpretation by both participants (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002), as well as subject to personal contexts and interests, even bias or lacking fully honest responses, this approach can be highly informative where a sense of trust can be or has been established between the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this monitoring study, bearing in mind the variety of school types and range of quality of geography provision to be sought, the interviewers worked with geography subject leaders where some contact existed and where trust in confidentiality and openness in the interview discussion could be assured. The geography subject leaders reported that they had found the process personally informative and they requested that they receive a copy of their own schedule record

for role purposes, a request supported by the monitoring team on ethical and practical grounds (McNamee & Bridges, 2002).

The information gathered through the monitoring study reflects the views of the geography subject leaders interviewed. It gathered their perceptions of the state of primary geography in their schools and of the issues that they identified, rather than the views of external interviewers. While there was some overlap with the Ofsted findings, it provided a different set of perspectives to those of Ofsted. While Ofsted reflects a gaze from the outside, the monitoring study tried to provide a view from within.

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY: SOME INITIAL POSTIVE COMMENTS

To begin with, it is worth noting some broad-brush outcomes from these sources of information and judgement about primary geography. A key point is that while geography teaching was satisfactory or better in only 25% of primary schools in the 1980s (DES, 1989), some 94% of geography teaching is now at least satisfactory and more than a third is good or better (see Figure 2.1), according to Ofsted (2003). While geography teaching was patchy in primary schools prior to the introduction of the national curriculum, it is now taught in all primary schools and each has a structured programme, though these may vary in quality and effectiveness. Among primary pupils in 2002, 88% of their achievement in geography was at least satisfactory with almost a quarter being good or excellent (Figure 2.2). There is no doubt that the introduction of national curriculum geography has been beneficial for the subject, and, while many primary teachers were somewhat disconcerted by the initial version of the geography programmes of study in the early 1990s, the indications are that the revisions to the geography programmes have improved teachers' understanding, and this may have been helped by their increasing use of the QCA geography scheme of work guidance (DfEE/QCA, 1998/2000).

Figure 2: The quality of pupils' achievements and teaching in primary geography 2001/02

2.1 Quality of Teaching in key stage 1 and key stage 2

Ofsted judgement	KS1	KS2	Overall KS1/2
Excellent/ Very Good	3%	3%	3%
Good	33%	33%	33%
Satisfactory	59%	57%	58%
Unsatisfactory/ Poor	5%	7%	6%

2.2 Standard of Pupils' Achievement in key stage 1 and key stage 2

Ofsted judgement	KS1	KS2	Overall KS1/2
Excellent/Very Good	1%	1%	1%
Good	23%	22%	22%
Satisfactory	67%	62%	65%
Unsatisfactory/Poor	9%	15%	12%

Source: Ofsted (2003)

Ofsted have noted that there continues to be improvement in geography in some 20-25% of primary schools annually, that pupils are achieving well in geography in some 30% of schools, that there now tends to be effective lesson planning with clear learning objectives and outcomes specified, and that there has been continuing

improvement in the teaching about places, near and far (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b). Ofsted also noted that often the best geography teaching is related to the use of fieldwork and that good, and sometimes the best, quality pupil work and learning often arises from such fieldwork. Fieldwork is certainly a component of primary geography teaching. Half of the monitoring study primary schools undertook fieldwork activities only once or twice a year; but a third of schools were in the 'field' three or more times a year. Ofsted rarely refer to enquiry approaches to teaching primary geography, other than critically (2002b, 2003b). Some 45% of the monitoring study schools claim to use an enquiry approach in their teaching to a major extent or fully, while a similar percentage of schools indicate they adopt an enquiry approach for some units of work but not most. It would seem that the type of enquiry approach is linked to the use of the units of work structure provided in the QCA geography scheme of work (DfEE/QCA, 1998/2000). While these are welcome developments, Ofsted notes that improvements in the quality of primary geography teaching appears to have reached a plateau in the past three years (2001a, 2002a, 2003a).

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY: THE SUBJECT LEADERS' PERSPECTIVE

From the perspective of primary school geography subject leaders, there are many positive aspects in, as well as critical concerns and issues facing, primary geography. Drawn from the evidence in the monitoring study (Catling, et al, 2002), a variety of points can be summarised, in relation to:

- the current status of primary geography;
- the impact of government initiatives on primary geography;
- the impact of the reintroduction of the geography programmes of study;
- the organisation of geography teaching;
- the use of a variety of resources and support materials; and,
- the role and impact of geography subject leaders.

These developments and concerns can be related to Ofsted's evaluative evidence, and where it is appropriate to do so they are.

The current status of primary geography

In almost all primary schools, geography has no greater or lesser standing than any other foundation subject. In two-thirds of the primary schools, geography is a valued subject in the curriculum, though it seems that it is still, like other foundation subjects, a relatively low priority when it comes to the school development plan and budgeting for resources. In this sense, the status of geography is still fragile. However, there is evidence that an increasing number of headteachers are developing an interest in improving the role and contribution of the foundation subjects to the overall curriculum, a development reinforced as educationally valuable by both Ofsted and the government (Ofsted, 2002d; DfES, 2003), even though reference to geography's role is lacking. This has been leading, it would appear, to a very gradual improvement in the status of geography, though, as yet, this is having only a marginal impact on the quality of geographical learning and teaching in primary schools (Ofsted, 2002b).

