

Geography Skills and Progression - Year 3 2026-2027
Subject Leader: Mrs Lonsdale

YEAR 3

This document shows how the Year 3 geography curriculum is carefully planned to develop children's geographical knowledge, skills and understanding. It outlines how learning is sequenced within each unit, identifying the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary children will develop, the National Curriculum objectives covered, and the outcomes children are working towards. The document highlights how each unit builds on children's prior learning from Key Stage 1 while introducing more complex geographical concepts, including physical processes, human geography and the relationship between people and places. Through carefully planned sequences of lessons, children develop their ability to investigate geographical questions, compare places, use geographical vocabulary accurately, interpret maps and data and understand how the world around them is shaped.

	Autumn 1/2	Spring 1/2	Summer 1/2
Focus	Learning how the Earth is constructed and about tectonic plates and their boundaries. Children learn how mountains are formed, explain the formation and types of volcanoes and explore the cause of earthquakes. They map the global distribution of mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes and consider the negative and positive effects of living in a volcanic environment and the ways in which humans have responded to earthquakes.	Learning about latitude and longitude, pupils consider how this links to climate. Pupils contemplate the tilt of the Earth and how this impacts the Antarctic circle and global temperatures. They explore the physical features of a polar region and how humans have adapted to working there, taking into account that there is no permanent population. Pupils study Shackleton's expedition before planning their own, using mapping skills learnt so far.	Exploring different types of settlements and land use, pupils consider the difference between urban and rural. They describe the different human and physical features in their local area and how these have changed over time. Children make land use comparisons between their local area and New Delhi to find key similarities and differences between these two locations.
Enquiry Questions	Why do people live near volcanoes?	Who lives in Antarctica?	Are all settlements the same?
National Curriculum	Locational Knowledge Locate the world's countries, using maps to focus on Europe (including the location of Russia) and North and South America, concentrating on their environmental regions, key physical and human characteristics, countries, and major cities Place Knowledge Understand geographical similarities and differences through the study of human and physical geography of a region of the United Kingdom, a region in a European country, and a region within North or South America Human and Physical Knowledge	Locational Knowledge Locate the world's countries, using maps to focus on Europe (including the location of Russia) and North and South America, concentrating on their environmental regions, key physical and human characteristics, countries, and major cities Identify the position and significance of latitude, longitude, Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere, the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, Arctic and Antarctic Circle, the Prime/Greenwich Meridian and time zones (including day and night) Place Knowledge	Locational Knowledge Locate the world's countries, using maps to focus on Europe (including the location of Russia) and North and South America, concentrating on their environmental regions, key physical and human characteristics, countries, and major cities Name and locate counties and cities of the United Kingdom, geographical regions and their identifying human and physical characteristics, key topographical features (including hills, mountains, coasts and rivers), and land-use patterns, and understand how some of these aspects have changed over time

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	Describe and understand key aspects of: physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle Describe and understand key aspects of: human geography, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity, including trade links, and the distribution of natural resources including energy, food, minerals and water Geography skills and fieldwork Use maps, atlases, globes and digital/computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied Use fieldwork to observe, measure, record and present the human and physical features in the local area using a range of methods, including sketch maps, plans and graphs, and digital technologies.		Understand geographical similarities and differences through the study of human and physical geography of a region of the United Kingdom, a region in a European country, and a region within North or South America Human and Physical Knowledge Describe and understand key aspects of: physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle Describe and understand key aspects of: human geography, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity including trade links, and the distribution of natural resources including energy, food, minerals and water Geography skills and fieldwork Use maps, atlases, globes and digital/computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied Use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey maps) to build their knowledge of the United Kingdom and the wider world Use fieldwork to observe, measure, record and present the human and physical features in the local area using a range of methods, including sketch maps, plans and graphs, and digital technologies.		Place Knowledge Understand geographical similarities and differences through the study of human and physical geography of a region of the United Kingdom, a region in a European country, and a region within North or South America Human and Physical Knowledge Describe and understand key aspects of: human geography, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity including trade links, and the distribution of natural resources including energy, food, minerals and water Geography skills and fieldwork Use maps, atlases, globes and digital/computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied Use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey maps) to build their knowledge of the United Kingdom and the wider world Use fieldwork to observe, measure, record and present the human and physical features in the local area using a range of methods, including sketch maps, plans and graphs, and digital technologies.	
