

# SATIPS

Support and training in Prep, Primary and Senior Schools



## Editorial

The Summer term is here and, by the time you read this Broadsheet, hopefully the weather is good and has allowed many opportunities to venture outside the classroom to utilise school grounds and Outdoor Learning spaces.

As I mentioned in my Autumn Broadsheet our Year 8 pupils are not sitting Common Entrance exams in the Humanities subjects this term; instead the pupils are researching, writing and presenting projects on topics we have chosen with Geography, History and RS elements. They will also continue to develop their geographical skills in preparation for senior school Geography.

As always, I welcome any articles for inclusion in future Broadsheets and please contact me if there is any advice or help I can offer.

### Top 10 Time Saving Ideas by Simon Lewis

Simon is the Head of Geography at St. Andrew's (Woking) and the ISEB's Chief Geography Setter. I have known him for many years on the prep school Geography circuit and I am very grateful to him for sending me this excellent article:

'There's so much to teach and never enough time!' is a refrain I hear expressed occasionally by hard pressed HoDs in prep schools. When is there ever enough time allocated to teaching Geography in prep schools? I, for one, would like to double, nay, treble the time given over to teaching the ultimate subject - and the world would surely be a better place for it!

Seriously, for starters, you need to ensure that you are getting the necessary contact time: I always recommend a minimum of one and a half hours per week plus a half hour prep. Fortunately, I get a little more than this in my own school but make sure that whoever organises the timetable, is giving you adequate time to fully cover the syllabus. Any complaints that the current Geography syllabus has too much content, usually only come from schools where two lessons a week is their meagre allocation - no wonder it becomes a pressured preparation for exams and no fun for the teacher or the pupil!

The other persistent problem is a misconception that the syllabus is to be covered only in Years 7 and 8. The syllabus is not your programme of study. As an independent school teacher, you retain this

autonomy to design and create the programme of study that suits you, your pupils and the location of your school. Now, if you are sensible you will be covering elements in all the preceding years. Geographic literacy (Geographacy) is how the subject should be taught and just like literacy in English and numeracy in Maths, you start learning the basics the moment you start going to school and then build things up gradually.

Even in KS1, children can be appreciating the names and location of primary Earth features such as the continents and oceans. They can also be learning to observe their environment at first hand and understand how objects appear when viewed from above, in preparation for simple map reading. Early foundations such as these can prove invaluable as springboards when they graduate on to more sophisticated geographic studies.

Remember too, that the ultimate aim is to get the children 'thinking geographically'. Geography is not merely a subject - it can be a whole modus operandi and one that perfectly equips children for flourishing in the real world and in adult life. Get the children that you teach to 'Think like a Geographer' and senior schools will love the pupils that you supply to them at 13+! It's like giving an art school mini-Rembrandts or Michelangelos, all primed to start painting a Sistine Chapel at GCSE and A Level!

Here I give you ten useful time saving tips that help to create more time for innovative and creative geography teaching in the classroom.

**1. Get other staff to teach Geography for you!** Remember - Geography really is the ultimate cross-curricular subject. It links in with so many other disciplines and practically everything in this 3D world we inhabit will have a spatial dimension and location. Often pupils are learning geographical skills in other subjects, without necessarily realising it! There are too many to list here but these are some obvious examples:

Grid references, scale, distances and bearings: Maths  
 Describing landscapes and journeys: English  
 Tropics, climate, atmosphere: Science  
 Settlements: History  
 Field sketching: Art

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This is one of the subject Broadsheets published termly by The Society of Assistants Teaching in Preparatory Schools limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

Reg. no. 890301 England.

Registered Charity no. 313688

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Since school timetables are essentially packaged time, why not create more time for your subject requirements by delegating elements to other teachers to cover? Whilst a little reinforcement may be necessary, it should leave you more time to focus on the core skills and knowledge in your Geography lessons. Essentially, you are utilising a team approach to delivering your programme of study. Cheeky? No! Shrewd? Yes! That's what thinking geographically brings you - global vision!