Four-fifths of geography subject leaders are confident about the future of geography in their schools, and all schools see strengths in what they do in geography. In almost half the schools the enthusiasm of staff generally is evident. But there is concern about the effectiveness of some primary teachers in teaching geography in some one-third of schools. Ofsted (2002b, 2003b) have raised concerns about the quality and depth of many teachers' geographical knowledge to teach confidently the

units in the school's scheme of work, a point echoing teachers' own perceptions (Ward, 2003).

There is also an enthusiasm among the pupils for geography teaching in about half the schools. In comparison, Pollard and Tagg (2000), in their study of primary school pupils' perceptions of their curriculum experience, found that around half of the pupils regarded geography to a large extent as 'boring', as was also the pupils' view of science, history and RE. The reasons pupils gave for their view was the large amount of information they had to learn in geography. Unfortunately, geography did not appear for any of the pupils on their list of favourite subjects. Pollard and Tagg indicate that the style and emphasis in teaching any subject clearly has an impact on children's feelings about subjects.

The impact of government initiatives on primary geography

From 1998 to 2000, as a result of the suspension of the programmes of study for the foundation subjects (which still had to be taught), primary schools had the option of maintaining or reducing the range of geography they taught (QCA, 1998). The impact of this government action was that the time for geography was reduced in many primary schools, where it has yet to be fully regained (Ofsted, 2002b, 2003b). Half the schools in the monitoring study stated that they continued to teach geography to the full geography programmes of study during the 1998-2000 period of suspension, but half reduced time and curriculum content. There is no doubt that the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies in 1998 and 1999, and the continuing emphasis on English and maths SATs for Year 2 and, more importantly, for Year 6, have had a major impact in not simply decreasing time for the foundation subjects but in the sense of marginalisation that many teachers have felt has happened to foundation subjects such as geography. While not the only subject affected, geography does appear to have had a difficult time holding its own in many primary schools.

Almost all primary schools have made changes to their curriculum since 2000. The publication of the QCA geography scheme of work (DfEE/QCA, 1998/2000) has had an impact on primary geography. All schools now have geography schemes of work in place (Ofsted, 2003b). Two-fifths of geography subject leaders are confident in their school's geography scheme of work, reflecting a view shared by Ofsted, which considers that only a minority of schools have well-planned and fully implemented geography schemes (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b). Indeed, Ofsted's view is that in too many schools there remains a limitation to the breadth and depth of geographical studies. Much has still to be done to develop the use of good quality geography schemes of work throughout many primary schools.

The majority of geography subject leaders is aware of the need and sees opportunities for curriculum development in geography, particularly through their monitoring of the geography curriculum and the provision of INSET for colleagues. However, there is no clear sense that geography INSET opportunities will become available in the foreseeable future in primary schools. In recent years Ofsted have expressed a similar concern (Ofsted, 1999b, 2000b). But, increasingly, a small but growing minority of primary schools are finding time for their geography subject leader to monitor geography throughout the school.

The impact of the reintroduction of the geography programmes of study

The reintroduction of teaching to the full geography programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2 in 2000 led to some rethinking by very many schools about their

geography schemes of work. Since 2000 the redrafting of schemes of work appears to have been influenced much more strongly by the QCA scheme of work for geography (DfEE/QCA 1998/2000) than by the revised Geography Order (DfEE/QCA, 1999a, 1999b). Ofsted have noticed a similar pattern (Ofsted, 2002b, 2003b), but the evidence indicates that it began in the late 1990s when the QCA scheme of work guidance was first published (Ofsted, 2000).

Figure 3: The use by primary schools of the QCA Geography Scheme of Work Units

Unit	% of schools	Unit	% of schools	Unit	% of schools
1	84%	10	76%	19	28%
2	60%	11	60%	20	20%
3	64%	12	36%	21	24%
4	72%	13	56%	22	28%
5	72%	14	76%	23	28%
6	80%	15	44%	24	32%
7	48%	16	48%	25	20%
8	80%	17	16%		
9	56%	18	20%		

Source: Catling et al, 2002

Many primary schools appear either only to have become aware of the QCA geography scheme of work at around the time of the reintroduction of the full geography programme in 2000 or to have been waiting until the revised programmes of study were available before undertaking any major revision to their own geography policies and schemes of work. The QCA geography scheme of work has been a major influence on the modification of the primary curriculum post-2000. The most popular Units used and adapted by schools are those associated with places and localities (Figure 3). Those published in 2000 have proved much less popular than those published in 1998 (DfEE/QCA, 1998/2000), though the later numbered units in the original guidance have also been less used.

The developments in schools have largely been in terms of modifying their existing curriculum and adapting the QCA scheme Units to their own circumstances. Almost all schools use a variety of the Units, but it is clear that many of them see themselves adapting rather than simply adopting them. Even so, Ofsted contends that in too many schools the Units in the QCA guidance scheme of work are being adopted without particular thought to the needs of the school (Ofsted, 2003b). Worryingly, few subject leaders use the planning *guidance booklets* provided for teachers published with the QCA geography schemes of work to develop and enhance their school's geography scheme. It appears that teachers are reacting pragmatically, responding to what needs to be done in the classroom rather than considering carefully the nature of the overall geographical learning of their pupils.

