



Geography Progression

Our Geography curriculum helps children understand places, people and environments, from their immediate surroundings to the wider world. Children build knowledge of human and physical features, explore how places are connected and investigate how environments change.

How learning develops

Phase	Progression in learning
Early Years	Notice and describe familiar places, explore the natural world and talk about similarities, differences and change. Begin to use photographs, simple maps and positional language.
Years 1 and 2	Locate countries, continents and oceans. Describe human and physical features, compare places and collect simple fieldwork information using maps, photographs and observations.
Years 3 and 4	Explain geographical processes and patterns, including tectonic activity, rivers and the water cycle. Develop map reading, enquiry and evidence gathering, and explore land use and environmental responsibility.
Years 5 and 6	Analyse connections between people, resources, climate and landscapes. Use increasingly precise mapping and data skills, investigate geographical questions and evaluate change and sustainability.

Our values in geographical learning

Geography provides opportunities to practise respect, creativity, resilience and responsibility. Children consider different communities and environments, explore questions about the world and reflect on how people's choices affect places and living things.

Planning, monitoring and reflecting support geographical enquiry. Children decide what they need to find out, check the usefulness of their evidence and explain how their findings develop their understanding.

Reading the progression

The following tables summarise the skills and key knowledge in the supplied progression from Nursery foundations to Year 6. Nursery describes the early experiences on which Reception learning builds. Related strands connect across topics and are revisited with increasing depth and independence.

A dash means that the supplied progression does not give a separate statement for that year in that strand. It does not mean that related learning cannot be revisited.



People and settlements

Children move from recognising familiar buildings to explaining how settlements, transport, land use and resources are connected.

Stage	Human features and landmarks	Settlements and land use
Nursery foundations	Notice and name human features in familiar surroundings, including local streets, buildings, shops and parks.	Say how two places in the immediate environment are similar or different.
Reception	Name and talk about local human features, including shops, houses, streets and parks.	Describe an environment that contrasts with their own.
Year 1	Name human features and landmarks and describe their purposes. Recognise houses, roads and bridges, and explain how landmarks help people find places or learn about the past.	Identify features of cities, towns and villages. Recognise London as England's capital and a major settlement.
Year 2	Use geographical vocabulary to explain how and why people use human features for work, travel, entertainment and living.	Describe the size, location and function of a local industry. Understand tourism as travel away from home for pleasure.
Year 3	Describe the type, purpose and use of buildings, monuments, services and land. Explain why some features are in settlements and others are outside them.	Describe settlement types and land use in an area. Recognise agricultural, commercial, recreational, residential and transport uses.
Year 4	Describe human features and their locations and explain how they connect, including railways, stations, interchanges and airports.	Explain how settlements, land and water systems are used. Explore rivers for farming, leisure and transport, and changing uses of canals.
Year 5	Describe and explain transport networks in the UK and elsewhere. Understand how roads, railways, airports and ports connect places and move people and goods.	Describe agricultural land use in the UK, including arable, pastoral and mixed farming, and the purpose of allotments.
Year 6	Explain how people live and work in a place, considering access to natural resources, culture and economic activity.	Describe the distribution of natural resources, including food, minerals, energy sources and water.



Weather and physical processes

Children build from seasonal observations to explaining processes and evaluating their effects on people and environments.

Stage	Climate and weather	Physical processes
Nursery foundations	Notice how the local environment changes in different seasons, such as new leaves and blossom in spring.	Notice how wind and rain affect the local environment, including damage to trees and flooding.
Reception	Record observations of seasonal changes. Recognise that weather can vary within a season.	Describe how different types of weather affect familiar places and how people use them.
Year 1	Identify daily and seasonal weather patterns. Name the four UK seasons and describe their typical weather.	Describe simply how a physical process or human behaviour has affected an area, place or human activity.
Year 2	Describe simple weather patterns in hot, cold and temperate places, relating these broadly to distance from the equator.	Describe the effects of erosion, including the action of wind and water on the landscape.
Year 3	Explain how weather affects what people do and how urban and rural environments are used.	Explain and illustrate how earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur, linking these processes to the movement of tectonic plates.
Year 4	Explain climatic variation within a country or continent, including contrasting climates in North and South America.	Explain the water cycle using diagrams and geographical vocabulary: evaporation, condensation, precipitation and collection.
Year 5	Explain how climate, temperature and precipitation influence land use.	Describe how soil fertility, drainage and climate affect the location and success of farming.
Year 6	Evaluate how climate and extreme weather affect people's lives. Consider how resources and the ability to prepare and recover influence vulnerability.	Describe physical processes, including weather, affecting two locations. Use evidence to compare their impacts.



