



Subject Leader Report: Geography

‘What is our knowledge worth if we know nothing about the world that sustains us’

‘Our Vision is for every child to love learning, be compassionate and achieve now and in the future. Working together with our communities, we will give our children roots to grow and wings to fly.’

Our Aims in Geography:

That children are confident to see patterns and make connections between places.

That children are confident drawing and using a range of maps at different scales.

Geography is special because children learn to understand the world that they live in. Children learn the following key skills through an enquiry approach:

To question

To observe and record

To use fieldwork

To make connections

The themes that run through geography at Portsdown include:

- Comparing places
- Local – National – Global sense of scale
- Conservation – Natural resources and Natural Disasters

Geography links to British values because children make links with other countries but start with where we live. The school values of respect are crucial when learning about conservation.

Substantive and disciplinary knowledge:

In primary education, **substantive** and **disciplinary knowledge** in geography form two critical aspects of how children learn and engage with the subject:

1. Substantive Knowledge

This refers to the core content, facts, and concepts that students learn in geography. It includes the "what" of geography – the information and ideas that help students understand the world around them.

- Examples of Substantive knowledge in Geography:

- Physical geography: Mountains, rivers, oceans, climate, and weather.
- Human geography: Settlements, transport, trade, and the impact of human activity on the environment.
- Locational knowledge: Understanding continents, countries, cities, and specific places around the world.
- Place knowledge: Detailed studies of contrasting localities, such as comparing the UK with another country.
- Environmental geography: Understanding sustainability, ecosystems, and how humans interact with the environment.
- **Purpose:** Helps students build a foundational understanding of geographical phenomena and their significance.

2. Disciplinary Knowledge

This involves understanding how geographers think and work – the methods and processes used to study geography. It focuses on the "how" of geography – developing the skills and approaches that geographers use to explore the world.

- **Examples of Disciplinary knowledge in Geography:**
 - Geographical enquiry: Asking questions about places and environments (e.g., "Why do rivers flood?" or "How do people adapt to living in deserts?").
 - Fieldwork skills: Collecting data, making observations, and using maps, compasses, and tools.
 - Interpretation: Analysing maps, charts, photographs, and satellite images to draw conclusions.
 - Critical thinking: Evaluating evidence, identifying patterns, and forming explanations about geographical issues.
 - Communication: Presenting findings through maps, reports, or models.
- **Purpose:** Encourages students to think like geographers, fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Why Both Matter

- **Substantive knowledge** gives students the content and context needed to understand geographical ideas.
- **Disciplinary knowledge** enables them to engage with geography as a way of thinking and questioning the world, making the learning active and reflective.

When balanced effectively, these two forms of knowledge create a comprehensive geography education, inspiring curiosity and equipping students with the tools to explore their world.

Planning and Teaching

At Portsdown, great geography lessons must come from a geographical enquiry approach based around a key question. Map skills are taught in all units at the scale appropriate for the place using digital maps, aerial maps, physical maps, globes and atlases. Field work is taught in both key stages at either the school, local or county level. Fieldwork and map skills at Portsdown use progressive skills from EYFS to Year 6 and we aim to prepare children for the Key Stage 3 content. Vocabulary is included on the planning and in the geography knowledge organisers; it is planned carefully to build on previous learning for children's vocabulary retention.

How do we plan for your subject?

The key themes & topics that children learn about are:

EYFS: Learning about the world around them

Y1: Local Park and UK small area study (including learning the 4 capital cities of the UK)

Y2: Hot and Cold Places and a Non-European Study

Y3: South America (including climate zones and rainforest); Study of Spain

Y4: Natural Disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes); Small UK region contrast

Y5: UK links with economic trade (tourism) comparison with Spain region; River Study

(Including Mountains and the Water cycle)

Y6: Natural Resources and North America

Assessment

At Portsdown we have a set of geographical skills and map skills for each year group to aspire to achieve from the National Curriculum. These are in the planning and when a unit is complete teachers can refer back to these to decide how their children are achieving in geography. In turn, these need to be carefully used to inform the next steps for children and to support any children that are not meeting the level of skills for their year group. At a transition point teachers share the children's achievement to support their lesson delivery.