The geography programmes of study (DfEE/QCA, 1999a) are much less used. Where geography subject leaders make reference to the Geography Order, the majority of them view the structure of the programmes of study as clear and informative. There are indications that they are an improvement on what went before (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b). In particular, subject leaders value the emphasis now placed on sustainable development and the inclusion of decision making and geographical patterns and processes in national Curriculum Geography 2000. Yet, limited use is made of the programmes of study other than to check curriculum coverage and to draft school geography policies. Perhaps, this is their core role, rather than as a classroom reference document. In fact, not every subject leader

made use of them, and many did not trouble their staff with them, seeing the QCA units of work as the way to encourage the reinvigoration of geography teaching. It would seem that in many primary schools modified but essentially off-the-peg solutions are those being sought and used to teach geography units.

The organisation of geography teaching

There is a clear variation between schools in the time given to teaching geography (see Figure 4), a view shared by Ofsted (2002b, 2003b). About one-third of schools allocate considerably less time than is recommended as an appropriate starting point (QCA/DfES, 2002), but two-fifths say that they give more time, including a small number of schools who allocate about a third more time than the 'base-line'. This is a more positive picture than that painted by Ofsted (2002b, 2003b), which notes that in many schools geography has not regained the time it lost to literacy and numeracy since 1998. Indeed, Ofsted's evaluation of the national literacy strategy's impact admits as much for all the foundation subjects (Ofsted, 2002c). Research covering the first six years of the national curriculum indicates that the core subjects dominated the curriculum even then (Osborn, McNess & Broadfoot, 2000), so it remains unclear as to how much of a time change really took place in the late 1990s that so affected the foundation subjects. Perhaps it should be remembered that the 1978 major HMI review of primary education found that English and maths dominated the curriculum (DES, 1978). In 2002, some 20% of teachers commented that they felt there was still too little curriculum time in their schools for geography, though some 78% felt that the time available was about right (Ward, 2002). [Only for music, art and D&T did teachers feel more concerned about the lack of teaching time, and the same number were as concerned about PE as for geography.]

The national literacy and numeracy strategies have had an impact on the timing of geography teaching in almost all primary schools. In essence, geography has become an 'afternoon' subject, on the basis that when children are more alert and better able to concentrate in the morning they should be taught English and mathematics. Indeed, only one school in twenty teaches geography in the morning (Ofsted, 2003b).

Figure 4: The hourage for geography teaching annually: key stages 1 and 2

Grouping of hours taught per year	% of schools	Average number of hours taught per year
About 15 hours	8%	15
Between 20 and 25 hours	28%	23
Between 30 and 36 hours	36%	32.5
Between 40 and 44 hours	28%	43

Source: Catling et al, 2002

While the overall geography scheme of work in a primary school generally provides an effective outline through its units of the content and structure of what to teach, in the large majority of schools the organisation of the teaching of a unit and its sequence of geography lessons is left to the discretion of individual teachers. Again, the literacy and numeracy strategies have had an impact through extending the practice of setting out explicit learning objectives and planned outcomes for geography lessons. Very few schools use pre-planned lesson materials, though some teachers in some schools draw on such publications and on web sites for lesson plans and ideas for activities. The national literacy and numeracy strategy

has also begun to have an effect on the style of geography lessons, which increasingly have introductory, group/individual work elements and plenary sections, a pattern that appears to be developing across schools for lessons in many subjects (Ofsted, 2002b, 2002c). The literacy and numeracy strategies are seen to be supportive for geographical work that uses information texts and in linking mathematical understanding and skills to such areas as mapwork and data handling.

There remain significant issues in the assessment of pupils' geographical learning, not least encouraged by the lack of any requirement to report pupil achievements against the geography attainment targets (QCA, 2003). While in some primary schools subject leaders create portfolios of children's work for moderation use, as Ofsted note, the monitoring, assessment and recording of progress and achievement in geography is very limited (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b). With the blocking of geography teaching and term-long or more gaps between geography blocked units in many primary school curricula, the lack of opportunity to use assessment information in planning inhibits effective progression for pupils, in a situation which already leads to lessening of geographical learning (Ofsted, 2001b).

Not only the assessment of geography, but the patterning of geography teaching through the year requires thoughtful consideration. Two-thirds of schools teach geography in blocked periods of time, often for historical reasons, though some one-third of schools argue that it is the only way to provide time for more detailed studies in geography. About a quarter of subject leaders contend that this approach supports pupils' learning more cohesively, giving concentrated time for studies. While there may be some merit in this argument in terms of substantial amounts of time for high quality geographical enquiries (Ofsted, 2002b, 2003b), it nonetheless needs to be substantiated, since the evidence to support it is weak and the curriculum patterns of schools fail to make a consistent case for it. For example, if it is appropriate to teach English and maths daily and to teach PE, music and art weekly, why does it appear that it for geography – and history – it is acceptable to teach them at half-termly or termly intervals in so many schools, creating a distinctly unhelpful break in pupils' geographical learning? Such an approach and attitude to learning and achievement seems more to be a remnant from the days of topic work rather than a reflection of the learning needs of children in geography – and history (DES, 1978, 1989).

