

Geography Curriculum Rationale

At Hurst Green Primary School, Geography is designed to help pupils develop a deep understanding of the world, how places are connected and how people and environments influence one another. Through a carefully sequenced curriculum, pupils develop geographical knowledge alongside increasingly sophisticated disciplinary thinking, enabling them to understand the physical and human processes that shape our world.

The curriculum is structured around five key strands: Place & Regional Comparison, Location, Space & Mapping, Physical Processes & Patterns, Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement and Environment, Sustainability & Change. These strands are revisited throughout the school so that pupils build secure knowledge and make increasingly complex connections between places, people and environments over time.

Geography begins in the Early Years through Understanding the World, where children explore their immediate environment, observe seasonal change, compare places and develop a sense of place and belonging. As pupils progress through Key Stages 1 and 2, they move from identifying and describing geographical features towards explaining patterns, analysing relationships and evaluating environmental issues using a range of geographical sources, maps, data and fieldwork.

Enquiry lies at the heart of the curriculum. Each unit is built around a meaningful question which encourages pupils to think critically, make connections and apply their understanding. Through fieldwork, map work and the study of local, national and global geography, pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to understand an increasingly interconnected world.

The curriculum promotes curiosity, responsibility and environmental awareness. Through studying diverse places, communities and environments, pupils develop an appreciation of the wider world and their role within it. Geography at Hurst Green aims to develop informed, thoughtful and responsible global citizens who are equipped to understand and positively influence the world around them.

Geography Strands

Strand	Focus
Place & Regional Comparison	Understanding the characteristics of places and comparing locations across the world.
Location, Space & Mapping	Developing locational knowledge, spatial awareness and mapping skills.
Physical Processes & Patterns	Understanding natural processes such as weather, climate, rivers, coasts and biomes.
Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement	Exploring how people live, work, travel and interact with places.
Environment, Sustainability & Change	Understanding environmental issues, sustainability and human impact on the world.

Reception: Foundations of Geographical Thinking

In Reception, children begin to develop geographical understanding through exploration of their immediate environment, observations of the natural world and encounters with places beyond their local area. Through first-hand experiences, maps, stories, photographs, discussion and play, children develop an awareness of place, location, environment and the wider world.

Geographical understanding is developed through the themes taught across the Reception year and provides the foundations for the geography curriculum in Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Geography Begins with the Child's World: Children begin their geographical journey by exploring familiar places, including their classroom, school grounds and local area. As their understanding develops, they compare these places with environments and communities beyond their immediate experience, building foundations for future geographical learning.

Reception Themes and Geography Strand Connections

Marvellous Me!	Location, Space & Mapping; Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement
Celebrations	Place & Regional Comparison; Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement
Once Upon a Time	Place & Regional Comparison (through stories and settings)
Let's Grow!	Physical Processes & Patterns; Environment, Sustainability & Change
Superheroes	Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement; Location, Space & Mapping
We Are Explorers!	All five geography strands

How the Geography Strands Begin in Reception

Place & Regional Comparison	Comparing Halesowen and the UK with contrasting places and environments around the world
Location, Space & Mapping	Exploring routes, maps, globes, aerial images and simple geographical representations
Physical Processes & Patterns	Observing weather, seasons, plants, animals and changes in the natural world
Human Geography: Settlement, Trade & Movement	Learning about communities, occupations, journeys, farming and food production
Environment, Sustainability & Change	Exploring the natural environment and developing an understanding of how to care for it

Reception Progression in Geography

Core Knowledge

By the end of Reception, children know:

They live in Halesowen, in the West Midlands, within the United Kingdom.
Some of the features of their immediate environment and local community.
The name of their school and some features they pass on their route to school.
The names of the four seasons.
That weather changes across the seasons.
That different plants and animals live in different environments.
That places around the world may be similar to or different from where they live.
That food is grown and produced in different places.
That people make journeys for different reasons and in different ways.
Ways in which they can help care for the environment.

By the end of Reception, children can:

Describe features of their immediate environment.
Draw information from simple maps.
Use maps, globes and images to find out about places.
Talk about places that are near and far.
Compare their environment with contrasting environments.
Observe and describe seasonal and environmental changes.
Ask questions and make observations about the natural world.
Identify similarities and differences between places.