Geographical resources and data

Children learn to select and interpret sources, recognise patterns and use information to support geographical conclusions.

Stage	Using geographical resources	Analysing data
Nursery foundations	Identify simple geographical features in a photograph.	Use small world toys and models to represent information about the locality.
Reception	Use photographs and maps to identify and describe local human and physical features.	Begin to collect simple geographical information during fieldwork.
Year 1	Identify features and landmarks in aerial photographs and plan views, recognising that these show an area from above.	Collect simple fieldwork data. Understand that data can include numbers and measurements.
Year 2	Study aerial photographs to describe an area's features and characteristics. Recognise vertical and oblique views.	Collect and organise information in charts, tables and pictograms. Use primary sources, such as observation, and secondary sources, such as maps and books.
Year 3	Analyse maps, atlases, globes and digital mapping to locate countries and describe geographical features.	Analyse primary data and identify patterns. Understand that primary data is collected first hand through observation and investigation.
Year 4	Draw conclusions about places and features using a range of resources, including atlases and digital maps.	—
Year 5	Analyse and compare places using aerial photographs, atlases and maps. Use map symbols, grid references and compass directions.	Summarise geographical data to draw conclusions, including information about populations and economic activity.
Year 6	Use satellite images and maps at different scales to investigate a place. Understand how scale helps to measure real distances.	Analyse and present increasingly complex data. Compare sources and suggest reasons for variation, including methods, equipment, location, timing and conditions.



Fieldwork and geographical enquiry

Children develop from supported observations to independent questions, hypotheses and investigations using a range of evidence.

Stage	Progression in fieldwork	Evidence and understanding
Nursery foundations	Take part in simple fieldwork, helping to take photographs and record information.	Begin to gather information directly from familiar places.
Reception	Take photographs, draw simple picture maps and collect simple information during fieldwork.	Recognise different features of the local environment and understand that maps can represent them.
Year 1	Carry out tasks to identify characteristics of the school grounds or locality.	Fieldwork involves observing and collecting information about people, places and natural environments.
Year 2	Ask and answer simple geographical questions through observation and straightforward data collection.	Use fieldwork to help answer questions about the local community.
Year 3	Gather evidence to answer a geographical question or enquiry.	Geographical evidence can include facts, information and numerical data.
Year 4	Investigate a geographical hypothesis using a range of fieldwork techniques.	A hypothesis is an idea to investigate. Use surveys, maps and numerical information to draw conclusions.
Year 5	Construct or carry out an enquiry by gathering and analysing evidence from different sources.	Investigate physical geography, such as rivers, coasts and weather, or human geography, such as population, land use and tourism.
Year 6	Ask and answer geographical questions and hypotheses using a range of fieldwork and research techniques.	Select and combine methods to investigate the local environment, using the evidence gathered to support answers.



Materials and physical features

Children progress from noticing natural materials and landforms to explaining their characteristics, distribution and influence on environments.