There is evidence of a revival taking place in the linking of curriculum subjects, supporting developments being encouraged by QCA and Ofsted (DfES, 2003; QCA/DfES, 2002; Ofsted, 2002d). It appears that these are being put in place more thoughtfully and appropriately than they were in the past (DES, 1989; Ofsted, 2002d). While more than half of schools are making progress in using thinking skills in geography lessons, less than half of schools have undertaken any developments relating citizenship and PSHE to geography; this is a missed opportunity given the environmental and decision-making aspects of both primary geography and citizenship, which are clearly reinforced in the citizenship national curriculum guidance (DfEE/QCA, 1999b; DfES/QCA, 2002).

The use of a variety of resources and support materials

Effectively, the QCA geography scheme of work (DfEE/QCA, 1998, 2000) is the only resource used by geography subject leaders to support the planning of the geography curriculum in the majority of schools. Other QCA materials are little known, as are many other publications to support teachers in relation to geography. But the journal *Primary Geographer* was used in half the schools in the monitoring study – a figure more than twice as high as that indicated by the number of primary

schools/teachers that subscribe to it through the Geographical Association – and the Geographical Association's *Handbook for Primary Geography* (Carter, 1998) is known to subject leaders in one-third of schools. It would seem that these two key publications serve a clear need usefully, but that they need to become still more widely known.

Primary schools are using a variety of resources for teaching geography. Almost all schools use aerial photographs and maps, quite often linked to locality studies. The local environment in and around school is a resource for work across geography but especially for local area studies. Ofsted note that there is increasing use of the local area and that the use of the QCA units that involve local studies and fieldwork have had a beneficial effect (Ofsted, 2003b). Many schools visit other UK localities for fieldwork, often, but not exclusively, on a school journey for older primary pupils. Locality packs support the study of less economically developed country localities in over half the schools. Indeed, the study of distant places is seen as a relative strength by Ofsted (2000b, 2001b). Links with local community groups exist and are used, for example in environmental studies, by about half of schools. Across schools a wide variety of secondary resources are employed. However, Ofsted also note that too often teachers rely on worksheets (Ofsted, 2003b), many of a pre-prepared nature, and that this inhibits rather than enhances effective learning.

Developments in ICT and geography are valued by geography subject leaders, and Ofsted see a limited but slow improvement in the use of ICT in geography teaching, now in about 20% of primary schools (Ofsted, 2002b, 2003b). ICT is seen by subject leaders both to support geography through access to useful resources and to provide opportunities to extend geographical learning through the development of pupils' skills. CD-roms are the most fully used resource, but the use of web sites is developing. Digital cameras are increasingly used with links to school grounds, local study and other fieldwork activities in geography. All schools use video materials. There is a clear link to the use of computer hardware and software to increased teacher confidence in handling these resources (Ofsted, 2002, 2003)

The role and impact of geography subject leaders

There were geography subject leaders in all the schools in the monitoring study, almost all of them holding other subject or school responsibilities. Ofsted reports that in a very small number of schools a geography subject leader is lacking (Ofsted, 2003b), a situation which appears worryingly to be on the increase. More than half of the subject leaders had either a degree or teaching certificate in geography or a related subject, as either a major or minor component, but almost all were among the more experience geography subject leaders. More than half of the subject leaders were in their first or second year in post, and most of these were not geography specialists. This indicates a worrying trend. Many of the more experienced subject leaders had taken on the role between the mid- and late-1990s; only one subject leader's post pre-dated the introduction of national curriculum geography. Less than 20% were responsible for only geography; almost half were responsible for one other subject, and a third held three or four subject and school responsibilities. In subject terms, only a quarter held joint geography and history leadership roles, while other main combinations included maths, PE and RE. Subject leaders felt there were conflicts of interest in their responsibilities and that geography usually ended up as the lowest of their priorities, particularly when they had core subject, ICT and school responsibilities.

Many of the geography subject leaders are concerned at the limited impact they have on geography teaching in their school. One third of them have some designated time

for their role and just over half of them have a budget responsibility, but there is clearly an inconsistency of approach to the role of subject leader across schools. Though there have been INSET opportunities for geography subject leaders in most schools, focused mainly through LEAs on implementing the revised geography programmes of study, this is not seen as other than rather limited support by the subject leaders. The issue of ineffectiveness is also indicated in the lack of INSET opportunities that the geography subject leaders can provide for colleagues in their schools. It seems that geography INSET is at best irregular and at worst rare to non-existent; in other words, it is negligible and not a priority in primary schools.

Ofsted reinforce this set of concerns, seeing only a quarter of geography subject leaders as of good quality, managing and developing geography well, providing for clear progression for pupils and maintaining and enriching standards (Ofsted, 2000b, 2001b, 2002b). Earlier Ofsted reports associated improvements in primary geography with subject leaders having attended an extended geography INSET programme (Ofsted, 1999a, 1999b). Such programmes ceased after 1997/98, with the GEST funds available for them diverted by the government to support the literacy and numeracy strategies, then ICT developments. It is, therefore, not surprising that there has been little opportunity for very many geography subject leaders to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject and its management. Inevitably, this has had an impact on the development of primary geography, particularly since other priorities have demanded very much, if not all, of primary teachers' time, focus and energy in the past four to five years. In view of the majority of geography subject leaders being in their first two years and not geography specialists, this lack of in-service support and development raises serious concerns for the continuing development of geography effectively in primary schools.

PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY: LEARNING AND TEACHING

Ofsted geography reports focus on pupils' learning and the quality of teaching in primary geography. An examination of both the Chief HMI's Annual Reports (Ofsted, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 2000a, 2001a, 2002a, 2003a) and of the primary geography subject reports (Ofsted, 1999b, 2000b, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b) indicates some trends in these two foci of inspections. In their reports, Ofsted provide somewhat bald statistics, which in themselves are not particularly informative. While the Chief HMI's reports have little (bar critical comments) to say about geography, the subject reports are clearly more helpful, but even they provide indicative information rather than detailed insights. Their points are made through selective illustrations of good practice or about indicative matters of concern.

For geographical learning, identifying trends is not entirely straightforward, since until 1999 the focus of Ofsted inspections was on pupils' progress, and since 2000 it has been on pupils' achievements. However, two trends can be discerned. One is that there has been a slow but steady, if unremarkable, improvement in good quality learning in geography (see: Figure 5.1). However, there is negligible excellent achievement by pupils in primary geography in both key stages (for example, see Figure 1). The other is that while the very small but not insignificant percentage of pupils' whose achievement in learning was unsatisfactory was gradually reduced until the end of the 1990s, it then increased marginally and has remained steady. The overall picture for the period 1996-2002 is that the amount of satisfactory to excellent pupil learning in geography has slipped up and down but in the end it is hardly changed, at 89% in 1996/97 and 88% in 2001/02. During this period the amount of good progress and achievement by pupils has only increased from 19% to 22%, a very small rise, while the amount of excellent learning has remained static at 1% over

the past three years. This is a less dramatic improvement than in almost all other subjects (see Figure 6.1); for example, ICT, RE and Design & Technology, which exhibited 20% or less of pupil learning in their subjects as excellent or good in 1996/97, have moved well ahead of geography across key stages 1 and 2. There is some evidence that pupils' learning and achievement in geography is a little higher in key stage 1 than in key stage 2, but the difference is not significant.

Figure 5: trends in pupils' achievements and in teaching in primary geography 1996/97 to 2001/02

5.1 Standards in Pupil Progress and Achievement: Overall Key stages 1 and 2 Summary

Ofsted judgements	Pupils' Achievements			Pupils' Progress		
	2001/2002	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
Excellent (Very Good)/Good	23%	22%	18%	21%	19%	20%
Satisfactory	65%	64%	70%	71%	71%	69%
Unsatisfactory/Poor	12%	14%	12%	8%	10%	11%

5.2 Quality of Teaching: Overall Key stages 1 and 2 Summary

Ofsted judgements	The Quality of Teaching					
	2001/2002	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
Excellent (Very Good)/Good	36%	38%	39%	36%	35%	31%
Satisfactory	58%	56%	55%	60%	60%	62%
Unsatisfactory/Poor	6%	6%	6%	4%	5%	7%

A similar set of trends can be detected in the quality of teaching, as judged by Ofsted inspectors (see: Figure 5.2). Overall there has been little change to the amount of satisfactory to excellent teaching during this period, though there was a slight increase followed by a minor reduction. Satisfactory to excellent teaching of geography was at 93% in 1996/97 and at 94% in 2001/02. There has, however, been a steady, if slow, improvement in the amount of good teaching in geography, rising from 30% to 35% in this period, while there have been some rather stronger improvements in other primary curriculum subjects (see Figure 6.2). Again, in ICT, RE and Design & Technology there have been much stronger improvements in standards of teaching than in geography. The more detailed figures show that excellent teaching is very low at 3% and has not improved in the past three years. Until the end of the 1990s there was a gradual reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching – this dropped as low as 4% by 1998/99 – but it has moved back to the situation of the mid-1990s since 1999/2000 and at 6% seems static. In geography teaching there is a slight but very small difference indicating slightly better quality teaching in key stage 1 compared to key stage 2.

It is noticeable that the data for satisfactory to excellent progress and achievement in pupils' learning is lower than that for the satisfactory to excellent quality of geography teaching (compare figure 5.1 and 5.2). Perhaps this is not surprising, and it is consistent, indicating that good and better quality teaching is needed to develop pupils' good to excellent geographical learning but that school and pupil contexts can mean that not always is pupils' learning incrementally at the same quality level. This is a pattern that is apparent in other primary curriculum subjects (compare Figures

6.1 and 6.2). However, Ofsted (2001b, 2002b, 2003b) makes the point that primary teachers have relatively low expectations, compared to most other subjects, of pupils in geography. Geography is at the bottom of the subject 'league table' nationally for good and excellent pupil achievement and for good and excellent teaching (Ofsted, 2003b). Indeed, geography has received lower judgements than all the other primary curriculum subjects about its level of good and excellent pupil achievement and teaching by at least 4-6% points in both key stages in recent years.

