

Geography Policy

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School



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Review Date

Vision and Aims

At St Matthew's, Geography helps children to develop a deep understanding of the world they live in and their place within it. Rooted in our Catholic mission we want to encourage children to recognise the dignity and uniqueness of every person to develop respect for communities, cultures and communities whilst considering how they can contribute positively to their local and global communities.

Progression in Geography

By the end of Year 6, pupil's should have secure geographical knowledge and vocabulary, understand the world and be able to use geographical skills to investigate places, environments and people. Our curriculum follows the Early years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework in Receptions and the National Curriculum for England in Years 1 to 6. A central Aim is to develop an understanding of the world through direct experiences, practical exploration and increasingly independent geographical enquiry. Pupils use photographs, globes, maps, atlases, aerial images, data and fieldwork to build their understanding, connecting what they observe to increasingly precise geographical vocabulary and concepts.

The journey begins in Reception with children experiencing geography through play, stories, routines and carefully planned adult-led experiences. They talk about where they live, explore their immediate environment and notice similarities and difference between places, people, landscapes and environments. Children will observe and begin to use simple geographical language to describe what they see in seasonal and daily changes to weather. They explore maps, photographs and simple representations of familiar places whilst developing an understanding of positional language. Through first hand experiences children develop their curiosity about wider world whilst revisiting these ideas frequently to develop secure foundations for understanding place, environment and change.

Year 1 teaching builds directly on children's early understanding of the world. Children develop knowledge of their local area and the United Kingdom, identifying familiar human and physical features and using simple geographical vocabulary to describe what they see. They learn to name and locate the world's seven continents and five oceans and begin to develop an understanding of different places and environments. Children explore seasonal and daily weather patterns and begin to recognise similarities and differences between locations. They develop simple geographical skills through the use of photographs, maps, globes and aerial images, using basic directional language and symbols to describe and represent places. In Year 2, pupils deepen their understanding of place by comparing the United Kingdom with a contrasting location, identifying similarities and differences in human and physical features. They develop their knowledge of hot and cold areas of the world and explore how people, settlements and environments differ between places. Teachers revisit Reception foundations and Year 1 knowledge when needed, while extending pupils towards more accurate geographical vocabulary, map skills and explanations. This planned progression gives children a clear bridge from their early understanding of the world in EYFS to the more formal geographical knowledge and skills of the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum.

Curriculum Design and Planning

The curriculum is aligned with the National Curriculum for England and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Teachers adapt planning and resources to meet the needs of St Matthew's pupils, ensuring that geographical knowledge, vocabulary and skills are carefully

sequenced and revisited from Reception to Year 6. Lessons, resources and activities are selected, reordered, supplemented or replaced where assessment shows that a different example, representation, pace or amount of practice is needed.

At St Matthew's, we understand the importance of developing geographical understanding through a combination of direct experience, practical exploration and increasingly abstract geographical concepts. Pupils are given opportunities to explore real environments, use photographs, globes, maps, atlases, aerial images and data before being expected to apply their understanding independently. Teachers ensure that practical and visual representations are not simply used as activities, but help pupils to develop and explain secure geographical understanding. Where appropriate, previously used representations and resources are revisited to strengthen connections and deepen understanding.

Teachers remain responsible for the Geography taught and for ensuring full curriculum coverage. Class teachers liaise regularly with the Geography subject leader about curriculum coverage, assessment, misconceptions, vocabulary and the adaptations pupils need. These discussions inform whole-school planning, agreed priorities and next steps for teaching. The subject leader provides practical support and guidance with sequencing, geographical knowledge, vocabulary, resources, fieldwork and lesson design, including coaching or team teaching where useful.

Subject progression identifies the key geographical knowledge, concepts, skills and vocabulary that build progressively from Reception to Year 6. Planning ensures that pupils develop the full range of geographical skills alongside their substantive knowledge. Geographical vocabulary is carefully planned and explicitly taught. Key vocabulary is identified within each unit and revisited through questioning, discussion, working walls, reading and written work. Assessment is used to inform curriculum planning. Teachers assess prior knowledge through entry quizzes, retrieval questions, targeted questioning and discussion before and during a unit.

EYFS and Key Stage 1 Curriculum Design and Planning

In Reception and Key Stage 1, children develop secure foundations in understanding the world, beginning with their immediate environment before exploring the wider world. They develop knowledge of places, weather, seasons, human and physical features, continents and oceans before applying this understanding to comparing different locations, using maps, globes, photographs and simple fieldwork.

Key Stage 2 Curriculum Design and Planning

In Key Stage 2, pupils deepen and extend their geographical knowledge and develop greater independence in geographical enquiry. They develop more detailed knowledge of the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider world, building understanding of physical and human geography, including rivers, mountains, climate zones, biomes, vegetation belts, settlements, land use, population, natural resources and economic activity. Pupils develop increasingly sophisticated map and fieldwork skills, including the use of atlases, globes, digital mapping, grid references, compass directions and geographical data.

Strong foundations in geography

In Reception, children develop their early geographical understanding through purposeful play, adult interaction, practical exploration and short, focused teaching. They explore their immediate environment, talk about where they live, notice changes in weather and seasons, and identify similarities and differences between people, places and environments. These foundations continue throughout school through carefully sequenced teaching and frequent opportunities to revisit and apply geographical knowledge. Children move between real-life experiences, photographs, maps, globes, models and simple diagrams so that they begin to recognise and describe places and features in different forms, rather than simply memorising geographical facts.