### 2. Ensure that KS2 Geography teachers are covering the age appropriate parts of the syllabus

There are many areas of the current CE syllabus that can be fully mastered by children from 7 to 11. The Location Knowledge list is the obvious place to start. All places that an 11 year old would be expected to know and locate on a map are helpfully identified in bold and italics on the document. If this is firmly in place before the children come to you in Year 7, you only need focus on the much reduced list of remaining places.

In addition, many elements of physical Geography such as river landforms and characteristics of the river valley can be understood by nine and ten year olds. They are also wowed by volcanoes and earthquakes and are fully capable of understanding the mechanics of plate tectonics, provided it is presented in a fun and engaging manner.

Likewise, my pupils have fully mastered the individual elements of Ordnance Survey map reading by the end of their first term in Year 6, leaving you free to practise applied map reading in Years 7 & 8.

### 3. Fieldwork

Aaah, the Jewel in the Crown regarding the CE Syllabus and one that has retained its importance for over thirty years, since its introduction as a mandatory piece of course work.

However, fieldwork projects have changed markedly from the travel-log style epics that threatened rain forests in the 1980s! With clearly prescribed requirements, the fieldwork study should be a highly focused scientific investigation with the essential inclusion of primary data, recorded by the students.

The data collection itself should be possible to carry out in a single day. Personally, I give my students three days in the field (a separate study focus each day) so as to give them an element of choice regarding the investigation that they write up in full and submit as their project. I also stay residentially for two nights, thus ensuring maximum teaching time and study immersion.

I then limit the fieldwork to half a term from data collection to handing in. Out of my three lessons per week, I devote one for students to work on

their write-ups; then towards the end, a couple of preps may be allocated for them to finish their projects on time. On this basis, there should be no need for pupils to work from home, thus ensuring that the work really is their own!

In addition, try negotiating with your Head of ICT over using ICT lessons for writing up. After all, word processing and Excel graph construction are every bit as important, arguably more useful, than the programming skills, that in reality only a handful of students will ever use in the work place.

### 4. Use a place focused approach that covers all aspects of the syllabus in one in-depth study

Don't assume that covering the syllabus requirements always requires a topic based approach. Whilst theming half-terms usually works well and lends itself to a geographic story approach that weaves coherently through the subject, don't be afraid to try a place study technique. Here, you take a reasonably sized town or small city and dissect it from top to bottom using the main elements of the syllabus as a framework.

I have made detailed presentations at CPD days on this teaching approach, but in essence it involves using a logical taxonomy that focuses in turn on key aspects of Geography tackled (from bottom to top) in the following order:



Using this approach can not only save you time but also will provide readymade examples and case studies that root the theory in the real world. It will also give your programme of study a much more individual character and one, if focused locally, which is much more relevant to children attending your school. In addition, you can incorporate useful background information for fieldwork studies, thus giving pupils a deeper appreciation of factors that then help to explain the data patterns that emerge.

A Study of Place Taxonomy ensures that all aspects of a settlement's Geography are considered - physical, human and environmental and this holistic approach is a very time-efficient way of covering huge chunks of the syllabus in one go.

### 5. Set time limits for all classroom activities

Children respond well to a time challenge. Thus, having briefed them on a task, saying to them 'this must be finished by x' and if it's not the end of the lesson give a specific time on the clock. It is amazing how even the most stubborn laggards can be transformed into sprint runners when there is a clearly defined target. Even set a countdown clock every so often. Children actually enjoy a race against time – try it and see!

### 6. Single lessons

It may seem counter-intuitive to actually request to your timetabler single lessons rather than doubles; after all, surely you can extract more work from your pupils by focusing them for longer periods of time and enabling you to develop the necessary preamble on written tasks? However, I have over my 30+ years in teaching, come to the conclusion that little and often is better than feast and famine. Seeing pupils three times during the week rather than twice with long gaps in between seems to enable them to remember where they left off more easily.

In addition, creating more bitesized portions enables pupils to digest topic content more readily particularly these younger children. Give it a go next academic year and you will be amazed that you cover the work more rapidly and in a way that assists knowledge retention and understanding by the children. Opt for singles!