Figure 6: Standards in pupil achievement and in geography teaching across the primary curriculum 1996/97 to 2001/02

6.1 Excellent/Good Pupil Progress and Achievement in Geography: Key stages 1 and 2 Summary

Primary curriculum subjects	The amount of Excellent (Very good)/Good Pupil Progress/Achievement: KS1/2					
	Pupils' achievement			Pupils' progress		
	2001/2002	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
Art	42%	38%	36%	37%	32%	33%
Design & Technology	29%	26%	21%	19%	19%	20%
English	53%	51%	42%	47%	35%	33%
<i>Geography</i>	23%	22%	18%	21%	19%	20%
History	31%	30%	24%	29%	26%	26%
ICT	38%	30%	21%	22%	17%	17%
Maths	54%	51%	44%	47%	34%	29%
Music	40%	36%	34%	36%	32%	33%
PE	36%	33%	32%	31%	28%	30%
RE	32%	31%	23%	26%	21%	20%
Science	50%	47%	40%	43%	35%	33%

6.2 Excellent/Good Geography Teaching: Key stages 1 and 2 Summary

Primary curriculum subjects	Amount of Excellent (Very good)/Good Teaching: KS1/2					
	2001/2002	2000/2001	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
Art	52%	51%	48%	47%	44%	39%
Design & Technology	41%	43%	38%	34%	34%	29%
English	66%	69%	66%	63%	53%	44%
<i>Geography</i>	36%	38%	39%	36%	35%	31%
History	46%	48%	45%	44%	43%	38%
ICT	52%	47%	38%	31%	22%	19%
Maths	66%	68%	65%	59%	52%	42%
Music	55%	54%	51%	49%	48%	43%
PE	51%	51%	49%	46%	46%	41%
RE	44%	48%	42%	41%	37%	32%
Science	60%	61%	56%	54%	49%	43%

Source: Ofsted 1998a, 1999a, 2000a, 2001a, 2002a, 2003a

What reasons might there be for these trends? Ofsted reports are not precise in attributing cause and effect, and, indeed, the methodology of their inspection regime does not provide for direct comparisons since too little information is available. However, a consideration of the wider picture may provide some possible links.

A number of possible reasons can be put forward. They are drawn from the commentaries in the recent and some earlier Ofsted primary geography subject reports.

- One reason may be the reduction in teaching time for geography, following the suspension of the Geography Order in 1998/99 and the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies in 1998/99 and 1999/2000. That lost teaching time has not been retrieved in many primary schools (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b), inhibiting opportunities to provide effective learning time for many pupils.
- As teacher confidence and experience developed from the early to late 1990s the impact on children's learning was slowly moving forward, but the loss of some teaching time in the late 1990s meant that teachers have not been able to consolidate their understanding by making further progress using well developed and improving, enquiry-based teaching strategies in many schools, an approach that enables and supports high quality pupil learning.
- It seems likely that the second year of the suspension of the geography programmes of study in 1999/2000 to increase time for the teaching of numeracy as well as literacy, with a further reduction of teaching time for geography (Ofsted, 2001b), had a significant impact on both pupils' learning and on the quality of geography teaching, since it is in this year that there was a fifty percent rise in unsatisfactory pupil achievement and in teaching as well as a drop in good to excellent pupil achievement – though it is since 2000/01 that good and better quality teaching has tailed off (Ofsted, 2001a, 2002a, 2003a), perhaps indicating that the struggle to maintain teaching improvement is not being won where there is still limited time.
- Limited time for geography teaching appears to have had led, if not to an increase, at least to no effective diminution in the use of low level teaching activities with pupils in geography, where an overdose of worksheets and colouring activities still appear to inhibit full and active engagement in stimulating tasks (Ofsted 2002b, 2003b). In effect, too often a limited variety of teaching strategies and activities is used.
- This situation may well be exacerbated by the reduction in resource up-dating and development in many schools (Ofsted, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b), because of the increased allocation of resources to literacy and numeracy development, even though this was funded additionally.
- The withdrawal of support for geography at school and subject leader level by government, and to a lesser extent by many local education authorities since 1997/98, may well have contributed to the weaker position of the subject in many schools and its resultant low priority in school development plans and for staff development. If there is a lack of opportunity for development in a subject it is surprising that quality is not enhanced and may drop back.
- It seems that geography is often led by subject leaders who are at an early stage in their teaching career, many of whom may well now not be geography specialists, and who receive little support either within or from outside school. Frequently, they have other subject responsibilities too, which are often seen to have a higher priority. In a very few but increasing number of cases, schools have left geography subject leader posts unfilled (Ofsted, 2003b). In other cases, geography subject leaders move on rapidly to alternative subject responsibilities. They do not find it easy to support colleagues, since they are given little direct support themselves. Inevitably, there is little opportunity in such circumstances for geography teaching to be supported and developed effectively, with a consequent impact on teachers and pupils.
- What Ofsted perceives as pupil underachievement in geography, certainly in comparison to the core and other subjects (Ofsted, 2000a, 2001a, 2002a,

2003a), is identified as related to teachers' limited expectations of pupils in their geographical studies. That tasks in much geography that is inspected are not seen to be challenging is viewed as reflecting low expectations by teachers, not necessarily the lack of teaching time, pupil potential, available resources or teacher capability. But limited encouragement and little opportunity to consider and see what pupils can achieve, as well as little if any chance to extend the range of teaching strategies and activities for geography, will inhibit rather than offer teachers a better sense of the higher expectations in geography that they could have.

In effect, primary geography seems to have reached a plateau, unable at present to break out of being a perfectly 'satisfactorily taught' subject, apparently offering only limited challenges to pupils. It is rare to find very high quality teaching in the subject, though more than a third is good teaching; and this is more the case in relation to good and excellent pupil achievement in primary geography. Much geography teaching is perfectly sound and competent. Indeed, geography is by no means the weakest subject overall in the primary curriculum, but for many children it is not the most exciting. Perhaps it could be.

