



NEWTON BLUECOAT CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Geography

Progression of Key Learning

Nursery to Year 6 • 2026–27

EXPLORE • LOCATE • INVESTIGATE • CONNECT • CARE

“Shine from the inside out”

Purpose

This document makes the progression from EYFS Understanding the World into the school's Geography curriculum explicit. It identifies the key learning that should become increasingly secure as children move from exploring familiar places, people, weather and environments towards increasingly precise locational knowledge, mapwork, fieldwork, geographical enquiry and explanation of human and physical processes.

Progression at a glance

EYFS foundation. Children explore their immediate environment, notice seasonal and environmental change, talk about places that are familiar or different, use simple positional language and begin to represent places through play, photographs, drawings and simple maps.

Key Stage 1 foundations. Pupils name, locate, observe, describe and compare places; use simple maps, globes, symbols and compass language; identify human and physical features; and ask and answer simple geographical questions.

Lower Key Stage 2 development. Pupils explain patterns and processes, use a wider range of maps and digital sources, use eight compass points and four-figure grid references, and undertake purposeful local fieldwork.

Upper Key Stage 2 depth. Pupils analyse connections and change, use latitude, longitude, time zones and increasingly complex mapping, use six-figure grid references, collect and analyse quantitative fieldwork data and form evidence-based views.

The geographical journey

PLACE	SPACE & SCALE	ENVIRONMENT	CHANGE & CONNECTION	ENQUIRY
What is this place like and what makes it distinctive?	Where is it and how is it connected?	How do physical and human features interact?	How and why do places change over time?	What can maps, fieldwork and evidence tell us?

Locational knowledge & sense of place

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Know familiar places such as home, Nursery and the school environment. Talk about where things are and notice features of places encountered through walks, stories and play.
Reception	Recognise and talk about familiar places and some places beyond the immediate environment. Use globes, maps, photographs and stories to develop awareness of the wider world.
Year 1	Name and locate the four countries of the UK and their capital cities; identify the UK on a map or globe; locate continents and oceans in relation to hot and cold areas.
Year 2	Locate the local area within the UK and the UK within the wider world; name the seven continents and five oceans; locate contrasting and seaside places.
Year 3	Locate the local area using maps; use local mapwork to understand routes and features; locate the Lake District and places linked to volcanoes and earthquakes.
Year 4	Locate Europe and selected countries/regions; locate rivers and environmental study areas and connect these to wider UK and European geography.
Year 5	Develop secure knowledge of UK cities, counties, mountains, rivers, seas and regions; locate food-producing regions and the Amazon using latitude and longitude.
Year 6	Locate North and South America and significant regions; use latitude, longitude, the Prime Meridian and time zones; apply secure locational knowledge when studying global trade and environmental change.

Human & physical geography

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Notice weather, seasons, plants, animals and features of the local environment. Begin to distinguish natural features from things made or used by people.
Reception	Describe seasonal change, weather and contrasting environments. Talk about buildings, roads, water, land, plants and other features and how people use places.
Year 1	Identify simple human and physical features; describe seasonal and daily weather; understand basic differences between hot, cold, urban and rural environments.
Year 2	Describe coasts, beaches, cliffs, harbours, mountains, rivers, valleys and vegetation; compare human and physical features of local, distant and seaside places.
Year 3	Explain basic tectonic processes behind volcanoes and earthquakes; describe mountains, lakes, settlements and tourism in the Lake District; investigate local land use and features.
Year 4	Explain the water cycle and river processes; describe settlement, climate and land use in European regions; investigate waste, recycling, pollution and human impact.
Year 5	Explain patterns of land use, resources and regional diversity in the UK; understand food miles, trade and sustainability; explain rainforest climate, biomes, vegetation and environmental change.

Stage	Key learning
Year 6	Analyse climate, coastline, erosion, settlement and environmental change; explain economic activity, imports/exports and interdependence; consider how human activity shapes places and environments.

