

The Quality of Education: Geography - Purpose and Provision



St Christopher's:
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither-
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

The Purpose of Study

How can we understand how the streams of water get to the tree, without understanding the water cycle and surface water flows?

Or how the seasons pass that cause the leaf to grow and wither, without understanding meteorological and atmospheric changes, including why more leaves are growing in the UK but more are burning in the USA and Australia?

Or how the fruit is yielded, without understanding different ecosystems and the changes with interactions of people that have changed them to yield more fruit from the same seed?

Indeed, we can see the importance of Geography transfer through the verse into our students' learning. Our purpose is to translate these geographical concepts from the outside world into the classroom; to allow students to secure wisdom and understanding of key natural and human processes and interpret and evaluate them within a changing place; and then allow students to return this learning back into the "untidy" real world that they experience and apply it to features they encounter, and the important human-environment relationships of the current century.

“Geography is a subject which holds the key to our future”

Michael Palin, Former President of the RGS

The purpose of studying Geography is to open students' eyes to the wider world surrounding them and to give them the building blocks to understand this world and the human-environment relationships within this. It is the aim of the Department that students will leave lessons as more rounded individuals that understand their own sense in the wide world, whether it be in their local place, or their global responsibility. This underlines the school purposes of knowing what it is to be fully alive, and learning to live well together. We aim to teach in a thematic approach that allows students to compartmentalise knowledge and then make links between human and physical parts of the discipline. We also want to ensure that our subject is relevant to real world discussions so that students can see the place of Geography in a modern classroom. We value the ideal of Geography as a subject that should be studied with an "outdoor mind", and the curriculum introduces students to the subject in real world contexts through case studies and place based lessons. We also ensure the high value of fieldwork, by giving pupils this experience in every year at the school, as this displays the acquisition of wisdom as deeper learning that covers understanding both within and without the classroom. Overall, we place the highest value on students enjoying and achieving in the subject – this should be the purpose of all learning in a school environment; to keep students wanting to know more, to study further and engage with their world in an informed and confident way.

Complementing the School Purpose

Foundation Scripture

The foundation scripture of the school's curriculum underpins the key aims of the teaching staff in the department – to encourage students to grow through understanding, analysis and evaluation in their confidence in the study of Geography. As the tree grows, students will want to investigate the different branches of the disciplines of human and physical Geography, and may go on to specialise in these in their A Level studies on their independent non-examined assessment. For others, the image of the stream can depict knowledge trickling up the curriculum, as students study a range of core foundations of the subject through Key Stage 3 that they can then build on at Key Stage 4. We intend to give students access to the broadest range of geographies, whilst acknowledging our key role in getting students to achieve to the best of their ability throughout the rigours of a GCSE syllabus. The aim of my staff is to provide these roles to ensure student development remains focussed and that they feel confident to 'prosper'.

Key Themes

Knowing what it is to be fully alive – students in Geography gain a unique perspective on the concept of being fully alive by studying what it is in the world that contributes to our sense of purpose and sense of place. Geography derives from the Greek for 'writing about the earth' and everything in it that drives our world today.

Learning how to live well together – human-environment interactions are at the core of modern Geography and these are not just taught within the curriculum, but discussed, analysed and evaluated to give students confidence to engage with current Geographical issues to which they will inevitably become a party. Sustainability is a key theme in life, and this pervades the study of Geography throughout all key stages and a manner of different topics, from climate change to the sustainability of populations and resources. Another part of learning to live together is through appreciation of geographical issues within the local community and working together to identify these, and students work together on specific fieldwork issues in every year of the curriculum.

Securing wisdom and understanding – from looking at the humble origins of mountains and volcanoes, to evaluating complex issues on local migration and responses to flooding, students will develop an idea of the bigger picture of the world around themselves, learning to "think like a Geographer" in the process. Our curriculum engages basic themes and then builds the challenge at Key Stage 4, where students can understand these concepts in more detail. Field trips and international visits allow students to develop their understanding in a real world context, something the Department encourages as one of its key aims

Christian Virtues – the love and nurture of nature, and the understanding of how people invest in their place link our subject intrinsically with Christian virtues. Students will hopefully invest in their local environment showing joy and respect, whilst evaluating issues of justice on a global scale within discussion of migration or responses to climate change. The promotion of excellent relationships within the classroom, founded on Christian virtues, is very important to every member of staff in the Department, forming a key foundation of our teaching.

Curriculum Aims

Our aim in Geography, is to teach a broad and challenging curriculum to inspire a love of the subject inside and outside the classroom. We aim to encourage students to enjoy their learning and to achieve, as students that enjoy and achieve leave the classroom feeling validated and wanting to study further. We follow the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, but overall maintain breadth of curriculum and application to places both local (fieldwork) and worldwide (case studies). At Key Stages 4 and 5, we aim to develop students' investment in the subject whilst acknowledging the demands of exam syllabi and the importance of student achievement in order to progress to future paths. Our major curriculum aims are:

- **Broad** - to cover many topics, physical and human, so pupils can enjoy the whole spectrum of experiences within Geography
- **Preparation for the next level** - provides basis for transition, with opportunities offered to students to sample work from future Key Stages
- **Inspirational** - mix of different lesson activities so that students are challenged and motivated
- **Challenging**
- **Developing** - key skills within Geography lessons
- **Relevant** and up-to-date teaching as our world changes constantly

Complementing School Provision

Teaching Approaches

The Geography Departments uses a diversity of teaching approaches to encourage all different learners to achieve within the curriculum. The Department encourages independent teaching strategies by valued professionals in order to attain the best results with their own style – no one style can be adopted by everyone. Lessons introduce **challenge** and variety to students in their approaches. Standardisation is regulated through topic tests and Milestone assessments which all students complete throughout their course. Assessment is regular and is used to inform progress, and students are encouraged to improve their performance through regular **feedback**, which is often directed by staff using **modelling**. Many different teaching strategies are used to give lessons a particular “Wow” factor, and members of the Department have led staff training on Outstanding teaching, **Questioning** and Partnerships in Excellence.