ASPECTS OF GOOD TEACHING IN PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY

The primary geography reports produced by Ofsted in recent years (Ofsted, 1999b, 2000b, 2001b, 2002b, 2003b), commend aspects of high quality teaching in geography. Ofsted reports do not set out to identify the characteristics of good quality teaching *per se*. Rather, they seek, in the subject reports, to provide exemplars of high quality work to illustrate what can be achieved. The reports also provide an insight into the contexts in which good teaching takes place.

In the report on the teaching of geography and history published as the national curriculum was introduced (DES, 1989), HMI set out what they identified to be the characteristics of good humanities teaching. From an examination of recent Ofsted reports it is possible to outline some of the characteristics of good and excellent teaching that primary schools have exhibited, as well as to acknowledge some of the contextual elements that are influential. Identifying these is an important aspect of being able to indicate the basis for improvement and progression in primary geography.

The importance of good quality teaching was indicated by the pupils' comments in Pollard and Tagg's (2000) study. A key factor for pupils was the teacher's ability to connect their experience with their geographical studies, making the subject 'interesting'. This is reinforced in Ofsted's findings, with the connection to real and topical local issues (Ofsted, 2003b). Motivation, task orientation and challenging activities, within a high quality scheme of work, are also qualities identified by Ofsted in their study of successful primary schools (Ofsted, 2002d).

Characteristics of excellent and good geography teaching

Ofsted identify a number of *characteristics* of good and excellent primary geography teaching. Particularly, these would seem to relate to teacher's perspectives and to effective short-term planning and teaching.

Teachers who:

- are clear about the subject knowledge needed for a particular unit of study, thus increasing their confidence to teach the topic;

- appreciate the particular focus and key ideas and understanding to develop in a geography topic, and know how to guide pupils to examine and research appropriately;
- hold high expectations of pupils.

Short-term [lesson] planning and teaching involves:

- well defined learning objectives;
- activities that are suitably selected to develop learning objectives to meet stated expected outcomes;
- clearly planned sequences of activities in lessons;
- the use of a variety of teaching methods and activities in lessons;
- appropriate differentiation for pupils in relation to their needs for learning;
- the use of creative and imaginative approaches to teaching geography;
- ensuring that the tasks are challenging;
- the use of good quality questioning;
- the development of higher-level enquiry skills;
- discussion and debate as valued teaching approaches;
- providing a variety of types of resource for pupils to use;
- undertaking practical activities and problems that are linked to topical, relevant and real issues which stimulate, motivate and engage pupils;
- encouraging pupils to extend their use of vocabulary effectively and to use specialist terms with increasing accuracy;
- the development of analytic skills, and enabling pupils to make reasoned evaluations and judgements about matters they have studied; and,
- building in effective formative assessment leading to speedy responses to pupils' needs in geographical learning.

The context of excellent and good geography teaching

It is possible from the Ofsted reports to identify *contexts* that support effective teaching. These include the attitude within the school to each subject, effective medium and long term planning, resource provision and subject leadership.

The primary school must ensure that:

- geography has its fair share of curriculum time;
- geography has a secure place and is well established in the school curriculum.

Medium [Unit of Work] and long-term [Scheme of Work] planning involves:

- careful planning for the development of pupils' geographical knowledge, understanding and skills within a Unit and throughout a Scheme;
- planning for coherence and progression across the year groups through the Scheme;
- planning for assessment in each Unit and across the geography Scheme;
- building enquiry-based approaches cumulatively and progressively on pupils' previous learning;
- providing the time for pupils to develop independent research skills and to follow up lines of investigation and personal interest;
- using the local area of the school, visits further afield and school journeys to develop fieldwork skills, these being planned for consistently throughout the school;
- drawing on topical and real issues to develop geographical learning;
- encouraging pupils to make links between and synthesise information in order to understand key ideas and the particular examples, and enabling them to make comparisons and draw out similarities and contrasts;
- giving pupils opportunities to apply what they have learnt in new contexts;

- supporting, through the planning and teaching of geography, the development of essential literacy and numeracy skills.

The provision of resources requires that:

- there is an appropriate range of resources available for all geography teaching;
- good and consistent use is made of the school's grounds and of the local area around the school;
- ICT is used to motivate pupils and to enhance their opportunities to gain access to information and viewpoints, and in which they use both generic packages and specific data sources and web sites.

The leadership of primary geography requires that:

- there is good management of geography throughout the school;
- the geography scheme of work for the school is well planned and detailed;
- planning for progressive learning objectives exists and is monitored throughout the school;
- the geography Scheme is applied consistently throughout the school;
- geography planning and teaching is monitored and reviewed regularly;
- the subject leader works with colleagues;
- the subject leader examines pupils' work at the end of units and relates the outcomes to a portfolio of pupils' work for moderation of standards;
- the subject leader maintains effective links with relevant subject associations to develop her/his own subject knowledge and understanding;
- the subject leader advises colleagues on their classroom teaching and provides individual support.

