

## THE CORNUBIAN DINOSAUR PROJECT

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Neighbour, G.A. 2006. The Cornubian dinosaur project. *Geoscience in south-west England*, **11**, 243-248.

Dinosaurs still hold a fascination for school children. Studies of the palaeogeography of the south-west of England have indicated that for large parts of the Mesozoic period there existed a land mass over parts of what today are the present counties of Cornwall and Devon. Projects have already taken place with partner primary schools within the Caradon Network Learning Community and the school is now taking the lead in developing a set of resources that have a firm basis in science that will allow dinosaurs and other fossil organisms to be used to teach aspects of the national curriculum in a new and exciting way, ensuring that Earth Science education is at the forefront of this experience.

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to outline a major new initiative to put earth sciences and more especially palaeontology at the forefront of teaching and delivering science in schools in the southwest. Geology represents approximately 4% of the national curriculum for science in secondary schools (King, 2004), and yet is not taught to all groups. At primary school it is possible to enhance the science learning experience by using a familiar and exciting concept to deliver ordinary aspects of the curriculum. The use of dinosaurs for specific projects can also give an exciting learning experience at secondary school level.

### SALTASH.NET COMMUNITY SCHOOL EARTH SCIENCE CENTRE

The saltash.net community school Earth Science Centre started from a concept proposed to the leadership group and governing body of the school in November 2004. Geology has not been taught in the school since 1985, and was identified as a science where much potential was being lost. In 2005 the school obtained specialist status as a Science and Mathematics with computing Specialist College. In 2005 a bid was made to the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund, to allow the setting up of the centre.

The centre has three aims. Firstly the centre is available in the school to improve the teaching experience at key stage 3 and key stage 4. It is intended to teach GCSE Geology (WJEC syllabus) and also Advanced level Geology (WJEC syllabus). Secondly the school has set up a number of projects with the feeder primary schools and it is proposed that the centre will be used to inform and deliver aspects of the science curriculum at key stage 1 and key stage 2. The final objective was to provide a facility that was available for the whole community, which would allow disabled access to the earth sciences and also allow its use by organisations such as the U3A and the OUGS.

### WHY THE CORNUBIAN DINOSAUR PROJECT ?

The school is keen to become the centre of a teaching network. It has seven feeder primary schools and since 2004 has had an active and varied liaison programme in place, including a "Dinosaurs and Past Life" project. The need for the "Cornubian dinosaur project" was identified as a means of

giving non-specialist teachers support and assistance in delivering some aspects of the national curriculum in science. The project can be used to discretely deliver aspects of these units as part of the normal science curriculum or alternatively it is possible to deliver the units as a concentrated unit of work in the form of a week long project.

Another key part of the project was to ensure that it was available to the students in the secondary school sector. At this level the pressures of examinations and assessment gives much less space for the inclusion of such "specialist" projects. The project in this sector has been delivered as part of extra mural work.

### *National Curriculum: Where does the project map across ?*

The project allows a wide range of National Curriculum targets to be covered in an exciting and innovative manner. Most importantly it allows a large number of the SC1 targets to be addressed. These SC1 targets are in the area of "scientific enquiry" and allow the students to "learn" to be scientists, rather than just re-iterating facts from text books or other media. They will devise a hypothesis and then work to prove or disprove this work. As can be seen from Table 1 and Table 2 there are a large number of the statements of attainment that are covered by the materials included in the project.

Table 3 illustrates that the project does not only address targets from the National Curriculum for Science, but also allows targets in other subject areas to be covered. These can for instance be the teaching of proportionality in mathematics, or the teaching of descriptive writing in the English curriculum.

Science Unit of Work	Year Group
Unit 2C – Variation	2
Unit 3D – Rocks and Soils	3
Unit 4A - Moving and Growing	4
Unit 4B – Habitats	4
Unit 6A – Interdependence and Adaptation	6

**Table 1.** Units of the key stage 1 and key stage 2 science national curriculum.