Adults model clear geographical language and give children time to explain what they notice, ask questions and describe their experiences. Naming and describing places, weather, environments and features is explicitly modelled, with children encouraged to use geographical vocabulary in their discussions. Talk partners, choral responses, questioning and sentence stems support early geographical oracy. Where geographical texts or instructions include substantial reading, teachers read them aloud or adapt their presentation to pupils' reading and phonics stages so that reading ability does not prevent children from accessing and demonstrating their geographical understanding.

Teaching and learning the St Matthew's Way

Lessons follow the St Matthew's Way: teachers establish what pupils already know, introduce precise vocabulary and the learning goal, model a new idea, check understanding, provide guided and independent practice, and use feedback to decide the next step. Children will be provided with real life experiences and given the chance to explore environments first hand to deepen their knowledge.

Assessment and responsive teaching

Teachers assess prior geographical knowledge through entry quizzes, discussion, targeted questions and short tasks. During lessons they use mini whiteboards, low-stakes quizzes, observation, map activities and purposeful questioning to identify what each pupil understands. A no-hands-up approach, including lollipop sticks and supportive cold calling, helps teachers hear from a broad range of pupils while allowing thinking time and appropriate support.

Teachers anticipate likely misconceptions during planning, identify gaps early and adapt examples, resources, grouping, pace and practice accordingly. For example, if pupils confuse physical and human geographical features, the teacher can revisit photographs and real-life examples, model how to classify features and provide opportunities to sort and explain their thinking before moving on. Similarly, if pupils are unable to use a map key accurately, the teacher can return to simple symbols and practical map activities before introducing more complex maps.

End-of-lesson and end-of-unit information informs consolidation, further teaching and targeted support. Short, focused intervention revisits an identified prerequisite, such as geographical vocabulary, map symbols, compass directions or knowledge of continents and oceans, and is linked back to class teaching. Assessment is used to improve learning, identify gaps and

misconceptions, and inform future planning. Staff avoid collecting evidence that does not help them make a teaching decision.

Personal development and Building the Kingdom

Geography is connected to meaningful experiences through practical investigations, fieldwork, games, visits, visitors and real-life geographical issues. Pupils may investigate their local environment, collect and interpret data during fieldwork, use maps to explore their local area, compare different places and environments, or investigate how human activity affects the world around them. Children learn to collaborate, listen respectfully to different perspectives, ask geographical questions, persist with challenge and explain their findings using geographical evidence and vocabulary.

In keeping with Catholic Social Teaching, we use Geography to develop pupils' understanding of human dignity, solidarity, stewardship and our responsibility to care for our common home. Where there is a genuine curricular link, pupils consider issues such as access to resources, environmental sustainability, climate, communities and the impact of human activity on people and places. Through these opportunities, pupils are encouraged to recognise their responsibility towards others and the natural world and to consider how they can contribute positively to their local and global communities.

Leadership monitoring and review

Class teachers plan, teach, adapt and assess Geography, maintain accessible geographical working walls and communicate concerns about pupils' progress and understanding. Class teachers have regular communication with the Geography subject leader to gain advice and guidance and to discuss curriculum coverage, assessment, resources, misconceptions and adaptations.

We recognise the importance of strong subject leadership at St Matthew's. Allocated subject leadership time enables the Geography leader to undertake learning walks, review planning, monitor books and standards, and provide team teaching and coaching sessions with staff. Subject leaders regularly lead CPD during staff meetings and share effective practice from their subjects across the school. In Geography, this may include modelling effective use of maps and geographical resources, developing geographical vocabulary, discussing common misconceptions and agreeing approaches to fieldwork, geographical enquiry and geographical talk.

These activities focus on how well pupils understand and retain geographical knowledge, the progression of geographical skills and vocabulary, the consistency of teaching approaches and the effectiveness of adaptations for all pupils. Monitoring also considers how effectively pupils can apply their knowledge through maps, fieldwork, data interpretation and geographical enquiry.

The curriculum lead and senior leaders ensure the Geography curriculum is implemented consistently and provide time and support for improvement. Governors hold leaders to account for the quality, accessibility and impact of Geography provision.

Findings from monitoring, pupil voice and assessment inform action plans, staff development and changes to curriculum planning. The Geography Subject Leader regularly creates Governor reports

to ensure that school governors are aware of the strengths, areas for development and next steps in Geography.

Working with families

Year group Geography curriculum information is shared with parents and carers, along with practical ways to support geographical learning at home. Families may be encouraged to explore their local area, discuss different places and environments, use maps and atlases, observe seasonal and weather changes, and talk about geographical vocabulary and the wider world. Teachers discuss individual progress and support with families as needed. The school's published information should reflect the Geography curriculum pupils actually experience.

The Geography Subject Leader provides opportunities for parents and carers to engage with their children's geographical learning, including workshops or shared activities where appropriate. These provide practical strategies and ideas for supporting geographical knowledge, vocabulary, map skills and curiosity about the world beyond the classroom.

Related guidance

Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework; National Curriculum in England Geography programs of study; Development Matters guidance; school Geography curriculum and progression documents; school assessment policy; school SEND policy; school Catholic Social Teaching and mission documents.