Map skills, aerial images & spatial understanding

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Use positional language in play such as in, on, under, next to and behind. Follow simple routes and explore small-world representations of familiar places.
Reception	Use simple maps, plans, globes, photographs and aerial images with adult support. Follow and describe routes and represent familiar places through drawing or construction.
Year 1	Use simple maps, globes and atlases; recognise simple symbols; use near/far and left/right; begin to follow routes and locate familiar features.
Year 2	Use maps and aerial views to identify features and routes; use simple compass language and create simple maps with symbols and keys.
Year 3	Use eight compass points, OS symbols and four-figure grid references; plan routes and identify local features from maps and aerial images.
Year 4	Use atlases, digital maps and OS-style mapping with greater confidence; use scale, symbols, compass points and four-figure grid references when investigating Europe and rivers.
Year 5	Use atlases, digital mapping, latitude and longitude and increasingly detailed maps; interpret land use and regional patterns and compare information from different map sources.
Year 6	Use a wide range of maps including OS maps; use six-figure grid references, latitude, longitude, Prime Meridian and time zones; interpret mapping critically and select the most useful source for an enquiry.

Fieldwork, observation & data

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Explore the school grounds and outdoor environment using the senses. Notice and talk about weather, plants, buildings and changes over time.
Reception	Observe and talk about the immediate environment; take part in walks and simple investigations; record findings through talk, drawings, photographs, collections or simple marks.
Year 1	Observe and describe the school environment and daily weather; identify human and physical features; contribute to simple maps and records.

Stage	Key learning
Year 2	Undertake a local village walk; identify and record human and physical features and map where people live, travel and play.
Year 3	Plan routes, use compass directions and maps, identify local features and collect simple fieldwork evidence to understand the locality.
Year 4	Carry out an environmental or river enquiry; observe, measure and record human and physical features and begin to explain patterns using evidence.
Year 5	Collect, organise and present data about food, resources or local patterns; use fieldwork evidence to investigate how choices connect places.
Year 6	Use numerical and quantitative skills in comparative or settlement enquiry; select methods, collect and analyse data, present findings and evaluate the reliability of evidence.

Geographical enquiry, comparison & evidence

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Ask questions about places and the natural world. Notice similarities and differences and talk about what has been seen or experienced.
Reception	Ask simple questions about places, weather and environments; compare familiar and contrasting places using photographs, stories, maps and first-hand experience.
Year 1	Ask and answer simple geographical questions; describe similarities and differences and use observations, maps and photographs as evidence.
Year 2	Compare places and landscapes using a wider range of evidence; identify patterns and give simple reasons for similarities and differences.
Year 3	Ask increasingly focused questions; use maps, fieldwork and secondary sources; explain patterns and processes and begin to draw supported conclusions.
Year 4	Investigate geographical issues and processes using several sources; compare regions, explain cause and effect and communicate conclusions using appropriate evidence.
Year 5	Analyse similarities, differences and connections between regions; interpret maps and data; investigate sustainability and interdependence and justify conclusions.
Year 6	Frame searching geographical questions; evaluate evidence, analyse patterns, connections and change, consider different viewpoints and form balanced, evidence-informed conclusions.

Environment, sustainability & responsibility

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Care for the classroom, outdoor area, plants and living things. Begin to understand that our actions can help or harm the environment.
Reception	Notice change in the natural world and take part in caring for living things and shared spaces. Talk about simple ways to look after the environment.
Year 1	Recognise that places and environments need care; talk about simple choices that help look after the school grounds and wider world.
Year 2	Consider how weather, tourism and human activity affect local and seaside environments; suggest simple ways people can care for places.
Year 3	Consider the impacts of volcanoes, earthquakes, tourism and land use on people and environments; begin to recognise that people respond to geographical challenges in different ways.
Year 4	Investigate waste, recycling, pollution, flooding and river/environmental management; use evidence to suggest responsible choices.
Year 5	Explore renewable/non-renewable resources, food miles, rainforest change and sustainability; explain how choices in one place can affect people and environments elsewhere.
Year 6	Analyse climate and environmental change, erosion, trade, fairness and interdependence; consider different viewpoints and propose informed, responsible responses.