Key Vocabulary	active volcano climate change composite volcano crust dormant volcano earthquake epicentre extinct volcano	magma chamber man-made rock mantle metamorphic rock natural rock negative effects plate boundary positive effects	climate climate zone compass points direction drifting ice hemisphere ice sheet	ice shelf iceberg lines of latitude lines of longitude treaty	agricultural land capital city commercial land compare country border county dispersed facilities	memorial metro monument nucleated place of worship recreational land region residential land

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	fault line fault-block mountain fertile soil fold mountain geothermal energy igneous rock index inner core outer core magma	pyroclastic flow sedimentary rock seismic waves shield volcano tectonic plate tsunami vent volcanic mountain volcanic springs			land use legend linear local	settlement transportation
How do children's previous experiences support their learning in this unit?	Why is our world wonderful? (Year 2) Children have been taught to... Identify and locate characteristics of the UK on a map. Identify human and physical features. Locate human and physical features on a world map. Explain the difference between oceans and seas. Name and locate the five oceans on a world map. Use an aerial photograph to draw a simple sketch map. Collect data by sketching findings on a map and completing a tally chart. Present their findings in a bar chart.	Would you prefer to live in a hot or cold place? (Year 2) Children have been taught to... Name and locate the seven continents on a world map. Locate the North and the South Poles on a world map. Locate the Equator on a world map. Describe some similarities and differences between the UK and Kenya. Investigate the weather; writing about it using key vocabulary and explaining whether they live in a hot or cold place. Recognise the features of hot and cold places. Locate some countries with hot or cold climates on a world map.	What is it like to live by the coast? (Year 2) Children have been taught to... Name and locate the seas and oceans surrounding the UK in an atlas. Label these on a map of the UK. Describe the location of the seas and oceans surrounding the UK using compass points. Define what the coast is. Locate coasts in the UK. Name some of the physical features of coasts. Explain the location of UK coasts using the four compass directions. Name features of coasts and label these on a photograph. Identify human features in a coastal town. Describe how people use the coast. Follow a prepared route on a map. Identify human features on the local coast. Record data using a tally chart. Represent data in a pictogram. Describe how the local coast has been used.			

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Key Knowledge	Locational Knowledge To know the names of some countries and major cities in Europe and North and South America. To know the names of some of the world's most significant mountain ranges. To know that mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes largely occur at plate boundaries. To know the main types of land use. To know some types of settlement Place Knowledge To know the negative effects of living near a volcano. To know the positive effects of living near a volcano. To know the negative effects an earthquake can have on a community. To know ways in which communities respond to earthquakes. Human and Physical Knowledge To know the different types of mountains and volcanoes and how they are formed (3 classifications of volcanoes). To know that an earthquake is the intense shaking of the ground. To know the different types of settlement. To know that a natural resource is something that people can use which comes from the natural environment. Geography skills and fieldwork To recognise world maps as a flattened globe. To know how to use various simple sampling techniques. To know that an annotated drawing or sketch map is hand drawn and gives a rough idea of features of an area without having to be completely accurate	Locational Knowledge To know where North and South America are on a world map. To know the names of some countries and major cities in Europe and North and South America. To know that climate zones are areas of the world with similar climates. To know the world's different climate zones (equatorial, tropical, hot desert, temperate and polar). To know that biomes are areas of world with similar climates, vegetation and animals. To know the world's biomes. To know the main types of land use. To know that countries near the Equator have less seasonal change than those near the poles. To know that the Equator is a line of latitude indicating the hottest places on Earth and splitting our globe into the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. To know lines of longitude are invisible lines on the globe that determine how far east or west a location is from the Prime Meridian. To know lines of latitude are invisible lines on the globe that determine how far north or south a location is from the Equator. To know the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn are lines of latitude and mark the equatorial region; the countries with the hottest climates. To know the Northern and Southern hemisphere are 'halves' of the Earth, above and below our Equator and have alternate seasons to each other. To know the boundaries of the polar regions are marked by the invisible lines the Arctic and Antarctic circle.	Locational Knowledge To know the names of some of the world's most significant rivers. To know the name of some counties in the UK (local to your school). To know the name of some cities in the UK (local to your school). To know the name of the county that they live in and their closest city. To begin to name the twelve geographical regions of the UK. To know the main types of land use. To know some types of settlement. Place Knowledge NA Human and Physical Knowledge To know the main types of land use. To know the different types of settlement. To know water is used by humans in a variety of ways. To know an urban place is somewhere near a town or city. To know a rural place is somewhere near the countryside. To know that a natural resource is something that people can use which comes from the natural environment. To know the UK grows food locally and imports food from other countries Geography skills and fieldwork To understand that a scale shows how much smaller a map is compared to real life.
