Geography Curriculum

Geography is all about the living, breathing essence of the world we live in.
Michael Palin

At our school, we understand the importance of geography in developing pupils' understanding, curiosity and love of the world around them. We foster a love of discovery through investigations, field work and a broad curriculum offer that ensures pupils have a sound understanding of location, place, human and physical features and how all of these aspects can be interrelated. We use the National Curriculum aims and objectives to drive our curriculum offer.

The curriculum is carefully sequenced to ensure an expanding field of learning so that prior knowledge is not only deepened and revisited but built upon at the same time. Early geographical knowledge and skills are introduced through exciting, relevant and innovative topics in Early Years Foundation Stage. This is then built upon in bespoke geography lessons through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

We support pupils, no matter their background or disposition, to become budding geographers and provide them with the essential knowledge to be successful, not only in primary and secondary school, but in later life.

Key cross curricular links between subject disciplines are identified and planned for, ensuring pupils can make links across many aspects of the curriculum, in particular, but not confined to, reading, writing and mathematics.

Early Years Foundation Stage

In Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils begin to develop a foundation for knowledge and skills relating to geography through the 'Understanding the World' strand of the EYFS framework.

Pupils are taught to acquire and use simple geographical vocabulary, relating to place, position and weather, using their local environment, indoor and outdoor classrooms. This enables all pupils to discuss and explore ideas about their immediate surrounds and develop a sound understanding. They think about their homes, their immediate surroundings and pay note to what they can see and where it is. They are supported to observe the changes in weather and start to relate common weather types to the seasons.

To support them in understanding the world around them, pupils listen to and read a variety of stories with characters and settings from around the world. Pupils start to explore, through stories and activities, the purpose of maps and how they are used.

By being provided with these opportunities in Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils have a strong foundation for learning in Key Stage 1 to build upon, where they begin to use maps to locate key features in their locality.

Key Stage One

In Key Stage 1, pupils begin to expand their field of learning by looking more deeply at their school site and local area. Pupils develop a sound understanding of their region and locality in preparation to make purposeful comparisons to a region in North America. This also prepares them for looking more deeply at contrasting localities in Key Stage 2, where they will look at a European and North American region. They begin to recognise and identify common, key human and physical features in the locations being studied, using positional language to exemplify where features are in relation to each other.

Developing this early understanding of common human and physical features, enables pupils to create foundation for more complex elements in Key Stage 2, such as land use, trade, mountains and biomes. Pupils also begin to use the four points of the compass to further exemplify where things are located. This allows for greater accuracy when moving into Key Stage 2.

Technology, such as cameras, is used to record observations during their work, including fieldwork where pupils have first-hand experience of geographical learning. By conducting simple fieldwork studies in their locality, it ensures pupils have a deep understanding of their locality, in preparation for building upon in Key Stage 2.

Exploring simple maps, pupils learn to locate the four countries of the United Kingdom and their respective capital cities. Building on learning about their own country, pupils' explore the world's continents and oceans using simple globes, atlases and maps.

Lower Key Stage Two

When pupils move into lower Key Stage 2, they build upon their previous learning by deepening their knowledge of the United Kingdom. Pupils use maps, globes and atlases of increasing complexity to identify key topographical features (including rivers, lakes, mountains) and identify where human settlements (including towns and major cities) are, considering why they might be located in these places.

As pupils further secure their understanding and knowledge of the United Kingdom, they begin to broaden their field of study, developing a good understanding of Europe and its countries, major cities, landmarks and topographical features. Pupils begin to explore key physical features and processes, conducting focused learning on rivers and the water cycle.

Pupils undertake a fieldwork study of a local river, gaining a first-hand experience of its features. When studying the water cycle, pupils draw on their understanding of condensation and evaporation acquired in their science learning to better understand the process, considering how it is essential to supporting life on planet Earth.

Teaching supports pupils to identify how humans and the physical environment can impact upon one and other, considering what this might mean for sustainability and human life.

Building upon the comparative study completed in Key Stage 1, pupils conduct a study of a European region. They identify key similarities and differences between both human and physical features.

Upper Key Stage Two

In upper Key Stage 2, pupils begin to use more complex globes, maps (including OS maps) and atlases to identify the location of key countries, cities and features around the world (developing a secure understanding of the whole planet). Building on the work they completed on Europe in lower Key Stage 2, they will use this knowledge to map key topographical features globally, such as key mountain ranges and the location of biomes.

Pupils are taught this knowledge and these skills at the start of Year 5 to enable them to apply learning when looking at the physical processes that occur globally, including mountain formation, volcanoes and earthquakes and the formation of biomes. Pupils are taught, when mapping the world, to use the lines of longitude and latitude, as well as identify the time zones. They learn that larger countries can often occupy a number of time zones, including the USA, Canada and Russia.

Exploring the structure of the Earth through cross sectional diagrams and models, enables pupils to understand how volcanoes, earthquakes and mountains are all interrelated. Throughout upper Key Stage 2, pupils explore how the physical features of a location can affect the way in which humans use the land for settlements, natural resources and farming. They also explore, in more depth, how human action in these locations can impact on the physical environment, both positively and negatively.

With a focus on sustainability, pupils discuss and further their understanding by suggesting ways that we can live more sustainability and minimise the impact of humans on the natural world. Using all of this knowledge, pupils conduct a study of a contrasting locality in Costa Rica, paying particular attention to climate data, trade, natural resources and sustainability.