

# Quality Marks

## PGQM – Prepare for impact

**Jon Cannell**, the GA's Primary Curriculum Leader describes the impact of the Primary Geography Quality Mark and provides some feedback from PGQM holders about their experiences.

'Impact', 'inspire', 'engage' are words that are used frequently in conversation about 'high quality learning'. However it is important to state that, whatever the buzz word, it can only be achieved consistently if school communities 'prepare' rigorously and plan for high quality learning to take place.

The GA rewards and promotes high quality geography through the prestigious Primary Geography Quality Mark (PGQM) (Figure 1). This award is highly valued by school leaders nationally as it recognises quality and progress in geography leadership; curriculum development and the learning and teaching taking place in schools.

The process has been carefully refined over many years to not only recognise and celebrate high quality geography, but importantly to stimulate it. The PGQM works as a collaborative professional review process where a rigorous self-assessment framework (Figure 2) enables schools to gather together evidence of their successes and submit a portfolio of evidence. This provides an analytical and reflective focus on four different elements that underpin sound educational practice. The GA's team of national experts support the process, assess and moderate the evidence and provide advice for future developments.

In 2016-17 over 90 schools registered for the award and below are the reflections on the process from some of the subject leaders:

**Lauren Heald, Higher Openshaw Community School, Manchester an RQT who took up the role towards the end of her NQT year. Silver Award 2016–17.**

The PGQM process has been a starting foundation for us as a school, highlighting many areas of strength in addition to areas needing to be improved in order to progress further.

After reading through the PGQM requirements my first priority was to raise the profile of geography in my school. As the profile of geography has been raised I have seen an increase in teachers discussing and sharing their ideas and learning strategies in and across school.

Many teachers feel over-worked, undervalued and that their efforts and



Figure 1: Primary Geography Quality Mark

Section	Evidence	Example of key indicator
<b>A</b> – Achievement and outcomes for pupils	How well do learners achieve in and enjoy the subject?	Pupils have good knowledge, appropriate for their age, of where places are and what they look like.
<b>T</b> - Teaching, learning and assessment	How effective is the teaching of geography in your school?	Teaching is underpinned by good subject knowledge.
<b>P</b> - Personal development and well-being	How well does geography support behaviour and relationships?	Geographical skills promote a better understanding of difference and diversity.
<b>L</b> - Leadership and management	How well is the subject led and managed?	There is a 'vision' for geography that is helping to shape the way the subject is taught.

Figure 2: Self assessment framework

commitment often go unrecognised. However, taking part in the PGQM has brought awareness, recognition, value and purpose back to our teachers' reflections around the subject. It has enabled them to take credit and feel proud about their understanding and teaching of geography whilst being supported and managed should they have any concerns.

Overall, I would say that the Quality Mark process has had a significant impact on the leadership of the subject, which has subsequently impacted upon teaching and learning; engagement in geography; assessment for learning and also, to a certain extent, behaviour. The clear guidance provided has enabled me as Geography Co-ordinator to structure an action plan that is designed to be

practical and effective. It has enabled teachers to see past our forest school status as a sole means to meeting geography provision and to bring it back to life in the classroom and within our teaching again.

**Dean Scott, St Luke's CEVA Primary and Nursery School, London. Silver Award 2016–17.**

The PGQM allowed our staff to review and discuss why we do things the way we do and possible alternatives to achieving our goals. I feel it has given me 'license' to take time away from the daily pressures of teaching and really think about my subject; to look at new areas and consider examples of good practice; to question and review processes within the

school and to think about monitoring and what we want it to achieve.

One of the main impacts of this is that we are more organised both at a resourcing level and a curriculum/expectations level. It has also helped to 'unlock' some of the latent skills that our staff have and use those to help enhance the teaching and learning that takes place. Our year 2 teacher, for example, has travelled extensively and is being encouraged to share those experiences, photos and resources to bring alive her geography teaching. The children now view many more places as relevant and less in the abstract, which in turn has meant greater engagement, heightened curiosity and intrinsic motivation to further their learning.

It has also helped me to plan how the geography curriculum will fit into our new topic based system, and given me time to really explore links between geography and other subjects to ensure that learning is seamlessly intertwined, giving our pupils a better grounding for real life. For example, year 5 children take part in 'The awesome mystery of the Princes in the Tower' which was solely taught as a history topic but through my PGQM review has now been broadened to include using O/S maps and 4/6 figure grid references to locate historic battle sites or places of interest and then plotting these across the modern counties of England.