Figure 7: Teaching quality in primary geography: a comparison of the late 1980s with 2001/02

HMI/Ofsted judgements	Late-1980s	2001/02
Excellent/Good		35%
Satisfactory	25%	59%
Unsatisfactory/Poor	75%	6%

Source: DES, 1989; Ofsted, 2003a

Naturally, many of the characteristics and contexts of good geography teaching noted in the late 1980s are reflected in the qualities of successful geography teaching found in schools today. What is more secure, though, is that there is more good and excellent geography teaching in primary schools in 2001/02 than there was of even satisfactory geography teaching in primary schools in the 1980s (Figure 7). It may be the case that Ofsted considers geography to be the least strong of the primary curriculum subjects in terms of high quality teaching and learning by several percentage points (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2), but, as for other foundation subjects, this need not be seen negatively. In recent years, the geography national curriculum has extended the access for primary pupils to good practice in primary geography, albeit slowly. Nevertheless, high quality teaching and learning needs to be much more widely extended.

CONCLUSION

There is much that could be drawn from the foregoing account and analysis of the state of primary geography. In conclusion, four significant points only are highlighted.

The introduction of National Curriculum Geography in 1991 has led to a much improved situation in the provision for and teaching of geography in primary schools, notwithstanding current concerns for greater improvement. Not only is geography a more secure and distinct part of the primary curriculum, the quality of pupil learning and achievement and of geography teaching is very much improved compared to the situation prior to the introduction of the key stage 1 and 2 programmes of study. There is more good quality geography teaching now than there was satisfactory geography teaching then. A plateau may have been reached, but there is a firm foundation for greater improvement.

However, the status of geography continues to be modest, as is the standing of the other foundation subjects, but there may be some indications of renewed interest in developing geography in many primary schools (Catling et al, 2002; Ofsted, 2003b). External projects focusing across key stages 1 to 3 that include geography, such as the curriculum development project for geography and history (QCA, 2003) and the creativity project (QCA, 2002), may well help to stimulate further renewed interest and development in improving the quality of teaching in geography.

Though much geography teaching is competent and satisfactory, there is too little that is good and excellent and which challenges children and leads to high levels of pupil achievement. There is a need for many primary schools and teachers to develop the range of teaching strategies and tasks they use to motivate pupils and to engage them with stimulating and demanding activities. In particular, these should be concerned with topical matters and real-world situations and be undertaken in practical ways. There is much that can be gleaned from current good practice which can readily be used by primary teachers who are already good at teaching the core subjects and can apply that experience and confidence to improving their geography teaching. Primary teachers will continue to need suitable guidance and support.

The teaching of primary geography appears to have suffered adversely from the suspension of the geography programmes of study between 1998 and 2000. Time lost to teaching has not yet been fully regained in many schools. Support for geography subject leaders has not been maintained. Resource needs remain unfulfilled, since funding has been diverted to resource the national literacy, numeracy and ICT strategies and not yet re-balanced towards the foundation subjects, including geography. There is no sight on the horizon of nationally funded INSET or CPD development for primary geography, and none can realistically be expected in the current climate. It is important then that geography subject leaders continue to be encouraged to develop their professional responsibilities to develop themselves and to support and guide their colleagues. It is vital that primary school headteachers are canvassed to be supportive of their geography subject leaders and to ensure that they are in place. They must also be encouraged to prioritise geography after so many years of emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Despite these limitations, there are developments that can and need to be undertaken for the state of primary geography to improve. Local education authorities, and organizations such as QCA and the Geographical Association, must continue to find ways to encourage and support some, if not all, of these areas of development. While supporting primary teachers in general, the primary need is to focus on geography subject leaders, who might then be able to take the development of teaching and learning in geography forward in their schools. In particular there is a need:

- to improve the subject leadership strategies for geography subject leaders, taking forward the criteria for good subject leadership developed by the Teacher

Training Agency (TTA, 1998) and supported by the Geographical Association (Carter, 1999);

- to provide examples of school curricula showing an effective and fair balance of time for geography teaching;
- to provide examples of well planned geography Schemes of Work, showing effective sequencing and progression;
- to provide resources and guidance to help teachers overcome weaknesses in their geographical knowledge and understanding relevant to the topics that they are teaching;
- to support teachers to be able to:
 - set challenging tasks in geography lessons,
 - use a range of effective teaching and learning strategies, including group work, discussion, plenary sessions to review learning, and self-evaluation for target setting by pupils,
 - provide pupils with the experience and approaches to complete extended geographical enquiries well, and
 - draw on a good variety of resources, including ICT, to enable pupils to undertake and complete successfully their geographical enquiries.

While there are issues to tackle, they are focussed on the improvement and development of geography teaching and learning. Broadly, there is a positive attitude to the state of geography in the primary curriculum. In only a small minority of schools is there any real sense of challenge to the future status and development of the teaching of geography. Very many geography subject leaders feel that they have the support and interest among their staff for retaining and even developing geography teaching. As one geography subject leader in the monitoring study stated, "I just want people to teach geography and be enthusiastic about it" (Catling et al, 2002).

There is a strong sense that children enjoy geographical work where it is well taught and engages them. There is a view among many subject leaders that geography is important, and, to paraphrase one subject leader, that it is a vital subject for children in a complex and challenging world, though, in the words of another subject leader, it is "one of the quiet subjects" that politicians will get not excited about (itself, a disquieting but probably accurate reflection on the value given by politicians to understanding the world in which we live, particularly in such troubled times). Though there are difficulties, a further subject leader summed up the general message that emerges from both the monitoring study and the overview of Ofsted reports, as, "Happier than I was a year ago. It is getting better." Primary geography is not without its problems, but there appears to be an optimistic sense for the immediate and medium-term future for the subject in primary schools.

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