

# GA networks

## Setting up a GA Branch

A few years ago, the geography department at Bourne Grammar School in Lincolnshire were wondering what geography looked like in other schools: What were the students learning? How were they learning it? What had an impact on their grades? What could the Bourne Grammar team learn from other geography educators? Here, **Aidan Hesslewood** describes how they decided to set up GeoLincs, a new network for geography teachers, and gives some advice for anyone thinking of doing the same.

A few years ago we felt we were in a strange position here in South Lincolnshire: while teachers in other areas of the UK had lots of opportunities to get together (through GA Branches, RGS-IBG networks and the like), we had few. The nearest group focused on more general evening lectures, but what we wanted was a participatory network, where teachers and other geography educators could get together to share teaching and learning ideas, and discuss the issues of importance to them. As most people have commitments outside of work, we felt it was important to be able to run the network during school hours. This meant we had to make sure that the quality of the CPD we were going to provide was truly excellent in order to legitimise having time off!

Our first steps were to create a name (GeoLincs) and a website, and we had to speak to the school leadership team to ensure we could have the time and a venue for our meetings. They were supportive, and even offered some advice – after all, it was raising the profile of the school. We found many of our first speakers through the GA Annual Conference, but we were also keen to ensure that we included colleagues from schools in our area, as the best people to learn from are other geography teachers – they don't always need to be big names on the CPD circuit!



Photo: Bryan Ledgard

Becoming a GA Branch was much easier than we expected. The GA has done away with the old application system and now requires much less information in order for a group to become affiliated to the national organisation. We are in charge of all the group's financial matters, including whether or not we charge any fees (great for us, as we were determined to be able to provide free CPD). The only real stipulation is that you must ensure that at least four members of the group are national GA members. This will entitle you to claim an annual Branch Subvention amount, and the more national members you have, the more you are able to claim – great to help pay for refreshments and the like.

Getting the word out there can be difficult. We phoned lots of local schools before realising that if you're setting up a new Branch, the GA can help put you in contact with members in your area. We were pleasantly surprised how many people wanted to be involved though, and we now have around 30 people on our mailing list.

So far, we have met for three CPD afternoons which have included sessions varying from classic lectures to more interactive

carousel-style workshops. Our main emphasis is to ensure there are always practical ideas to take away. Between the meetings we discuss ideas and opinions via email, and share resources via the group's Dropbox.

Our future plans include setting up a series of GeoLincs evening lectures which will support students with A level topics and (hopefully) encourage them to continue studying geography at university. Watch this space!



**Get involved**

If you want to make a positive impact on geography education in your region and start up a network or branch find out more at [www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/branches](http://www.geography.org.uk/getinvolved/branches)

To find out more about GeoLincs contact Aidan [Aidan.hesslewood@bourne-grammar.lincs.sch.uk](mailto:Aidan.hesslewood@bourne-grammar.lincs.sch.uk)

