

Geography Best Practice Guide

Autumn 2021

The following guide is based upon: The OFSTED Research review series: Geography (June 2021), the 2014 national Curriculum and our own Katherine Semar Geography progression document.

The National Curriculum for 2014 for geography aims to ensure that all pupils:

- develop contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places – both terrestrial and marine – including their defining physical and human characteristics and how these provide a geographical context for understanding the actions of processes
- understand the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and how they bring about spatial variation and change over time
- are competent in the geographical skills needed to:
 - collect, analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through experiences of fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes
 - interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including maps, diagrams, globes, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
 - communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps, numerical and quantitative skills and writing at length.

In common with many subjects, OFSTED's geography research review sets out two key strands of geographical knowledge – substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. **Substantive knowledge** refers to the 'content' that is to be learned. OFSTED suggests that this is defined by four 'interrelated forms':

- locational knowledge
- place knowledge
- human and physical processes, and
- geographical skills.

Disciplinary knowledge considers how geographical knowledge originates and is revised over time. It is through disciplinary knowledge that children learn the practices of geographers.

A combination of our well thought out geography progression and the skilful application of an enquiry-led approach to geography teaching will support the mastery of both strands.

Enquiry-led approach

Katherine Semar introduced an enquiry-led approach to geography teaching and learning in 2020. The enquiry-led approach challenges us to explicitly train our children to work as geographers *and* to understand that they are working as geographers by examining and exploring evidence to answer specific enquiries. Using this methodology, we invite children to reach, support and discuss answers to key geographic questions. As an example, instead of telling children that volcanoes tend to be found where tectonic plates meet, we might instead challenge them to answer the question – Why are there volcanoes in Iceland but none in Saffron Walden? Whilst teaching about volcanoes, the enquiry-led model should challenge children to employ a range of geographic skills including observation and comparison, map reading and data analysis.

A key part of our enquiry-led approach to teaching geography is our geography skills progression, set out in the table below:

	EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Geographical Enquiry	Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate):			Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate):		Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate):	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise • Describe • Observe • Select • Categorise • Classify • Sequence • Connect and make links • Compare and contrast • Recall • Reason/speculate 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise • Synthesise • Construct informed responses • Interpret and explain • Demonstrate understanding • As well as build upon previously learned enquiry skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach informed conclusions • Empathise • Make reasoned judgements • Reflect • Justify • Apply • Evaluate • Critique • Hypothesise • As well as build upon previously learned enquiry skills 	

Our geography progression is designed to ensure that, as our children work as geographers, their level of challenge increases on their journey through our school. The planning of geography teaching in the school should reflect this skills progression.

OFSTED specifically recognise the value of enquiry-led geography teaching, quoting research which sets out four key features of the enquiry-led approach to teaching geography:

- it is question-driven and encourages a questioning attitude towards knowledge (including posing geographical questions)
- pupils analyse geographical data and sources of information as evidence
- pupils interpret information for themselves to develop understanding
- pupils reflect on their learning

Taking all of this into account, wherever practical, geography units should begin with an overarching enquiry supported by a sequence of lessons, each exploring at least one more enquiry. As an example, a KS1 unit on weather might seek to answer the overall enquiry, How does the weather affect our lives? As a means of exploring this, it might also answer the following enquiries:

- What is the weather?
- How does the weather change throughout the year?
- Why isn't the weather the same everywhere in the world?
- How can Antarctica be a desert when it's the coldest place on earth?

Vocabulary

Mastering relevant vocabulary is a key part of learning to be a geographer. Katherine Semar has an agreed vocabulary progression to support the children's primary school- journey. Geography teaching should seek to revisit and embed this vocabulary so that children are able to confidently to use it appropriately.

Revisiting previous learning

Our geography progression is specifically designed to build upon the geography learning from previous years. This will involve both substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. OFSTED is explicit in its requirement that content is revisited in subsequent year groups to support the introduction of new, more complex knowledge, 'emphasising how it is interconnected to facilitate the building of strong schema and allowing the children to retain more information.'

Fieldwork

OFSTED is clear in its requirement for all pupils to engage in meaningful fieldwork as part of learning the skills of a geographer. Covid 19 has meant that organising trips and visits has been a significant challenge in recent years. As the country opens up again, we need to think carefully about fieldwork opportunities and whether or not they meet our needs as teachers of geography. Effective fieldwork needs to be more than a 'visit'. OFSTED make the following observation: 'Fieldwork includes data collection, analysis and presentation. The experience of fieldwork draws together pupils' locational knowledge and that of human and physical processes.' When planning trips/visits and other fieldwork in Katherine Semar, teachers are encouraged to consider whether these requirements are being met. In some cases, it has been clear that our high expectations are greater than those met by third party providers, and it may be good practice to develop and provide our own fieldwork activities and materials even when purchasing experiences externally.

Planning and designing a geography enquiry in Katherine Semar

The planning of a geography enquiry unit in Katherine Semar should consider the following:

- Previous substantive and disciplinary knowledge
- The Katherine Semar geography progression
- The skills progression within the geography progression
- The geography vocabulary progression
- An overall enquiry for the topic
- A series of enquiries to support the topic
- Where relevant, fieldwork.