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	To know the patterns of daylight in the Arctic and Antarctic circle and the Equatorial regions. Place Knowledge NA Human and Physical Knowledge To know that the water cycle is the processes and stores which move water around our Earth and to be able to name these. To know that a biome is a region of the globe sharing a similar climate, landscape, vegetation and wildlife. To know the world's biomes. To know that the hottest biomes are found between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. To know that climate zones are areas of the world with similar climates. To know the world's different climate zones. To know water is used by humans in a variety of ways. To know that a natural resource is something that people can use which comes from the natural environment. Geography skills and fieldwork To understand that a scale shows how much smaller a map is compared to real life. To recognise world maps as a flattened globe. To know the eight points of a compass are north, south, east, west, north-east, south-east, north-west, south-west. To know that an annotated drawing or sketch map is hand drawn and gives a rough idea of features of an area without having to be completely accurate.	To know that an OS (Ordnance survey) map is used for personal use and organisations use it for housing projects, planning the natural environment and public transport and for security purposes. To know that an OS map shows human and physical features as symbols. To know the main types of land use (agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and transportation). To know an enquiry-based question has an open-ended answer found by research. To know what a bar chart, pictogram and table are and when to use which one best to represent data.
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Key Skills	Locational Knowledge Locating some countries in Europe and North and South America using maps. Locating key physical features in countries studied including significant environmental regions. Locating the world's most significant mountain ranges on a map and identifying any patterns Locating where the world's volcanoes are on a map and identifying the 'Ring of Fire'. Identifying how topographical features studied have changed over time using examples. Describing how a locality has changed over time, giving examples of both physical and human features. Place Knowledge Describing how and why humans have responded in different ways to their local environments. Human and Physical Knowledge Understanding some of the causes of climate change Describing how physical features, such as mountains and rivers are formed, and why volcanoes and earthquakes occur (3 classifications of volcanoes and 3 types of plate boundaries). Describing where volcanoes, earthquakes and mountains are located globally. Describing and explaining how physical features such as rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes have had an impact upon the surrounding landscape and communities. Geography skills and fieldwork Beginning to use maps at more than one scale. Finding countries and features of countries in an atlas using contents and index.	Locational Knowledge Locating some countries in Europe and North and South America using maps. Locating key physical features in countries studied including significant environmental regions. Locating some key human features in countries studied. Finding the position of the Equator and describing how this impacts our environmental regions. Finding lines of latitude and longitude on a globe and explaining why these are important. Identifying the position of the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and their significance. Identifying the position of the Northern and Southern hemispheres and explaining how they shape our seasons. Identifying the position and significance of both the Arctic and Antarctic Circle. Place Knowledge Describing and beginning to explain similarities between two regions studied. Describing and beginning to explain differences between two regions studied. Describing how and why humans have responded in different ways to their local environments. Discussing climates and their impact on trade, land use and settlement. Explaining what measures humans have taken in order to adapt to survive in cold places. Describing and explaining how people who live in a contrasting physical area may have different lives to people in the UK. Human and Physical Knowledge Describing where volcanoes, earthquakes and mountains are located globally.	Locational Knowledge Locating some major cities of the countries studied. Locating key physical features in countries studied including significant environmental regions. Locating some key human features in countries studied. Locating some counties in the UK (local to your school). Locating some cities in the UK (local to your school). Beginning to locate the twelve geographical regions of the UK. Identifying key physical and human characteristics of counties, cities and/or geographical regions in the UK. Describing how a locality has changed over time, giving examples of both physical and human features. Place Knowledge Describing and beginning to explain similarities between two regions studied. Describing and beginning to explain differences between two regions studied. Describing how and why humans have responded in different ways to their local environments. Describing and explaining how people who live in a contrasting physical area may have different lives to people in the UK. Human and Physical Knowledge Describing and explaining how physical features such as rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes have had an impact upon the surrounding landscape and communities.