### 7. Record your lessons so that absent pupils can watch key bits from home

Whether using iPad apps or Smartboards, the ability to record what has been covered in lessons is a modern day godsend! How many of us are frustrated by the regular absence of pupils not merely through illness but music lessons, sports fixtures and learning support? Sometimes, it feels like you never have a full class of pupils for your lessons, such is the overstuffing of the typical prep school week. To take the pressure off having to recap on complicated explanations and tailored catch up work, save time by uploading your masterclass lesson onto the school website or MIS for pupils to access at home. Who knows, you might just become a YouTube legend and be able to take that early retirement you've been promising yourself, living comfortably off your advertising royalties. Now that's what I call saving time! Seriously, this will not only save you time, it saves the pupils precious hours too!

### 8. Use fast marking techniques

One of the holy grails for hard pressed teachers is to find a task for children that is useful, engaging and intricate to complete, and yet can be marked in seconds! Such an example is map reading. I talk to my students about the 3 Ps - Precision, Practice and Perfection! Plotting grid references accurately is a task worth devoting time to – just like much of Maths, pupils need to practise so that they build up the requisite speed for accurate map reading in exams. The time saving technique I employ is easy - utilising a transparent plastic overlay with all the correct locations marked on; when put over the child's work, it immediately reveals any inaccuracies of plotting. Thus a half hour task can be marked in seconds, giving instant feedback for the pupil. Simple but effective!

### 9. Independent learning

This is something that all prep school teachers should be encouraging, particularly in Years 7 & 8; supplying pupils that are capable of finding out things for themselves is exactly the raw material that senior school teachers can work with. The biggest single criticism expressed by senior school staff is that new entrants arrive in Year 9, having been spoon-fed (and at worst, whipped) through CE, thus rendering them incapable of self-study and using their own initiative to solve problems.

Set enquiry tasks to be researched within a lesson or their own time (even breaks!). One of my favourites is to set them on a mission to find out the causes and effects of a natural disaster, confining them not only on a time basis but to one side of an A4 sheet of paper. Getting them to include a location map and snappy factoids focuses their minds and forces them to be selective and succinct when it comes to deciding what to include. In addition, you have work that lends itself perfectly to classroom/corridor displays – all presented in a neat and convenient format without the need for time consuming re-writing.

### 10. Link the syllabus to breaking news and current events

Carpe Diem! What really excites children to learn is embracing what is happening around them in the real world. Fortunately (or not), we now live in a world of 24 hour breaking news. This means that the hurricane bearing down on Caribbean islands or the volcano erupting in Indonesia can be monitored from your classroom with an immediacy that journalists could only dream of less than fifty years ago.

Thanks to the Internet, we can embrace one of the best features of Geography – the present and anticipating the future. You will be amazed how children respond positively to the dramatic footage that you access from news websites around the world. The enthusiasm and interest generated will often extend not only beyond the lesson but will be remembered and discussed with parents on the home run. Once you have geographic themes and understanding being reinforced by discussion/reference outside of school - well that really is saving you time!

As Louis Armstrong famously sang in 1969 – 'We have all the time in the world!' so use it wisely and you'll find covering the ISEB syllabus requirements is really not so arduous!

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### A visit to Spurn Point

At the start of the Easter holidays I spent a few days in the East Riding of Yorkshire and my visit coincided with the opening of the new Discovery Centre at Spurn Head. The Centre is run by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust ([www.ywt.org.uk](http://www.ywt.org.uk)) and has information about the natural, nautical and military history of the Spurn peninsula.



The tidal surge of 2013 washed away part of the road and it is no longer possible to drive the three and a half miles to the end of Spurn Point. Luckily I was able to go on a 'Spurn Safari', a two hour guided tour utilising a 4x4 Unimog truck. It was really interesting to see and hear about the effects of coastal erosion in this area, which will inform my teaching of this topic. There were also great views from the top of Spurn Lighthouse: Perhaps of most interest from a teaching perspective was the huge amount of litter which has been deposited on the beach at the end of Spurn Point. Most of this inevitably is plastic and the guide told us that he regularly finds bottles dating back to the 1980s and even from the 1970s - a salient reminder of our throw-away society:

