

St Mary's CofE Primary School



Geography Curriculum Overview

Statement of Intent:

At St Mary's, geography inspires curiosity about the world and the people who live in it. Rooted in our vision of "Shining Brighter and Brighter", we help pupils understand their local area, explore contrasting places and environments, and recognise how human actions and natural processes shape our planet. Our curriculum develops secure geographical knowledge alongside the ability to ask questions, investigate evidence and make thoughtful, informed judgements. Through this learning, pupils grow as ambitious learners, respectful communicators and responsible world citizens.

Aims:

- Build secure knowledge of places, locations and the Earth's human and physical processes.
- Use geographical vocabulary accurately to describe, compare and explain places and patterns.
- Develop progressive map-reading, observation, fieldwork and enquiry skills.
- Recognise similarities, differences and connections between local, national and global environments.
- Consider environmental challenges and the impact of human decisions with curiosity and respect.

How Geography is taught at St Mary's:

In Years 1–6, geography follows the Kapow Primary scheme, adapted to our pupils and locality. Units revisit and extend substantive knowledge and disciplinary skills, including map work, fieldwork, data interpretation and geographical enquiry. Pupils use maps, atlases, globes, digital resources and first-hand observations to investigate real places and questions. Local fieldwork provides meaningful opportunities to apply learning, while explicit vocabulary teaching, retrieval and appropriate support enable all pupils to participate. In Nursery and Reception, geographical foundations develop through Understanding the World, exploration of the school and local environment, seasonal observation, stories and comparisons of places.

Long Term Overview

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Nursery	UW: Autumn changes, songs about Harvest (Helping others) and other festivals: Diwali (dep. on moon)	UW: Celebrations in our class: Diwali, Bonfire, Remembrance, Christmas	UW: Winter changes Celebrations in our class: Chinese New Year	UW: Animals and changes (animal babies) People that helps us (Health)	UW: Plants and changes (growth)	UW: People that help us Summer changes Celebrations in EYFS: Eid
Reception	UW: Seasonal change - Autumn, Harvest & seasonal fruit and veg.	UW: Comparing celebrations: Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah. Seasonal change, changes in weather,	UW: Exploring Local wildlife habitats, Winter seasonal changes, clothes we wear, identification of animals/plants in cold places, understanding how weather affects people/animals around the world	UW: Materials: Floating and sinking. Different occupations. Planting beans and taking care of them. Exploring the beginnings of spring	UW: Observation of animals, animal body parts and differences, comparing environments, atlas Different cultural greetings	UW: Space and the planets
Year 1	What is it like here?		What is the weather like in the UK?		What is it like to live in Shanghai?	
Year 2	Would you prefer to live in a hot place or a cold place?		Why is our world wonderful?		What is it like to live by the coast?	
Year 3	Why do people live near volcanoes?		Who lives in Antarctica?			Are all settlements the same?
Year 4	Why are rainforests important to us?		Where does our food come from?			What are rivers and how are they used?
Year 5	What is life like in the Alps?		Why do Oceans Matter?		Would you like to live in the desert?	
Year 6			Why does population change?		Where does our energy come from?	Can I carry out an independent fieldwork enquiry?

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - EYFS

Geography in the Early Years Foundation Stage

At St Mary's, the foundations of geographical understanding are developed through the Understanding the World area of learning in both Nursery and Reception. Geography is woven naturally into children's everyday experiences, play, exploration and conversations, rather than taught as a separate subject.

Children begin by exploring their immediate environment, observing seasonal changes and developing an awareness of the natural world around them. Through experiences such as investigating local wildlife, growing plants, exploring different habitats and noticing changes in weather, they develop curiosity about places, environments and the world in which they live.

Children are also encouraged to look beyond their immediate surroundings. Through stories, celebrations, discussions, atlases and comparisons of different environments, they begin to recognise similarities and differences between places, communities and ways of life.

These experiences lay the foundations for geographical learning in Key Stage 1, particularly locational and place knowledge, human and physical geography, and early geographical enquiry skills. They also support our curriculum drivers of Ambition for All, World Citizens and Respectful Communicators, encouraging children to ask questions, share observations and develop an appreciation of the wider world.

Vocabulary	home, school, near, far, map, place, weather, season, environment, country; language about familiar people, places and changes.
Understanding the World	Explore and describe the school, local area and natural world through observation and play. Notice changes in seasons and weather, and recognise similarities and differences between familiar and contrasting places and environments.
Early geographical skills	Talk about simple maps and representations of places; use everyday positional language; describe observations, ask questions and share what they notice.
Progression into Year 1	Children enter KS1 with experience of noticing, describing, comparing and representing places; Year 1 makes these geographical concepts and mapping skills more explicit.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 1

Units: What is it like here? • What is the weather like in the UK? • What is it like to live in Shanghai?

Vocabulary	place, country, continent, United Kingdom, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Europe, Asia, China, Shanghai; human feature, physical feature, season, weather, map, atlas, aerial photograph, symbol, north, south, east, west.
Locational knowledge	Identify the UK and its four countries; locate the UK in Europe and China in Asia on maps and globes. Recognise that places can be located at different scales.
Place knowledge	Describe familiar features of the school and local area; identify similarities and differences between local life and life in Shanghai, using examples of buildings, transport and environments.
Human and physical geography	Distinguish basic human and physical features. Identify the four seasons and describe typical seasonal weather in the UK; observe and record local weather patterns.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Use aerial photographs and simple maps to recognise landmarks; use directional language and begin to use N, S, E, W. Draw and label a simple map with symbols; follow a route and observe features of the school grounds. Ask a simple geographical question and record observations.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 2

Units: Would you prefer to live in a hot or cold place? • Why is our world wonderful? • What is it like to live by the coast?

Vocabulary	seven continents, five oceans, Equator, North Pole, South Pole, capital city, London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast; coast, cliff, beach, sea, ocean, harbour, tourist, urban, rural, key, sketch map, tally, pictogram.
Locational knowledge	Name and locate all seven continents and five oceans; identify the Equator, North and South Poles. Locate the four UK countries, their capitals and the surrounding seas.
Place knowledge	Compare a small area of the UK with a contrasting area in Kenya, describing how climate, landscapes and ways of life differ. Identify characteristics of UK coastal places.
Human and physical geography	Explain simply why places near the Equator are generally hotter and polar areas colder. Describe coastal human and physical features and recognise that coastlines can change.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Use atlases, globes, four compass points and simple map keys. Interpret aerial photographs and produce a sketch map with a key. Observe local features, collect simple tally or survey data, present it in a pictogram or chart and describe findings.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 3

Units: Why do people live near volcanoes? • Who lives in Antarctica? • Are all settlements the same?

Vocabulary	tectonic plate, volcano, magma, eruption, earthquake, mountain, climate zone, latitude, longitude, hemisphere, Antarctica, settlement, urban, rural, land use, four-figure grid reference, eight-point compass.
Locational knowledge	Locate major mountain and volcanic regions and Antarctica; identify the Equator, hemispheres and significant lines of latitude. Locate and compare settlements in the UK and India.
Place knowledge	Explain how people adapt to living in tectonically active or polar environments. Compare settlement characteristics and land use in a local UK area and New Delhi.
Human and physical geography	Describe how tectonic plate movement can cause volcanoes and earthquakes, and explain some risks and benefits for communities. Identify types of settlement and land use and explain why settlements develop in different places.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Use atlases and digital maps at different scales, eight compass points, map keys and introductory four-figure grid references. Plan a supported enquiry, record local land use through observations and sketch maps, and draw a simple conclusion from evidence.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 4

Units: Why are rainforests important to us? • Where does our food come from? • What are rivers and how are they used?

Vocabulary	biome, tropical rainforest, vegetation belt, canopy, deforestation, sustainability, import, export, trade, food miles, fair trade, water cycle, evaporation, condensation, precipitation, source, tributary, meander, mouth, floodplain.
Locational knowledge	Locate the Amazon rainforest and Brazil; identify major world biomes and locate important UK and world rivers. Use maps to trace some global food origins and trade connections.
Place knowledge	Describe life and environments in the Amazon rainforest and compare them with the UK. Explain how food production and trade connect places, including the role of Côte d'Ivoire in cocoa production.
Human and physical geography	Explain how climate influences rainforest vegetation and why deforestation matters. Describe the water cycle, river features and river uses; explain advantages and disadvantages of different food supply choices.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Interpret atlas, thematic and digital maps and use map keys, scale and grid references with increasing independence. Gather and present evidence from a local river or environment study; use observations and data to explain a pattern or process.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 5

Units: What is life like in the Alps? • Why do oceans matter? • Would you like to live in the desert?

Vocabulary	Alps, mountain range, tourism, climate, contour, altitude, biome, desert, arid, erosion, adaptation, ocean current, coral reef, marine ecosystem, overfishing, microplastics, pollution, sustainability, thematic map.
Locational knowledge	Locate the Alps and countries they cross, the Great Barrier Reef and major hot deserts, including the Mojave. Use latitude and global maps to explain broad patterns of climate and biomes.
Place knowledge	Compare mountain tourism in the Alps with tourism in the local area. Describe the challenges and opportunities of living in a hot desert and explain why oceans matter to communities and ecosystems.
Human and physical geography	Explain how climate and physical features shape mountain and desert environments and human activity. Describe ocean ecosystems and evaluate impacts of pollution, overfishing and other human actions.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Select and interpret physical, political, thematic and digital maps, using scale, symbols and increasingly precise locational information. Plan and carry out a focused local environmental or tourism enquiry, analyse collected data and support conclusions with evidence.

Substantive and Disciplinary Knowledge/Skills and Vocabulary Progression - Year 6

Units: Why does population change? • Where does our energy come from? • Can I carry out an independent fieldwork enquiry?

Vocabulary	population density, distribution, migration, push factor, pull factor, birth rate, death rate, renewable, non-renewable, fossil fuel, solar, wind, hydropower, time zone, Prime Meridian, six-figure grid reference, qualitative, quantitative, reliability, conclusion.
Locational knowledge	Locate and compare countries and regions with different population densities and energy resources. Explain the significance of the Prime Meridian and time zones; consolidate knowledge of Europe, North and South America and major global features.
Place knowledge	Explain how population patterns and migration affect different communities. Compare energy choices and their consequences in the UK and another country, using evidence from studied places.
Human and physical geography	Explain causes and consequences of population change and migration. Compare renewable and non-renewable energy sources, considering environmental, social and economic trade-offs and the distribution of resources.
Geographical skills and fieldwork	Independently frame a geographical enquiry question, select suitable maps and fieldwork methods, collect and present qualitative and quantitative data, and draw an evidence-based conclusion with limitations and recommendations. Apply eight-point compass directions and four- and six-figure grid references.