

# Education inspection framework 2019: inspecting the substance of education

The Geographical Association's response (April 2019)

## Proposal 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to introduce a 'quality of education' judgement?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The [Geographical Association](http://www.geography.org.uk) (GA), the subject association for teachers of geography, supports the introduction of a new 'quality of education' judgment. Since part of Ofsted's strategic mission is to be a force for improvement in education, it also **urges Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to ensure that:**

- inspectors are sufficiently well trained to reach an informed judgement about the quality of the geography curriculum, including aspects of curriculum implementation such as good subject knowledge. This is, unfortunately, something too few inspectors are currently trained to do;
- inspectors take account of the school's context and that of its learners in reaching judgements, so that schools serving socially and economically deprived communities receive the same recognition for their achievements as schools in affluent areas;
- Ofsted analyses the national picture of subject specialism and plays its role in identifying the issues, rather than limit its work to judging individual teachers for lacking the requisite subject knowledge or subject leaders for the support they provide to colleagues;
- inspection judgements around quality of education, whilst distinguishing curriculum content from pedagogy, take account of the fact that children and young people do not develop knowledge, understanding and skills directly from curriculum plans or intent, but through the way teachers implement the curriculum. This process rests both on the curriculum *and* pedagogical knowledge and thinking of the teacher;

- very clear guidance and systems are established to ensure that normative statements contained within the draft inspection framework (such as “achieve well”) are interpreted consistently;
- the draft inspection framework be re-examined so that ambiguous and abstract language that does not lend itself to consistent judgements is amended. For example, it will in practice prove very challenging to make consistent judgements about the extent to which the intended curriculum is designed to provide the ‘cultural capital needed to succeed in life’;
- the curriculum is not viewed by inspectors as an ‘end in itself’ and that the inspection of curriculum intent acknowledges deeper educational aims.

Assuming these steps are taken, the GA supports the move to place the curriculum ‘at the heart’ of the quality of education judgement. This is a step that chimes very well with the GA’s long-established view that teachers and schools must engage energetically and critically with the purposes of education and with questions about *what to teach* as well as *how to teach*. We note:

- through its concept of ‘[curriculum making](#)’, the GA argues that teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that the curriculum engages children and young people in a ‘lifelong conversation about the earth as the home of human kind’ ([A Different View](#), p.5) and that to achieve this, teachers – regardless of the age group they teach – need to hold three considerations in balance at all times: the lives and curiosities of learners; the geographical content of lessons (what they are teaching); choices and decisions about how to teach;
- in its response to a call for evidence from the Commons Education Committee (2016) on [The purpose and quality of education in England](#), the GA argued against the misconception that school subjects like geography are accidental, anachronistic or inert bodies of knowledge with limited ‘relevance’ in the 21st century. It suggested instead that subjects are the most reliable means we have for enabling children and young people to build their understanding of, and relationship with, the world. They are essential for taking children and young people beyond what they already know and this is a fundamental part of what it means to become an educated citizen in society;
- from the perspective of organisations such as the GA, the school curriculum should rightly be subject to close and careful scrutiny. Its structure and content must do far more than facilitate success in tests and examinations, important though this is for life chances, further study and employment. Instead, the curriculum must enable children and young people to think independently and systematically, to discern the reliability of knowledge and argument and to learn how to make their own choices about how to live. The curriculum should also provide children and young people with a broad range of experience and enable them to acquire knowledge and skills through these experiences – for example

through fieldwork. We propose these ideas as being more useful than imprecise notions of the cultural capital needed to 'succeed in life'.

The GA wishes to re-emphasise the professional development implications of the new criterion, both for inspectors and teachers:

- under 'curriculum implementation', reference is made both to teachers having good subject knowledge and to subject leaders providing effective support for those teaching outside their main area of expertise. This is a position the GA has long endorsed. For example, in its recent National Research Report (2015), [Geography initial teacher education and teacher supply in England](#), the GA cited research evidence showing that 'The most effective teachers have 'deep knowledge' of the subject(s) they teach: secure subject knowledge equips them to plan so that learners progress, and enables them to evaluate learners' thinking and identify and respond to misconceptions' (p.5). However, the same report also established that teachers need 'pedagogical knowledge. Geography teachers need to know how young people learn the subject and about the effectiveness of specific teaching approaches, such as fieldwork or the use of geographical information' (ibid.). In short, good subject knowledge is insufficient on its own to equip teachers to plan or interpret a curriculum;
- the HMCI will be aware that whilst many teachers of geography possess and maintain good levels of subject and pedagogical content knowledge, for example through membership of their subject association, nationally the supply of well qualified teachers of geography is a cause of grave concern. For many subject leaders of geography, too much of their time is devoted to supporting non-specialists, including at GCSE. These challenges are well evidenced, for example by [National Audit Office](#) data which show geography as having one of the lowest proportions of teachers with relevant post-A level qualifications. This issue also appears to be uneven in their distribution and to be more acute in areas facing economic and social deprivation: the proportion of KS4 geography hours taught by subject specialists is around [80% for the least deprived and 70% for the most deprived schools in England](#). We repeat here our call for Ofsted to analyse the national picture of subject specialism and play a role in addressing the issues;
- in order to address our concern about the current level of geography curriculum expertise across the inspectorate, **the GA would be happy to work with HMCI and her team to build the knowledge base**. This work would build on the engagement achieved between the GA and Ofsted throughout the period of its curriculum research and recorded in the [Summary of evidence from the Geographical Association](#) (2018), which sets out the scope and range of purposes of the geography curriculum and builds understanding of the ways the

