Programme of study: Geography (Key stage 3)

Curriculum aims

Learning and undertaking activities in geography contribute to achievement of the curriculum aims for all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

The importance of geography

The study of geography stimulates an interest in, and a sense of wonder about, places and helps make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world. It explains how places and landscapes are formed, how people and environment interact, and how a diverse range of economies and societies are interconnected. It builds on pupils' own experiences to investigate at all scales from the personal to the global.

Geographical enquiry encourages questioning, investigation and critical thinking about issues affecting the world and people's lives, for the present and future. Fieldwork is an essential element of this. Pupils learn to think spatially, using maps, visual images and new technologies, including geographical information systems, to obtain, present and analyse information. Geography inspires pupils to become global citizens by exploring their own place in the world, their values and responsibilities to other people, to the environment and to the sustainability of the planet.

Key concepts

There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of geography. Pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Place

- Understanding the physical and human characteristics of real places.
- Developing geographical imaginations of places.

Space

- Understanding the interactions between places and the networks created by flows of information, people and goods.
- Knowing where places and landscapes are located, why they are there, the patterns and distributions they create, how and why these are changing and the implications for people.

Scale

- Appreciating different scales – from personal and local to national, international and global.
- Making links between scales to develop understanding of geographical ideas.

Interdependence

- Exploring the social, economic, environmental and political connections between places.
- Understanding the significance of interdependence in change, at all scales.

Environmental interaction

- Understanding that the physical and human dimensions of the environment are interrelated and together influence environmental change.
- Exploring sustainable development and its impact on environmental interaction.

Physical and human characteristics
This includes what a place is like, how it became like this and how it is subject to forces for change.

Geographical imaginations of places
Pupils carry with them mental images of places – the world, the country in which they live, the street next door. These form part of their 'geographical imagination'. It is important that pupils recognise that there are many images of places, some of which may conflict with their own.

Knowing where places and landscapes are located
This allows pupils to develop a coherent framework of locational knowledge.

Links between scales
Making links between scales helps pupils understand interdependence. For example, considering how their consumption of energy has a global impact on physical systems such as climate.

Sustainable development
Sustainable development aims to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Physical and human processes

- Explaining how physical and human processes shape places, landscapes and societies.

Cultural understanding and diversity

- Appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places, environments and cultures to inform their understanding of societies and economies.
- Appreciating how people's values and attitudes differ and may influence social, environmental, economic and political issues, and develop their own values and attitudes about such issues.

Key processes

These are the essential skills and processes in geography that pupils need to learn to make progress.

Geographical enquiry

Pupils should be able to:

- ask geographical questions, thinking critically, constructively and creatively
- identify bias, opinion and abuse of evidence in sources when investigating issues
- collect, record and display information
- analyse and evaluate evidence, presenting findings to draw and justify conclusions
- find new ways of using and applying geographical skills and understanding to create new interpretations of place and space
- plan geographical enquiries, suggesting appropriate sequences of investigation
- solve problems and make decisions to develop analytical skills and creative thinking about geographical issues.

Fieldwork and out-of-class learning

Pupils should be able to:

- select and use fieldwork tools and techniques appropriately, safely and efficiently.

Graphicacy and visual literacy

Pupils should be able to:

- use atlases, globes, maps at a range of scales, photographs, satellite images and other geographical data
- construct maps and plans at a variety of scales, using graphical techniques to present evidence.

Geographical communication

Pupils should be able to:

- communicate their knowledge and understanding using geographical vocabulary and conventions in both talk and writing.

Geographical enquiry
Pupils should carry out a range of enquiries, from structured enquiry, to more open-ended and active learning situations. The approaches used should support the type of enquiry questions being asked. This is essential if skills and processes are to be developed.

Identify bias, opinion and abuse of evidence
This includes evaluating the quality of information by asking questions about its source, what it was collected for and how it has been analysed and presented (eg questioning the provenance of websites).

Collect
Information should be gathered from a variety of sources, including fieldwork libraries, the internet and digital media, official agencies, geographical information systems (GIS) and newspapers.

Fieldwork tools
This includes using ICT such as digital and video cameras, geographical information systems, and environmental sensors, such as data-logging weather stations.

Maps at a range of scales
This includes Ordnance Survey maps to a scale of 1:25 000 and 1:50 000. These should be used by pupils throughout key stage 3 to interpret physical and human landscapes.

Photographs
This includes vertical and oblique aerial photographs.

Geographical data
This includes published statistics, data gathered from fieldwork, literature, biographies, travel writing and information generated by geographical information systems.

Range and content

This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes.

The study of geography should include:

- a variety of scales, from personal, through local, regional, national, international and continental, to global
- a range of types of study, including studies based on a place or region, a theme, an issue or problem. Studies should develop pupils' knowledge of the location of places and environments. Each study should include a range of scales
- the consideration of different parts of the world in their wider settings and contexts. This includes local areas, the UK, the European Union and regions or countries in different states of development. The studies should be placed within a regional, continental and/or global context. Selections should show different types of environment and levels of economic development, and in some cases have cultural, economic or political relevance to the lives of pupils
- undertake study of the UK and learn some key aspects of its changing geography, current issues, place in the world today
- investigation of people-environment interactions at different scales and in different parts of the world, highlighting consequences, impacts and planning/management responses
- studies that involve physical geography, physical processes and natural landscapes
- studies that involve human geography, built and managed environments and human processes.

Variety of scales
Investigations need to zoom in and out of scales and investigate from different perspectives.

Physical geography
This should include study of weather and climate, and why they vary from place to place.

Curriculum opportunities

During the key stage pupils should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject.

The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to:

- use a range of enquiry approaches
- use varied resources, including maps, visual media and geographical information systems
- participate in informed responsible action in relation to geographical issues that affect them and those around them
- examine geographical issues in the news
- investigate important issues of relevance to the UK and globally, using a range of skills including ICT
- undertake fieldwork investigations in different locations outside the classroom, individually and as part of a team
- make links between geography and work in other subjects and areas of the curriculum.

Geographical information systems
GIS is valuable for mapping and visualising information as well as linking and analysing different spatial datasets. There should be opportunities to learn with GIS and to learn about GIS.

Participate in informed responsible action
This enhances pupils' understanding of how geography has meaning and relevance to their own lives. It can also help them make informed and independent decisions and take action both at a personal level and as citizens in society.

Fieldwork investigations
Fieldwork provides opportunities analyse issues in real contexts. Fieldwork also links study to pupils' personal experience of places and environments.

Different locations outside the classroom
Fieldwork should relate directly to the topics studied, making the most of the local area as well as contrasting localities.