### **Chantelle Duberry at Colegrave Primary School, Newham. Silver Award 2016–17.**

By completing the PGQM action plan in the early part of the autumn term, I was able to identify that as a school we needed to improve the children's knowledge of places around the world and current affairs. Each month I created a competition to interest the children and enhance such knowledge. For children in KS1, I focused primarily on capital cities and the names of countries on maps. While children in KS2 were asked to research and understand current world events such as: the impact of Hurricane Matthew on the islands in the Caribbean and countries in South America, the conflict in Syria and the election in the United States. I feel that throughout the year, the competitions created a real buzz about the subject and allowed the children to become more aware of the world they live in.

The PGQM process also had an impact on how we framed our next steps; they are now linked to three of the main aspects of the primary geography curriculum (map skills, locational knowledge and fieldwork) as well as to Bloom's Taxonomy of questioning so that children are challenged to think critically about their topics.



*Lyndhurst Infant School, Worthing, PGQM Gold Award 2016*

### **Sandie Taylor, a part time teacher and subject leader at St Lewis Catholic Primary School, Warrington. Bronze Award 2016–17.**

The PGQM provided a framework for my subject review, which included: book monitoring; pupil and teacher questionnaires; displays and learning walks. It also made it easier to share the purposeful and relevant nature of the monitoring that I was going to be focusing on throughout the academic year. As a result we are definitely better at evidencing the good practice that takes place in our classrooms.

Through the raised profile that the PGQM provides, teachers prioritise geography more and use different teaching strategies and resources to enhance their lessons. They have gained in confidence when using their own anecdotal knowledge such as holiday experiences and hobbies. It is evident that the children are enjoying their geography lessons more, especially when there is a shared connection to them and this has an impact on their lives.

It has ignited our focus on 'Outdoor Learning' with teachers now regularly planning a variety of lessons to take place outside using our wonderful grounds. Delighted with their enthusiasm, I monitored Y3 children engaging in their local setting through building scaled-down huts/houses from natural resources from our Nature Trail.

I started the process in September 2016 with a visit from a GA consultant, Jon Cannell, which was an extremely useful meeting that facilitated discussions around the whole application process. On a personal level I have developed confidence in my own leadership skills through the acquisition of management strategies and I strongly believe that this is just the beginning of a journey to outstanding geography learning!

### **Jessica Hill, Geography leader and Assistant Head Teacher, Alwoodley Primary School, Leeds. Gold Award 2016–17.**

Our school first applied for the bronze award in 2013. The purpose of our first application was for us to gain a solid grasp on where we were as a school. By the nature of the time frame given to this process, I felt by the end of it that we were already scratching into the silver level. Having the action plan to hand meant that as we moved through the year, I was continually gaining inspiration about how to drive the subject forward into the next level.

For the following years, the PGQM action plan was never far out of sight. It became a working document which fed into the SDP and helped me, as a leader, to drive my vision for the subject forward. As a result, geography in our school has continued to flourish.

This year we decided to revalidate our quality mark and knowing the PGQM action plan had underpinned our previous years' work, we felt confident in making the leap for gold.

The process came naturally. Moving from one level to another means that a coordinator has to know their school curriculum inside out. When it came to gathering evidence I could be very specific in my requests for each year group because I had a solid understanding of what was happening, how it was happening and where it was happening in school. In summary, the process has equipped me with insight across the school. The greatest challenge came in selecting which pieces of evidence we could leave out. By the time the submission was collated and shared with SLT, we really felt that the portfolio celebrated the vision of our school – it tells a story and one which we feel could be shared with a variety of stakeholders. If someone came into our school and wanted to know what outstanding teaching and learning in geography looks like, we feel they would gain the answers from looking at the portfolio. The benefit of this is that it captures the voice of teachers, pupils, parents and SLT so a well-rounded picture has been painted.

Go to the [www.geography.org.uk](http://www.geography.org.uk) for more details on how to apply for a PGQM. The deadline for registration is **31 October** each year and the deadline for the final submission of evidence is the **end of May** each year.