Monitoring the Quality of Teaching and Learning

Monitoring is carried out through a range of approaches; pupil interviews, book looks, lesson observations and these inform the next steps for geography and how to support teachers with their teaching and learning. When monitoring the quality of geography, it is linked to the National Curriculum expectations and the vision for Portsdown children. The geography

subject leader will always share the monitoring feedback with teachers and where appropriate with SLT and governors. The results of the feedback lead to the next steps for geography and its links with the School Improvement Plan.

Wider Enrichment Opportunities

Geography has links with most other subjects although we need to ensure these links are meaningful for the children. An example is in English where we cover a range of themes such as conservation and migration. 'Reading to learn' is also an opportunity for children to read and learn about the content in the geography curriculum.

Other links include using the school grounds for science where children can develop their knowledge of the ever changing world we live in and learn through an investigation or enquiry.

Some of the trips that enrich geography include: Year R visits to the local library, farm or around the school grounds. Comparisons of place are taught here within the 'world' that children are very familiar with. As an example, Year 1 visit a forest and the links with conservation, weather and seasons are explored there. They then compare this environment to the school grounds and a local park.

Year 4 have developed a fieldwork unit taking children to compare Cosham with another locality in Hampshire.

Year 5 have their 'Rivers' unit where they explore a local river in order to combine their classroom-based knowledge with field work.

Targets for 2026/2027

Ensure Knowledge Organisers are consistently present and used across all foundation subjects

Ensure foundational geographical concepts, spatial skills, and vocabulary are consistently delivered across EYFS (Nursery & Reception) in line with the *Understanding the World: People, Culture and Communities* and *The Natural World* ELGs.

Embed consistent retrieval practice and recall strategies across all KS1 and KS2 Geography lessons to improve long-term memory retention of key places, spatial vocabulary, and core physical/human processes.

Ensure geography enquiry questions directly align with unit outcomes and formative assessment points to establish clear, objective evaluation standards across all key stages.

Targets for 2025/2026

- Continue to engage parents in Geography at Portsdown
- Review feedback from teachers on last year's units and make tweaks to planning to ensure we are always improving and striving for better coverage and better experiences for our children:
 - Year 1 – More focus on explicitly teaching Human and Physical Features (plan adapted for Local park unit)
 - Year 1 – A celebration of each saint day for the 4 home countries of the UK and more of a focus on the oceans to ensure this learning sticks
 - Year 2 – Non-European unit for India to be made into a CAW, as perfect opportunity for a written outcome to demonstrate their learning
 - Year 3 – More time to rehearse their speeches and perform them on the Amazon Rainforest.
 - Year 3 – Study of Spain unit to be tweaked to add in some stimulating tasks for children to help them understand the learning.
 - Year 5 – To review the outcome of the river unit to see if a more hands on model would be effective.
 - Year 6 – Both Units to be reviewed by Geography lead to ensure focus is put on key learning intentions.
- Save evidence of final outcomes from units: whether this be in books or saved on system (e.g. Year 3 creating a Rainforest video) and *how is technology used to record Geography?*
- Continue to promote and develop talk in the classroom through planned opportunities for Talk and by supporting all children to participate
- Continue with opportunities for writing within Geography for children to demonstrate their knowledge in an assessed piece of writing, see below:
 - Autumn 1 – Year 4 Natural Disasters and Year 2 Hot and Cold Places
 - Autumn 2 – Year 3 Rainforest and Year 6 Natural Resources
 - Spring 1 – Year 1 UK small Area
 - Spring 2 – Year 6 North America
 - Summer 1 – Year 4 Endangered animals
 - Summer 2 – Year 4 Endangered animals and Year 5 River