Geographical vocabulary & communication

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Use everyday words for place, position, weather, seasons and features of the environment, supported by talk, stories and play.
Reception	Use increasingly specific language for place, route, weather, environment and simple human/physical features. Explain observations in sentences.
Year 1	Use vocabulary including near, far, left, right, map, globe, journey, seasons, weather, town, village, country, continent and ocean.
Year 2	Use vocabulary including aerial view, landscape, environment, local, distant, city, coast, beach, cliff, harbour, port, mountain, river, valley, vegetation and Equator.
Year 3	Use vocabulary including continents, countries, trade, links, land use, plains, terrain, population, farming, seas and oceans, atlas, latitude and longitude.
Year 4	Use vocabulary including river, source, water cycle, evaporation, condensation, precipitation, runoff, flood plain, pollution, Europe, region, environmental and temperate.
Year 5	Use vocabulary including UK, counties, land use, natural resources, renewable, non-renewable, food miles, trade links, rainforest, Amazon, latitude, longitude, biome and vegetation belt.

Stage	Key learning
Year 6	Use vocabulary including import, export, trade, fair trade, economic activity, Prime Meridian, time zone, erosion, coastline, climate, environmental change and interdependence; communicate findings precisely.

Year-by-year Geography journey

Year 1: Autumn: Hot and Cold Areas of the World — Why are some places hot and others cold? | Spring: UK Countries and Capital Cities — What makes the United Kingdom a group of four countries? | Summer: Fieldwork in the School Grounds — What is our school environment like?

Year 2: Autumn: Local Area – Where I Live? / Continents and Oceans — Where do we live in the world? | Spring: Explorers — How did explorers change what people knew about the world? | Summer: Seaside Localities / Seasonal & Daily Weather — What makes a seaside place distinctive?

Year 3: Autumn: Local Area – Map Work & Fieldwork — How can maps and fieldwork help us understand our locality? | Spring: Volcanoes & Earthquakes — Why does the Earth shake and erupt? | Summer: Lake District — What makes the Lake District a distinctive region of the UK?

Year 4: Autumn: Rubbish & Recycling — What happens to our rubbish and how can our choices make a difference? | Spring: Passport to Europe — How does a European region compare with our own? | Summer: Flow River Flow — How do rivers shape landscapes and people's lives?

Year 5: Autumn: A Kingdom United — How diverse is the geography of the United Kingdom? | Spring: Food, Glorious Food! — Where does our food come from and why does it matter? | Summer: Amazon Adventure – Amazon Rainforest — Why is the Amazon important to the world?

Year 6: Autumn: Amazing Americas — How are places across the Americas connected and different? | Spring: Trading and Economics — How does global trade connect people and places? | Summer: Our Changing World — How and why is our world changing?

End-of-phase expectations

By the end of Nursery: Children confidently explore familiar environments, use simple positional and place language, notice weather and seasonal change, ask questions about the world and begin to care for shared places and living things.

By the end of Reception: Children describe familiar and contrasting environments, use simple maps, photographs and globes with support, observe change, talk about human and physical features and record simple observations.

By the end of Key Stage 1: Pupils name and locate key places, observe and compare environments, identify human and physical features, use simple maps/globes/symbols/compass language, undertake local fieldwork and ask and answer simple geographical questions.

By the end of Lower Key Stage 2: Pupils explain patterns and processes, use a wider range of maps and digital sources, use eight compass points and four-figure grid references, undertake purposeful fieldwork and communicate evidence-supported conclusions.

By the end of Key Stage 2: Pupils analyse connections and change, use increasingly complex mapping including latitude, longitude, time zones and six-figure grid references, collect and analyse quantitative fieldwork data and form balanced, evidence-informed views about places, processes and sustainability.

Thinking like a geographer

- Where is it and what is it like there?
- What makes this place distinctive?
- How is this place similar to and different from other places?
- What physical and human processes are shaping it?
- How is this place connected to other places?
- What do maps, fieldwork, photographs and data tell me?
- How and why is this place changing?
- What are the impacts on people and environments?
- What evidence supports my conclusion?
- How can people make informed and responsible choices about the world?