Geographical Vocabulary

Place and Location: Halesowen, West Midlands, United Kingdom, Great Britain, world, country, town, city, London, capital

Mapping and Position: map, globe, route, near, far

Human Geography: community, school, road, shop, doctor, teacher, jobs, farm, harvest

Physical Geography: season, weather, temperature, autumn, winter, spring, summer, mountain, beach, forest, countryside

Environment and Comparison: environment, nature, animal, plant, different, same

Transition into Year 1

Children leave Reception with an emerging understanding that:

- places have different physical and human features;
- maps can help us understand and navigate places;
- weather and seasons affect the environment;
- people live, work and travel in different ways;
- places around the world can be similar to or different from their own locality.

This provides the foundation for the Year 1 geography curriculum, where pupils begin to study their local area, develop mapping skills and compare places and environments

Geography Long-Term Plan

Year Group	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Year 1	Our Local Area	Our World	Weather & Seasons
Year 2	Journeys & Maps	Extreme Environments	Our Seaside
Year 3	Rainforests	Rivers	Climate & Biomes
Year 4	Italy (Volcanoes & Hazards)	Settlement & Land Use	Oceans & Trade Routes
Year 5	Global Trade	Middle East	Planet Earth (Systems & Change)
Year 6	The Americas	Climate Change	Linked through wider curriculum themes

Detailed strand planning is available within the Geography Long-Term Planning by Strand document.

Vocabulary Progression

Geography vocabulary is carefully sequenced to develop pupils' disciplinary thinking as well as their geographical knowledge. The curriculum uses a progressive vocabulary spine, ensuring that key concepts are introduced, revisited and applied in increasingly complex contexts.

Vocabulary is organised into:

Tier 2 – Disciplinary Vocabulary

High-utility concepts that help pupils think like geographers and are revisited across multiple units.

Tier 3 – Topic-Specific Vocabulary

Subject-specific terminology that gives precision to learning within individual units.

Tier 2 Vocabulary Progression

Year	Newly Introduced Vocabulary	Retrieved Vocabulary
Year 1	place, map, feature, compare	—
Year 2	journey, location	Year 1
Year 3	settlement, environment	Years 1–2
Year 4	region	Years 1–3
Year 5	climate, resource	Years 1–4
Year 6	sustainability	Years 1–5

End of Phase Expectations

End of KS1	End of Lower KS2	End of Upper KS2
Compare places and features	Explain settlements and environments	Analyse sustainability and environmental impact
Use maps and simple geographical vocabulary	Compare regions and geographical patterns	Evaluate geographical issues and justify conclusions
Describe journeys and locations	Explain human and physical geography	Connect climate, resources and human activity

Detailed Tier 3 vocabulary is identified within medium-term plans and revisited through retrieval, discussion and application activities throughout each unit.

Assessment in Geography

Assessment is used to identify what pupils know, understand and can do as geographers. Assessment focuses on both geographical knowledge and the disciplinary skills needed to think and work as a geographer.

Teachers continually assess pupils' understanding through discussion, questioning, fieldwork, map work and written outcomes. Assessment information is used to identify next steps in learning, address misconceptions and support progression over time.

Current Assessment Approaches

Teachers gather evidence through:

- Geographical enquiry activities
- Fieldwork investigations
- Map work and atlas skills
- Discussion and questioning
- Retrieval activities
- Written outcomes
- Interpretation of geographical data and sources
- End-of-unit tasks where appropriate

Assessment Considers Pupils' Ability To:

- Recall and apply geographical knowledge.
- Use geographical vocabulary accurately and confidently.
- Identify, describe and explain human and physical features.
- Use maps, atlases, globes and digital mapping tools effectively.
- Collect, analyse and interpret geographical information.
- Make comparisons between places and environments.
- Explain geographical patterns and processes.
- Develop and justify geographical conclusions using evidence.
- Demonstrate curiosity and understanding of the wider world.

Future Development

The school is currently reviewing and refining its approach to assessment across the wider curriculum to ensure consistency, meaningful assessment and clear progression of knowledge and skills. Geography assessment will continue to evolve alongside this whole-school curriculum development.