Pupil Attitudes

One of the core values of the teachers within the Department is strong relationships with pupils. We value this very highly, as this encourages students to see staff as approachable and to act as role models for good behaviour, which develops **respect**. This leads to students enjoying lessons and being **ready** to achieve well, and cements Geography as the strongest optional subject for Key Stage 4, and one of the strongest for Key Stage 5 as well. High expectations are maintained for all students, and students feel valued and supported in their lessons, leading them to be **resilient** when they find learning challenging, and **reflective** on their progress.

Going beyond the National Curriculum

Although the National Curriculum provides the foundation for our curriculum, we try to extend the reaches of students within the frameworks provided. During lessons, students are often offered opportunities for discussion about further geographical issues that surround current topics, and recent case studies are brought into work at every possible opportunity. Fieldwork is offered for every year group and local issues around school are studied at Key Stage 3. We also provide constant links from Key Stage 3 to 4, and 4 to 5 as my staff are particularly knowledgeable about stretching and challenging pupils, with every member of staff teaching every Key Stage.

Extra-Curricular and Enrichment

Fieldwork is an important part of geographical learning and our subject needs to be relative to the world outside of the classroom. At Key Stage 3, students carry out a small investigation around the school that is relative to their topic at the time, but also augments practical skills and relationships, and gives them experience outside the learning environment. At Key Stage 4, we run fieldwork visits to Sabden and Accrington to complete the obligatory elements of the syllabus, and we also run a highly successful and oversubscribed overseas field trip to Catalonia and Barcelona, which augments students’ experiences of the subject and encourages them to learn to live well together. At Key Stage 5, we run fieldtrips to Betws-y-Coed and then into the local area, specifically tailored to the topics that students have selected for their independent investigation. We also run our overseas field trip to Iceland, a trip that often inspires a lifelong love of Geography even after student have left for university. On top of this, members of staff give up their time to run a plethora of revision sessions for Key Stages 4 and 5 which serve to solidify students’ knowledge from their lesson learning

Whole School / Cross Curricular Elements

Many of the themes within Geography are further investigated in other subjects, such as climate change in both Science and Religious Education. Many members of the Department are involved in the promotion or organisation of the school’s successful Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, which offers students opportunities to get outside and achieve in challenging circumstances. Also many staff within the Department volunteer for a myriad of other projects around school, involving their other titular roles or just to engage with the achievement of pupils away from their lessons. We are certainly one of the busiest Departments in the school! Within lessons, links are made to further research opportunities for students, and we maintain a subscription to “Geofile” for further reading, particularly at A-level. Study and essay skills are taught throughout the Key Stages, with students from Year 7 onwards becoming familiar with GCSE command words, skills and structures that are necessary to a successful Geographer. **Numeracy and Oracy** are key points of the curriculum and used constantly throughout year groups.

Meeting the Needs of All

Differentiation is used within classes, and students are encouraged to aspire to their own targets at all times. Pupil Premium funding has been recently used to support revision schemes, and also to provide extra resources for disadvantaged pupils. It is also used to support PP applications for overseas trips. Although we are strictured by the lack of a tiered exam structure, and therefore have to follow this in all formal tests to all years for clarity and equality, we make strong efforts to breakdown extended assessments for students with additional needs so that they don't get left behind. Challenge is provided to students in all lessons, and we interweave higher level vocabulary and command words throughout in order to accelerate student learning, often to the next level in their Geography journey.

Overall, our Department is proud to maintain our focus on "Enjoying and Achieving" within lessons and outside of the curriculum. This forms the backbone of the Geography staff's purpose and maintains our strong personal relationships and high expectations of students. This underpins our purpose and intent within the school curriculum.

Geography Long Term Plans (KS3)

Topic	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Term 1	My Places (mini-place and intro to Geography)*	Population and Migration*	Natural Hazards*
Term 2	UK and Rivers and Flooding*	Brazil and Rainforests*	Development, Globalisation and China*
Term 3	Settlement and Urbanisation*	Global Sustainability*	Weather and Climate Y9 Exams
Term 4	Settlement and Urbanisation (traffic)* Y7 Exams	Environmental Concerns Y8 Exams	EU Country Study (mini-topic)
Term 5	Geology/Cold Environments	Coasts	Tourism
Term 6	Traffic Fieldwork	School Environment Fieldwork	Microclimate Fieldwork

* Topic appears on end of year exam

Geography Long Term Plans (KS4)

Topic	Year 10	Year 11
Term 1	Natural Hazards **	Rivers Fieldwork (Conclusions and Evaluation) Human Fieldwork Economic Change*
Term 2	Natural Hazards **	Economic Change* / Living World
Term 3	Urban Environments **	Y11 Exams Living World
Term 4	Urban Environments **	Challenge of Resource Management
Term 5	River Landscapes **	Geographical Applications (booklet) Revision
Term 6	Coastal Landscapes * Y10 Exams Physical Fieldwork (Aims to Graphs) Barcelona Trip	


* Topic appears on Year 11 PPE



** Topic appears on Year 10 and Y11 PPE

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