

Geography

'Geography underpins a lifelong 'conversation' about the earth as the home of humankind'

Geography Association

Through Geography, we aim to inspire curiosity and fascination about the world. By learning about different people, cultures, landscapes and environments and the links between them, our children will develop a growing knowledge that will help them to make sense of the world they live in.

In line with the National Curriculum, our children develop their knowledge about diverse places, people, resources and natural and human environments, together with a deep understanding of the Earth's key physical and human processes. As they progress, their growing knowledge about the world should help them to deepen their understanding of the interaction between physical and human processes, and of the formation and use of landscapes and environments.

Curriculum coverage:

We believe that a geography curriculum should provide mirrors for the children in which they can see themselves reflected, and windows, through which they can look into the lives and stories of people who are different. Using this approach, we select subject content from the National Curriculum document and build depth studies within geography that represent the unique community that we serve.

Curriculum Progression:

Our geography curriculum comprises of four interrelated strands of knowledge:

Procedural knowledge:

Procedural knowledge represents the skills of a geographer. This knowledge drawn from the National Curriculum programmes of study and is organised into a vertically integrated progression so that the children revisit and deepen their knowledge and understanding in each year group as they move through school. In planning, this knowledge is presented as our broad 'learning aims'. For example, the children are taught how to analyse geographical sources. This is taught in every year group from year one to year six. As the children move through school, they are presented with increasingly complex sources and are taught how to analyse them in increasingly complex ways. This process is supported by the use of SOLO taxonomy, which enables the children to deepen their knowledge and understanding within year groups ensuring a mastery approach to curriculum.

Disciplinary knowledge:

There is not a commonly held view on what disciplinary knowledge represents within geography*. Drawing on a range of notable works on this subject (see references section) we believe that disciplinary knowledge represents the ways in which the substance of geography is understood, organised, debated and generated.

Disciplinary knowledge is represented by large, organising concepts that underlie a geographical way of investigating and understanding the world. They are the key ideas involved in framing the unique contribution of geography as a subject discipline.

By using the following 'Big ideas' carefully and accurately we have a means of identifying what it means to think geographically:

- **Space:**
Understanding location – a specific geographical point on the earth's surface
- **Place:**
Understanding the physical and human characteristics of a location and the meaning humans attach to it
- **Cultural understanding and diversity:**
Appreciating the differences and similarities between people, places, environments and cultures
- **Interdependence:**
Understanding the social, economic, environmental or political connections between places
- **Sustainability:**
Exploring sustainable development and its impact on environmental interaction
- **Scale:**
Appreciating different scales (from personal and local to national, international and global)
- **Change:**
Understanding how sequences of events and activities in the physical and human worlds lead to change in places, landscapes and societies

The explicit teaching of disciplinary knowledge means that we're able to show the children how geographers use the different 'Big Ideas' to focus on specific aspects of study and the connections between them. The same 'Big ideas' are taught, revisited and referred to in every year group as the children move through school.

* Ofsted Research review series: geography (June 2021)

Substantive knowledge:

Substantive knowledge represents the geographical content that is taught in each year group – in planning, this knowledge is presented as specific ‘learning outcomes’ – the content we want the children to know and remember. In selecting the specific content, we ensure that the heritage of our children is highlighted and celebrated. As a result of our work on developing an anti-racist curriculum, deliberate choices are made about aspects of geography so that our curriculum is representative of, and sensitive to, the community that we serve.

Substantive concepts:

Substantive concepts are specific terms that often don’t have a fixed meaning, and as a result, are context dependent. In geography, this would include concepts such as Water, Migration or Climate.

Substantive concepts appear throughout the geography curriculum and are explored in different year groups through different aspects of geography. By highlighting these concepts, we are able to ensure that connections are made so that children begin to develop familiarity and confidence, which then supports their future learning within the subject.

Repetition and retrieval:

Our geography curriculum is built upon high levels of repetition to ensure that our children can do more and remember more as they progress through school. The two strands of Procedural knowledge and Disciplinary knowledge are revisited and developed in every class from year one to year six. This repetition ensures that our children reach the end of Key Stage Two with the ability to apply the skills and conceptual frameworks of geographers with high levels of independence.

Substantive concepts are repeated in multiple year groups in order to develop resonance. Concepts are unpicked, defined and put into context to support the children’s immediate understanding of the area being studied, whilst also broadening their wider understanding of geography as a discipline.

During the course of their geography project, we share significant amounts of substantive knowledge with our children. In planning, our specific learning outcomes detail the substantive knowledge that we want the children to know and remember. Retrieval practice is used during the course of the project to ensure that key knowledge is revisited and remembered.

Long-term retrieval opportunities are created by revisiting project books beyond the term in which the subject is being studied. This is planned for and structured so that children are given the opportunity to recall key elements of previously studied content; ensuring that it is further embedded in long-term memory.

Assessment:

We believe that assessment in Geography is more than just knowing facts, names or places. We assess the children's ability to apply their knowledge with a final assessment piece at the end of each project. This provides information on the children's ability to use a combination of substantive, disciplinary and procedural knowledge.

The end of unit assessment comprises of an unseen source that is related to the area of geography that has been studied. The children analyse the source, using the knowledge and skills they have developed during the project. This is used by teachers to provide information on how well the children are learning the curriculum.

References:

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