GEOGRAPHY PROGRESSION

EYFS to Year 6

From Year 3, we follow Opening Worlds. Pupils build substantive geographical knowledge through carefully sequenced units while developing disciplinary understanding through the recurring geographical ideas of **change, diversity and interaction**.

1. Substantive knowledge	2. Geographical thinking	3. Geographical skills	4. Vocabulary
What pupils know about places, people, environments and processes.	How pupils reason about change, diversity and interaction.	How pupils use maps, photographs, data, fieldwork and enquiry.	The subject language that helps pupils think and communicate geographically.

How the Curriculum Develops

Phase	Main progression	Knowledge becomes broader and deeper	Pupils increasingly…
EYFS	Experience and describe	Immediate environment • seasonal change • simple maps/routes • contrasting environments	Talk, observe, compare, ask simple questions
Year 1	Locate and compare	Local area • UK countries/capitals • continents and oceans	Use simple maps/globes; identify human/physical features; simple fieldwork
Year 2	Compare and explain	Farming • coastlines • Kenya/Liverpool comparison • compass points	Fieldwork, aerial photographs, atlases/globes, four compass points
Years 3-4	Build connected knowledge	Rivers, mountains, settlements, agriculture, climate, coasts, population, tourism, hazards, deserts	Opening Worlds: increasingly reason about interaction and diversity using a wider range of sources
Years 5-6	Explain connections and change	Water, oceans, migration, Americas, Amazon, climate change, Ethiopia, changing cities, Jamaica, local enquiry	Interpret thematic maps and data; enquiry; grid references; explain local-global connections

Opening Worlds principle: earlier knowledge is deliberately reused so that new units are easier to understand. In KS2, disciplinary content is threaded through the units, particularly change, diversity and interaction

Whole-school Geography at a Glance

Year	Main geographical content	Main skill progression
EYFS	Local environment; seasonal change; maps/routes; habitats; hot/cold and contrasting places	Observe • describe • simple maps • positional language • compare
Y1	Local area & Fieldwork • Countries of the UK • Continents & Oceans	Simple fieldwork • local maps • globe/world map • human/physical features • compare places
Y2	Food & Farming • Coastlines • Kenya compared with Liverpool	Fieldwork • aerial photos • atlases/globes • N/S/E/W • locate and compare
Y3	Rivers • Mountains • Settlements & Cities • Agriculture • Volcanoes • Climate & Biomes	Photos • 4-point compass • fieldwork • diagrams • world map/latitude
Y4	Rhine & Mediterranean • Population • Coastal Processes • Tourism • Earthquakes • Deserts	Maps/photos • thematic maps/census • climate data • satellite photographs
Y5	California water • Oceans • Migration • North & South America • Amazon • Interconnected Amazon	Thematic/world maps • 8-point compass • 4-figure refs • satellite photos • bar graphs • enquiry
Y6	Energy & Climate Change • Ethiopia • Changing Birmingham • Jamaica • Local Area Enquiry	Line graphs • population pyramids • longitude/time zones • data presentation • 6-figure grid refs • enquiry

The three recurring ways of thinking in Opening Worlds

CHANGE	DIVERSITY	INTERACTION
How and why places, environments and patterns change over time.	How and why places, populations and environments differ across space.	How people, places and physical processes affect one another.

Progression in substantive geographical knowledge

Year	What pupils increasingly know and connect
EYFS	• Know familiar places in the immediate environment. • Know maps can represent places and routes. • Recognise seasonal and environmental differences. • Know people live in different countries.
Y1	• Know the UK countries and capital cities. • Know the 7 continents and 5 oceans. • Know the UK is in Europe and the Atlantic lies west of the UK. • Distinguish human and physical features in familiar places.
Y2	• Deepen knowledge of farming, food and agriculture. • Know key coastal features, tides and sea defences through New Brighton. • Locate Kenya in Africa and compare its climate, landscape and ways of life with Liverpool. Identify the Equator and North and South Poles, recognising that places near the Equator are generally hotter and places near the poles are colder. • Secure N/S/E/W and core UK locational knowledge ready for Year 3.
Y3	• Rivers: source/course, water cycle, flooding, human interaction. • Mountains: UK regions, Andes/Snowdonia, links to weather and people. • Settlements/cities: types, land use, London/Cardiff. • Agriculture, volcanoes, European climate and biomes.
Y4	• River/sea regions: Rhine and Mediterranean, human use and settlement. • Population distribution, diversity and migration in Great Britain. • Coastal processes and landforms; tourism; earthquakes; deserts. • Revisit and connect earlier rivers, volcanoes, climate and settlement knowledge.
Y5	• Water as a resource in California; oceans and climate. • Migration, identity and changing places. • Human/physical characteristics of North and South America and megacities. • Amazon region, ecosystems, deforestation, farming, trade and globalisation.
Y6	• Energy use, greenhouse effect and climate change; local/global responses. • In-depth place studies: Ethiopia and Jamaica. • Changing Birmingham: past, present and future urban change. • Local area enquiry brings together map, data and fieldwork knowledge from KS2.