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	Asking and answering one- step and two-step geographical questions. Observing, recording, and naming geographical features in their local environments. Using simple sampling techniques appropriately. Taking digital photos and labelling, or captioning them. Presenting data using plans, freehand sketch maps, annotated drawings, graphs, presentations, writing and digital technologies (photos with labels/captions) when communicating geographical information. Finding answers to geographical questions through data collection.	Describing how humans use water in a variety of ways. Describing and understanding types of settlement and land use. Explaining why different locations have different human features. Explaining why people might prefer to live in an urban or rural place. Geography skills and fieldwork Beginning to use maps at more than one scale. Using atlases, maps, globes, satellite images and beginning to use digital mapping to locate countries studied. Using atlases, maps, globes and beginning to use digital mapping to recognise and describe physical and human features in countries studied. Using the scale bar on a map to estimate distances. Finding countries and features of countries in an atlas using contents and index. Zooming in and out of a digital map. Accurately using 4-figure grid references to locate features on a map in regions studied. Beginning to locate features using the 8 points of a compass. Making and using a simple route on a map. Observing, recording, and naming geographical features in their local environments.	Describing and understanding types of settlement and land use. Explaining why a settlement and community has grown in a particular location. Explaining why different locations have different human features. Explaining why people might prefer to live in an urban or rural place. Geography skills and fieldwork Beginning to use maps at more than one scale. Using atlases, maps, globes, satellite images and beginning to use digital mapping to locate countries studied. Using atlases, maps, globes and beginning to use digital mapping to recognise and describe physical and human features in countries studied. Using the scale bar on a map to estimate distances. Finding countries and features of countries in an atlas using contents and index. Zooming in and out of a digital map. Beginning to use the key on an OS map to name and recognise key physical and human features in regions studied. Using a simple key on their own map to show an example of both physical and human features. Following a route on a map with some accuracy. Saying which directions are N, S, E, W on an OS map. Making and using a simple route on a map. Labelling some features on an aerial photograph and then locating these on an OS map of the same locality and scale in regions studied. Beginning to
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			choose the best approach to answer an enquiry question. Mapping land use in a small local area using maps and plans. Asking and answering one- step and two-step geographical questions. Observing, recording, and naming geographical features in their local environments. Taking digital photos and labelling or captioning them. Finding answers to geographical questions through data collection.
Sequence of lessons	Lesson 1: How is the world constructed? Lesson 2: Where are mountains formed? Lesson 3: Why and where do we get volcanoes? Lesson 4: What are the effects of a volcanic eruption? Lesson 5: What are earthquakes and where do we get them? Lesson 6: Where have the rocks around school come from?	Lesson 1: What is climate? Lesson 2: Where is Antarctica? Lesson 3: Who lives in Antarctica? Lesson 4: Who was Shackleton? Lesson 5: Can we plan an expedition around school? Lesson 6: How did our expedition go?	Lesson 1: What is a settlement? Lesson 2: How is land used in my area? Lesson 3: Can I explain the location of features in my area? Lesson 4: How has my local area changed over time? Lesson 5: How is land used in New Delhi? Lesson 6: How does land use in New Delhi compare with my local area?