geography curriculum and geographical knowledge can be structured so that progress may be accurately assessed.

### Proposal 2

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed separation of inspection judgements about learners’ personal development and learners’ behaviour and attitudes?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA regards the proposed separation of inspection judgements about learners’ personal development and learners’ behaviour and attitudes and having the potential to promote learners’ wider personal development, character and resilience.

The GA collects a large quantity of evidence from schools annually, including through its GA [Geography Quality Mark \(GQM\)](#) awards. Over 1000 of these have been awarded over the past 12 years. Within the Quality Mark process of collaborative, professional self-evaluation, schools are asked to submit evidence on learner behaviour and relationships in geography (secondary schools and post-16 providers) or on the personal development and well being of children (primary schools). The GA therefore receives a wide variety of evidence in response to these aspects of the GQM frameworks, including reward policies, student voice surveys, information about extra-curricular activities and fieldwork and, to a lesser extent, lesson observations to exemplify behaviour and attitudes. This evidence base reinforces its belief that geography education provides rich opportunities for personal development, through its teaching of world knowledge, cultural diversity and understanding others’ values through listening to their views and beliefs.

On balance, the GA's experience with GQM backs up the view expressed in this consultation document: that whilst behaviour and personal development are both important and are linked in important and complex ways, teachers and school leaders find it challenging to distinguish these aspects and to reach firm conclusions about practice and outcomes based on evidence. However, the GQM evidence base also highlights the risk that attempting to achieve good behaviours and attitudes without attending to the personal development of learners is a fruitless task.

The GA therefore advises that, unless introduced and implemented with great skill and care, this proposal risks ignoring the complex links between behaviour and personal development and marginalising aspects such as values and attitudes, which are of central importance to geography education.

The separation of inspection judgements about learners' personal development and learners' behaviour and attitudes does however provide an opportunity to recognise the importance of environmental knowledge and understanding as an important component of learners' personal journey towards responsible citizenship. We **therefore urge the HMCI to:**

- recognise the need to 'develop knowledge and understanding of the environment' within the framework
- include 'developing understanding and appreciation of the environment' as part of learners' personal development
- acknowledge, within the research base Ofsted is building to support its work, the growing body of research evidence linking nature connectedness, environmental education, outdoor experiences, mental wellbeing, personal development and environmental attitudes and behaviours.

Regarding 'Fundamental British Values', the GA acknowledges how challenging it can be for schools and teachers to interpret this in practise and to develop learners' understanding of these values. Accordingly, we have developed [guidance for teaching values through geography](#) and would **welcome working with the HMCI on further developing such guidance for schools.**

Early years (registered provision)

### Proposal 3

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the judgements will work well for:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Childminders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare on non-domestic premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare on domestic premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare settings that offer care exclusively before and after school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA agrees that the education inspection framework 2019 judgements will be appropriate for the range of early years settings.

For inspection in this setting to be effective, however, it suggests that inspection must take careful account of curriculum provision. The GA shares the view of the HMCI: that over-assessment at this age can be detrimental and must not be focused on disproportionately. In particular, it is important that EYFS inspectors observe learning through play. This enables inspection to recognise the vital importance that subjects like geography can make to all aspects of learning in EYFS.

**Maintained schools and academies**

**Proposal 4**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed focus of section 8 inspections of good schools and non-exempt outstanding schools and the proposal to increase the length of these inspections from the current one day to two days?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	√	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA agrees with the proposed focus of section 8 inspections of good schools and non-exempt outstanding schools and the proposal to increase the length of these inspections from the current one day to two days.

Too often, foundation and facilitating subjects such as geography receive too little attention in school inspections, despite the subject's status within the English Baccalaureate and the fact that it is one of the most popular option subjects in schools.