Stage	Natural and human made materials	Physical features
Nursery foundations	Notice natural and human made materials in the environment.	Name physical features nearby, such as fields, rivers and hills.
Reception	Name materials such as wood, stone, sand, metal, plastic, glass and fabric.	Name common physical features locally and beyond, including rivers, mountains, oceans and coastlines.
Year 1	Identify natural and human made materials. Recognise that natural materials come from the ground or living things, while others are processed or changed.	Use geographical vocabulary for features such as beach, cliff, coast, forest, hill, mountain, sea, river, soil, valley and vegetation.
Year 2	Describe materials' properties and where they are found. Recognise that both natural and human made materials are used to create human features.	Describe the size, location and position of physical features. Explore coastal features such as stacks, formed through erosion.
Year 3	Name and describe sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks and explore how they form and differ.	Describe the parts of a volcano or earthquake. Recognise active, dormant and extinct volcanoes, different volcano shapes and explosive or effusive eruptions.
Year 4	Explain how rivers transport materials: dissolved in water, suspended in the flow, bounced along the bed or rolled along it.	—
Year 5	Explain how topography and soil type help to determine the location of agricultural regions.	Identify physical features and environmental regions of North and South America, explaining how climate, soils and landscapes affect land use.
Year 6	Explain how ice and cold conditions make polar oceans different from other oceans.	Compare polar landscapes, including glaciers, icebergs, mountains and ice fields, and features such as tundra and boreal forest in northern regions.



Environment and sustainability

Children move from caring for familiar places to explaining environmental systems and evaluating how resources can be used sustainably.

Stage	Environment	Sustainability
Nursery foundations	Show care for living things and the environment. Understand that litter can harm plants and animals.	—
Reception	Describe ways to look after the immediate environment, including keeping litter away from land and sea.	—
Year 1	Describe how pollution and litter affect the local environment and school grounds.	Describe ways to protect woodlands, hedgerows and meadows, including recycling and disposing of waste carefully.
Year 2	Suggest ways to improve the local environment, such as collecting litter, planting flowers and improving amenities.	Describe how people can help local and global environments now and in the future through reducing, reusing, recycling, composting and saving resources.
Year 3	Identify five broad climate zones: desert, Mediterranean, polar, temperate and tropical.	Explain the term carbon footprint and describe ways to reduce it, such as travelling differently, wasting less and making informed food choices.
Year 4	Describe how conditions and vegetation change with altitude on mountains.	Describe how natural resources can provide sustainable energy, including solar, wind, hydroelectric and geothermal power. Distinguish renewable and non renewable resources.
Year 5	Name and locate major biomes, climate zones and vegetation belts, explaining their shared characteristics.	Explain how production can meet present needs while considering future generations, including reducing emissions, using renewable energy and developing technology.
Year 6	Explain how climate change affects climate zones and biomes, including temperature, water availability and habitats. Consider the effects of fossil fuel use and land use change.	Explain relationships between people and environments and how careful management of natural resources can support life now and in the future.



Knowing the world and the United Kingdom

Children expand their geographical knowledge from familiar places to countries, continents, cities and patterns of settlement.

Stage	The wider world	The United Kingdom
Nursery foundations	Talk about places visited or seen in photographs. Explore globes, maps and stories about other places.	Show interest in the place they live on a map or globe.
Reception	Notice and talk about places around the world, including oceans and seas. Recognise a globe as a model of Earth.	Identify the United Kingdom on a world map or globe.
Year 1	Name and locate the seven continents and five oceans on a world map.	Name and locate England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and their capitals: London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.
Year 2	Locate the seas around the UK, other seas, the five oceans and seven continents on maps or globes.	Identify characteristics of the four UK countries and major cities, including well known mountains, lakes, rivers and coastal features.
Year 3	Locate countries and major cities in Europe, including Russia. Understand Europe's position in the Northern Hemisphere.	Name, locate and describe major UK counties and cities.
Year 4	Locate countries and major cities of North, Central and South America using maps, atlases or globes.	Study UK geographical features in detail, including hills, mountains, coasts, rivers, forests, lakes and islands.
Year 5	Name, locate and describe major world cities across different continents.	Describe the relative locations of UK cities, counties and geographical features, using distances and relationships to other places.
Year 6	Explain interconnections between two or more parts of the world.	Describe population growth, movement, economic activity, space, land use and settlement patterns in a UK area or the wider world.



Location and position

Children develop from everyday positional language to precise location using compass directions, coordinates and global reference lines.

