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Improving provision in geography: Greenford High School

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Brief description

This example illustrates how resources and training can be utilised to develop teachers' subject knowledge and skills in geography. It includes links to external resources and to resources supplied by the school.

Overview – the school's message

'One of the school's most successful areas in recent years has been the continuing professional development of all members of the school community. The Leadership Team believes that a key means of improving standards of teaching and learning is through developing the skills and knowledge of all our staff, to enable their students to reach their full potential.'

Peter Mather, Training School Manager

The good practice in detail



The number of students choosing geography at Key Stage 4 in this school has increased significantly in recent years. In 2010, 93 students sat the GCSE examination; 40% of the cohort and almost double the national average. Some 80% gained A* to C passes at GCSE. And 93% of the students studying geography at A level achieved A to C grades in 2010, with many progressing to degree courses in geography.

One of the school's most successful areas in recent years has been the continuing professional development of all members of staff. Geography teachers have actively participated and have used links with the geography subject

associations, notably (in this case) the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), to enable the teachers to enhance their skills and to indulge their passion for geography.

[Chartered Geographer \(CGeog\)](#) is the only internationally recognised professional accreditation for those with competence and experience in the use of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills in the workplace. Most Chartered Geographers are not teachers, so when a teacher at this school became a Chartered Geographer in 2007, it was unusual.

Teachers in the department have also been involved in a range of activities supported by the RGS and through the [Action Plan for Geography](#). A range of other resources for Key Stage 3 is also used and are readily available to all schools, such as:

- [London 2012](#)
- [Fantastic places](#)
- [Geography in the News](#)

Most of these resources can also be obtained from the [Teaching Today](#) website.

The school also participates in the '[Geography Ambassadors](#)' scheme which recruits, trains and supports under-graduates and graduate geographers in the workplace to act as ambassadors for geography in schools. The scheme introduces younger students to the benefits of studying geography and encourages them to pursue the subject beyond Key Stage 3. The ambassadors act as positive role models for pupils and can illustrate, with enthusiasm, both the specific and transferable skills they have developed in geography. A recent ambassador to visit the school was an ex-student currently studying for a geography degree in Brighton.



In '[Why I Love Geography](#)', broadcast on [Teachers TV](#), geography ambassadors and Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the RGS are interviewed. It shows the diverse opportunities available to geography graduates.

However, what has made the link with the subject associations special is the way in which students (particularly in the examination groups at both GCSE and A level) are involved in activities run by the RGS. A-level students regularly attend lectures and revision sessions, and several have had practise interviews for Oxbridge. Two students have undertaken work experience at the Society.

Students attending revision sessions find them 'challenging' and an opportunity to 'really test each other's knowledge'. The sessions make them feel more confident and they provide a greater range of examples on which to base their examination answers. GCSE students enjoy their visits to lectures at the Society because the speakers 'bring geography to life'. They say that their interest is stimulated because 'they've all got stories to tell' and 'they're all passionate about geography'.

Recently, Year 11 students attended a lecture by Michael Wood, '[In the footsteps of Alexander the Great](#)' and met Michael Palin, the President of the RGS, when he spoke about,



'Orissa: temples and tribes'. Through these lectures, students not only develop their love of geography but also make connections with other subjects such as science, history and religious education.

Another area where professional development has been used successfully has been to improve the controlled assessment outcomes for GCSE students. With the advent of a new GCSE syllabus in September 2009, the department made a

successful bid to part-fund a four-day GCSE residential at the [Field Study Council \(FSC\)](#), [Slapton Ley Centre](#) in Devon. While there, students completed the majority of the 20 hours needed for the controlled assessment using a [checklist](#) and a [guidance document](#) provided by the school. For many of the students it was a completely new experience and their first visit to the countryside. Some said:

'It's been a really enjoyable experience, being out in the river brought all the class work we've done in geography to life.'

'I've never seen the sea before; it was so blue, I'm really glad we went on the trip.'

'The teachers at the centre were so helpful and showed us exactly what the examiner would be looking for; it made writing the controlled assessment so much easier especially because we wrote about the fieldwork we had just been doing!'

The FSC also provides in-service training linked to [GCSE controlled assessments](#). The Key Stage 4 leader attended in-service training provided by the examination board and by the FSC. This training enabled the teacher to lead moderation of the controlled assessment with the rest of the staff. As a result, the teachers became more familiar with the new coursework requirement of the GCSE. They moderated and marked the work together and were involved in an in-depth discussion about the outcomes. Moderation was used as a training session to identify how the controlled assessment experience could be improved and developed to ensure even better outcomes for students. All the staff in the department attended, including support staff. They received professional development covering the controlled assessment to ensure that they were confident in working with the students on the residential visit. This has resulted in a better experience for students with more focused outcomes for the controlled assessment and improved results for this aspect of the GCSE course.

Outcomes for students

- [2010 – Examples of students' work](#)
- [2011 – Examples of students' work](#)

The school's background

Greenford High School is a multi-cultural comprehensive foundation school situated in Ealing on the western outskirts of London. It is a Business, Enterprise and Language College, and is housed in new buildings which were opened in 2007. The school is also a recognised 'Training and Leading Edge' School.



Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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