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Unit outcomes	• Name all four layers of the Earth in the correct order, stating one fact about each layer. • Explain one or more ways a mountain can be formed. • Give a correct example of a mountain range and its continent. • Describe a tectonic plate and know that mountains occur along plate boundaries. • Correctly label the features of shield and composite volcanoes and explain how they form. • Name three ways in which volcanoes can be classified. • Describe how volcanoes form at tectonic plate boundaries. • Explain a mix of negative and positive consequences of living near a volcano. • State whether they would or would not want to live near a volcano. • State that an earthquake is caused when two plate boundaries move and shake the ground. • Explain that earthquakes happen along plate boundaries. • List some negative effects that an earthquake can have on a community. • Observe, digitally record and map different rocks using a symbol on a map. • Identify rock types and their origins based on collected data.	• Describe what lines of latitude and longitude are, giving an example. • Understand that the Northern and Southern Hemispheres experience seasons at different times. • Define what climate zones are. • Understand Antarctica has a polar climate made up of ice sheets, snow and mountains. • Describe Antarctica's location in the far south of the globe. • State that tourism and research are the two main reasons people visit Antarctica. • Describe equipment researchers might use and clothes they wear. • List some of the research carried out in Antarctica. • State the outcome of Shackleton's expedition. • Successfully plot four-figure grid references at the point where the vertical and horizontal line meet. • Describe a similarity and difference between life in the UK and life in Antarctica. • Confidently use the zoom function on a digital map. • Begin to recall the eight points of a compass, following at least four of them. • Recognise and describe features on their school grounds from an aerial map. • Draw a map of the route they take on an expedition. • State one thing that went well on the expedition and one aspect that did not go as hoped.	• Locate some cities in the UK. • Describe the difference between villages, towns and cities. • Identify features on an OS map using the legend. • Describe the different types of land use. • Follow a route on an OS map. • Discuss reasons for the location of human and physical features. • Locate some geographical regions in the UK. • Identify and begin to offer explanations about changes to features in the local area. • Describe the location of New Delhi. • Identify some human and physical features in New Delhi. • State some similarities and differences between land use and features in New Delhi and the local area.
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How does this unit prepare children for future learning?	Why are rainforests important to us? (Year 4) <i>Children will learn to...</i> Describe a biome and give an example. State the location and some key features of the Amazon rainforest. Name and describe the four layers of tropical rainforests. Understand that trees and plants adapt to living in the rainforest and give an example. Define the word indigenous and give an example of how indigenous peoples use the Amazon's resources. Name one way in which the Amazon is changing. Articulate why the Amazon rainforest is important. Give an example of how humans are having a negative impact on the Amazon and an action that can be taken to help. Use a variety of data collection methods with support. Summarise how the local woodland is used and suggest changes to improve the area.	What are rivers and how are they used? (Year 4) <i>Children will learn to...</i> Identify water stores and processes in the water cycle. Describe the three courses of a river. Name the physical features of a river. Name some major rivers and their location. Describe different ways a river is used. List some of the problems around rivers. Describe human and physical features around a river. Identify the location of a river on an OS map. Make a judgement on the environmental quality in a river environment. Make suggestions on how a river environment could be improved.	What are rivers and how are they used? (Year 4) <i>Children will learn to...</i> Identify water stores and processes in the water cycle. Describe the three courses of a river. Name the physical features of a river. Name some major rivers and their location. Describe different ways a river is used. List some of the problems around rivers. Describe human and physical features around a river. Identify the location of a river on an OS map. Make a judgement on the environmental quality in a river environment. Make suggestions on how a river environment could be improved.
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