Progression in Geographical Thinking

Year	Main lens 1	Example thinking	Main lens 2	Example thinking
EYFS	Notice differences and similarities	How is this place/environment different from another?	Notice simple relationships	What happens when the season changes?
Y1	Understand the local area	What are the human and physical features of our local area?	Compare countries of the UK	How are the four countries of the UK similar and different?
Y2	Explain simple similarities/differences	How is Kenya similar to/different from Liverpool? Why is Kenya generally warmer than Liverpool?	Connect people and environments	How do people use farms/coasts? How do natural features affect them?
Y3	Diversity	How are settlements similar and different?	Interaction	How do rivers/mountains/volcanoes/climate affect people and places?
Y4	Diversity	How do population and the uses of regions vary?	Interaction	How do coastlines, tourism and earthquakes affect places and people?
Y5	Change + Diversity	How do drought, oceans, migration and megacities change places?	Interaction + Change	How does the Amazon interact with people, farming, trade and the wider world?
Y6	Change	How has Birmingham changed? What futures are possible?	Interaction	How do local actions affect global climate? How do global changes affect Ethiopia?

Progression in Geographical Skills and Enquiry

Year	Skills pupils should increasingly be able to use
EYFS	• Observe immediate environment. • Use/create simple maps and routes. • Use positional/directional language. • Ask questions and compare environments.
Y1	• Use simple local maps, globe and world map. • Locate UK countries/capitals, continents and oceans. • Use observation in local fieldwork. • Identify human/physical features; draw simple maps.
Y2	• Use atlases, globes and world maps with greater independence, to locate the Equator, North Pole and South Pole. • Use aerial photographs and plan perspectives. • Use N/S/E/W to describe and locate features. • Use fieldwork/observation at New Brighton and in the local area.
Y3	• Use photographs. • Describe location using 4-point compass. • Optional local fieldwork on shops/sourcing. • Use diagrams; describe distribution; use world map and key lines of latitude.
Y4	• Extend use of maps and photographs. • Use thematic maps and census data. • Interpret climate data. • Use thematic maps and satellite photographs.
Y5	• Interpret thematic and world maps. • Ask geographical questions; use 8-point compass. • Use 4-figure grid references. • Interpret satellite images; flow diagrams; bar graphs; questionnaire/simple enquiry.
Y6	• Interpret line graphs and population pyramids. • Use longitude and time zones. • Interpret and present data. • Local enquiry: OS maps, symbols, 8-point compass, 4- then 6-figure grid references, atlases, thematic maps and digital technologies.

Progression in Geographical Vocabulary

Vocabulary is cumulative: pupils revisit earlier geographical language while learning increasingly precise subject vocabulary. This core set includes selected terms from the school knowledge organisers; additional unit-specific vocabulary remains in lesson materials.

	Core vocabulary 1	Core vocabulary 2	Core vocabulary 3
EYFS	place · local area · map · route · near	far · next to · environment · habitat · weather	season · hot · cold · country
Y1	compass · direction · house · map · fieldwork · symbol	ocean · country · capital city · settlement · village · compass · direction ·	atmosphere · satellite · Earth · globe · landmark · country · continent ocean
Y2	agriculture · arable · dairy · livestock · harvest · transport · seasons	beach · sea · harbour · lighthouse · tide · sea wall · promenade · compass point · coast · coastline · rural · urban · sea defence, port	north · south · east · west · climate · tourism · national park · game reserve · endangered, equator, North South Pole
Y3	river · source · course · mouth · tributary · flood · water cycle · channel · meander	mountain · mountain range · settlement · land use · agriculture · arable · pastoral · mixed farming · fertile · evaporation	pastoral · volcano · climate · biome · latitude · Equator · tundra · condensation · precipitation
Y4	population · distribution · diversity · migration · census · coast · population density · sparsely populated	erosion · transportation · deposition · headland · bay · tourism · cliffs · cave · arch · stack · groynes	sustainable tourism · earthquake · tectonic plate · fault line · desert · thematic map · epicentre · seismic · ecotourism
Y5	resource · water supply · drought · aqueduct · ocean current · migration · push factor · adapted · canopy	pull factor · refugee · asylum · identity · megacity · urban-rural migration · rainforest · understory · permafrost	ecosystem · deforestation · trade · industry · globalisation · interdependence · greenhouse gases · biome
Y6	energy · renewable · non-renewable · greenhouse effect · climate change · sustainability · development	population density · longitude · time zone · regeneration · infrastructure · economy · urbanisation	grid reference · Ordnance Survey · enquiry · data · distribution · global-local connection