Stage	Global location	Position and direction
Nursery foundations	Explore how weather, plants and animals differ between places, using pictures and stories.	Discuss routes and locations using positional language such as in, on, next to, behind and in front.
Reception	Use simple geographical terms to describe differences in weather, plants and animals between places.	Describe where things are in relation to each other and give simple directions, including forward, backwards, left and right.
Year 1	Locate hot and cold areas of the world in relation to the equator. Understand the equator as an imaginary line around Earth.	Use directional and positional language to give directions and describe locations and relationships between features.
Year 2	Locate the equator and North and South Poles. Recognise the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.	Use the four cardinal compass directions: north, south, east and west.
Year 3	Locate significant places using latitude and longitude. Latitude measures north or south of the equator; longitude measures east or west of the Prime Meridian.	Use eight compass points to locate places and features, including north east, south east, south west and north west.
Year 4	Identify the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and locate the tropical region between them.	Use eight compass points, four and six figure grid references, symbols and a key to locate and plot places.
Year 5	Identify the Prime Meridian and explain its role in measuring longitude. Explore world time zones and differences in local time.	Use compass points, grid references and scale to interpret maps accurately, including Ordnance Survey maps.
Year 6	Explain the significance of latitude, longitude, the equator, hemispheres, tropics, polar circles, the Prime Meridian and time zones. Explore polar day and night.	Use latitude and longitude or grid references to locate geographical areas and features precisely.



Maps and geographical comparisons

Children learn to represent and interpret places and to compare them using increasingly detailed geographical evidence.

Stage	Maps	Comparing and contrasting
Nursery foundations	Describe a familiar route and use maps in role play. Recognise that a map represents an area.	Talk about simple differences between places where people live, using pictures, books and maps.
Reception	Make and use simple maps in play to represent real or imagined places and journeys.	Describe how two places are similar or different using simple maps, photographs and other information.
Year 1	Draw or read a simple map. Recognise symbols and keys used to show human and physical features.	Identify similarities and differences between two places, for example London and Kuala Lumpur.
Year 2	Draw and read simple maps using symbols and a key. Use maps to follow routes and identify features.	Compare human and physical features of an area of the UK and a contrasting non European country, such as Somalia.
Year 3	Use four figure grid references to describe the location of objects and places on a simple map. Read eastings before northings.	Classify and compare types of geographical feature, including volcanoes.
Year 4	Use four and six figure grid references and keys. Understand that six figure references locate places more precisely within a grid square.	Compare physical features such as rivers and mountains, using vocabulary including source, tributary, mouth and summit.
Year 5	Identify high and low land and river basins on relief maps. Interpret contours and recognise that closely spaced lines indicate steep slopes.	Describe similarities and differences in physical and human geography between continents.
Year 6	Use grid references, latitude and longitude, contours and symbols on maps and globes to interpret an area's geography.	Compare the climates of two regions using evidence such as precipitation and average temperatures.



Significant places and geographical change

Children progress from recognising places that matter to explaining their importance and analysing how landscapes and communities change.

Stage	Significant places	Geographical change
Nursery foundations	Talk about and ask questions about places important to them.	Notice and talk about changes in the local environment.
Reception	Discuss and describe significant places, considering their location, use, buildings or landscape.	Describe local changes using photographs and first hand experiences.
Year 1	Name important buildings and places and explain their importance, including community services and links with the past.	Describe how a place or geographical feature has changed over time, including roads and towns.
Year 2	Name and locate a significant place and explain why it matters to a community or society, including historical or religious importance.	Describe how an environment has changed or might change through human activity or physical processes such as erosion.
Year 3	Locate significant volcanoes and plate boundaries and explain their importance, including the Pacific Ring of Fire.	Explain short and long term landscape changes caused by earthquakes and volcanoes. Describe plate movement and how it changes Earth's surface over time.
Year 4	Locate significant mountains and rivers and explain their importance, using examples from around the world.	Explain how rivers, seas and oceans change landscapes through erosion, transportation and deposition.
Year 5	Identify problems faced by farmers in a studied country, such as Peru, and report on possible support.	Describe how settlement characteristics change as settlements grow. Use settlement hierarchy to compare their size, role and significance.
Year 6	Locate significant industrial, farming and exporting regions and explain their distribution, considering resources, transport, water, power and labour.	Present a detailed account of how an industry, including tourism, has changed a place over time, considering environmental, social and economic effects.