A move towards two-day section 8 inspections may therefore deepen the inspectors' understanding of the school's curriculum and permit evidence from subjects such as geography to play an appropriate role in forming a judgement about the school. This proposal, taken together with the others in this consultation, may therefore help to combat the damaging 'narrowing' of the curriculum commented on by the HMCI.

**Proposal 5**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed introduction of on-site preparation for all section 5 inspections, and for section 8 inspections of good schools, on the afternoon prior to the inspection?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	√	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA has received very mixed views from teachers regarding the proposed introduction of on-site preparation for all section 5 inspections, and for section 8 inspections of good schools, on the afternoon prior to the inspection.

Collaboration between inspectors and a school being inspected is vital. Since the stated aim of the reform is to shift the conversation from a data-driven one to an education-focused one, it follows that a pre-inspection visit *could* help to support a more nuanced and context-conscious dialogue than at present. Under such a model, there would be a need to balance this advantage against the risk of increasing workload and pressure on schools, teachers and school leaders – a risk highlighted to us by school leaders during the consultation period. The quality of inspector guidelines and training and the approach individual inspectors take to on-site preparation will be critical if the potential benefits of this approach are to outweigh the potential disadvantages.

We note that the proposed approach is broadly similar to that of the Independent School Inspection (ISI) system, conducted by ISI and overseen by Ofsted and suggest there may be lessons to be learned from the experience there, especially around the risk of creating additional workload and pressure for school leaders.

## Proposal 6

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal not to look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data and our reasons why?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	√	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA supports the proposal not to look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data but suggests this proposal is amended to make clear that internal progress and assessment data is not routinely used to reach judgments.

In autumn 2018, the GA published an [article](#) by its Chief Executive and President, which acknowledged that:

- the links between data management, workload and the recruitment and retention of teachers of geography are matters of growing concern



- a large-scale survey reported teachers in England work an average of 54.4 hours a week (Foster 2018, 'Teacher recruitment and retention in England', House of Commons Library Briefing Paper 7222)
- the purposes of data collection and analysis lack clarity, the time associated with these activities is seen as most wasteful by teachers and workload is one of the most important factors for teachers leaving the profession (Teacher Workload Advisory Group 2018)
- fewer working-age teachers are being retained, the retention rate of early-career teachers has fallen in recent years (Worth 2018) and only 64% of those qualifying with a geography specialism in 2012 were still in service five years later (DfE 2018, Analysis of teacher supply, retention and mobility 00284-2018)
- the vacancy rate for geography (1.2%) is one of the highest of any subject area.

The article also summarised well-established GA assessment advice to help teachers manage workload. It also reasserted the GA's position, that teachers of geography should approach assessment with clear notions of standards and progression in their minds, apply these to assessment for learning practices on a day-to-day basis in their classrooms but should not be required to report this granular information more widely or feel obliged to record it in a way which is standardised across the school. Instead, they should be called on periodically – two to three times each year – to provide a rounded, professional judgment of pupil attainment, from which specific development actions can be taken by the pupil, the teacher, school leaders and parents. The GA acknowledges that this model of practice may well look different in the Early Years and Foundation Stage, where ongoing assessment plays such a pivotal role. A move away from routinely using internal assessment data to reach judgements is therefore well aligned with the GA's position. This approach may also help inspectors become more aware of curriculum provision in subjects like geography, since in many cases (especially the primary phase) internal data systems focus exclusively or disproportionately on maths and English 'progress' data.

Non-statutory internal progress and attainment data has occupied an even more challenged position since the introduction of the national curriculum in 2014, a point at which it can be argued that *national* expectations 5-14 in subjects like geography were effectively removed and where standards became a local matter. This remains a problematic situation for teachers of geography attempting to make comparable judgements of standards and outcomes. It is an issue the GA has sought hard to address - see for example <https://www.geography.org.uk/assessment>.

**Non-association independent schools**

**Proposal 7**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that inspectors should normally use the non-specialist curriculum as their primary source of evidence in assessing the extent to which the school meets the quality of education criteria?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	√	<input type="checkbox"/>

The GA does not agree that inspectors should normally use the non-specialist curriculum as their primary source of evidence in assessing the extent to which the school meets the quality of education criteria.

The GA's Manifesto for Geography (<https://www.geography.org.uk/GA-Manifesto-for-geography>) describes the subject as "not a narrow academic subject for the few. It is fundamental for everyone."

The circumstances of non-association independent schools, and those of their learners, vary enormously. However, all learners have a fundamental right to (and need for) geographical education and the quality of geographical education should be inspected in such schools