Geography Policy

Reviewed September 2025

The Stour Academy Trust

Cornerstones Vision

Our Geography curriculum embodies a vision that fosters curiosity and exploration, empowering pupils to understand and engage with the world around them through diverse geographical perspectives. We aim to provide pupils with a comprehensive understanding of the world, encompassing both physical and human geography, while exploring the interconnections between these elements. This comprehensive approach enables pupils to appreciate how geography shapes our environment and societies. Our curriculum focuses on developing essential geographical skills such as map reading, data interpretation, and fieldwork techniques, empowering pupils to engage critically with their surroundings and the information they encounter. We also foster respect and understanding of different cultures and societies, promoting global citizenship by exposing pupils to diverse cultures and environments, which helps them appreciate the role of geography in shaping human identity and societal development. In addition, we instil a sense of responsibility towards the environment and encourage sustainable practises, teaching pupils about the importance of protecting our planet and understanding the impact of human activity on natural systems. Promoting a culture of inquiry is central to our approach, as we encourage pupils to investigate geographical concepts and their relevance to everyday life, nurturing critical thinkers who are equipped to ask questions and seek answers about their environment. Our curriculum emphasises the interconnectedness of knowledge by integrating geography with subjects such as history, science, and literacy, enriching the learning experience and highlighting how different fields of study inform one another. Ultimately, we aim to create a dynamic and engaging Geography curriculum that not only informs but also inspires pupils to become informed global citizens who appreciate the complexities of our world.

Intent

1. **Fostering Curiosity and Inquiry:**
   - Encourage pupils to ask questions and explore their surroundings, developing their unique geographical perspectives.
   - Provide opportunities for fieldwork and investigation, allowing pupils to discover geographical concepts through hands-on experiences.

2. **Building Geographic Skills:**
   - Equip pupils with a solid foundation in essential geographical skills, including map reading, data analysis, and spatial thinking.
   - Introduce pupils to various geographical techniques and tools, ensuring they understand the historical and contemporary context of the geography they study.
3. **Enhancing Critical Thinking and Reflection:**
   - Promote critical evaluation of geographical data and case studies, enabling pupils to articulate their thoughts and feelings about geographical issues.
   - Encourage reflective practises through discussion, self-assessment, and peer feedback, fostering a growth mindset

4. **Promoting Collaboration and Communication:**
   - Design projects that require teamwork and collaboration, allowing pupils to learn from one another and share ideas.
   - Encourage open dialogue about geographical processes and outcomes, enhancing pupils' ability to communicate their thoughts and interpretations effectively.

5. **Supporting Personal and Social Development:**
   - Recognise the role of geography in promoting well-being and environmental awareness, providing a safe space for pupils to explore their feelings and experiences related to the world.
   - Encourage pupils to engage with their community through geographical projects and initiatives, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility.

Implementation

Curriculum Design

- Curriculum Design Thematic Learning: Each unit is structured around key themes that connect geographical concepts to real-world issues, ensuring relevance and engagement. Themes may include "Our Local Area," "Weather and Climate," "Ecosystems," and "Global Connections."
- Skills Development: The curriculum emphasises the development of geographical skills, including map reading, data analysis, fieldwork techniques, and the use of geographic information systems (GIS). Pupils will progressively build these skills throughout their learning journey.
- Interdisciplinary Connections: Geography will be integrated with other subjects, such as history, science, and art, to provide a holistic understanding of topics. This approach allows pupils to see the connections between different areas of knowledge.
- Progression and Sequencing: The curriculum is designed to build upon prior knowledge, with clear progression maps outlining how concepts and skills will be developed over time. Each unit revisits and deepens understanding of previously taught content.
- Cultural Awareness and Sustainability: Pupils will explore diverse cultures and environmental issues, fostering respect for global citizenship and an understanding of sustainability.

Implementation Strategies:

- Sequencing of Learning: Lessons will be sequenced to ensure continuity and progression, allowing pupils to build on their foundational knowledge before moving onto more complex ideas and techniques. This approach will help pupils connect new learning to existing knowledge, as emphasised in the Cornerstones framework.
- Cross-Curricular Links: Where appropriate, we will make cross-curricular links with other subjects to enhance pupils' understanding and application of geographical concepts. For instance, integrating elements of history or science into geography projects will foster a deeper appreciation for the context of geographical phenomena.

Cornerstones Lesson Resources

- Using teaching resources from Cornerstones effectively involves strategic planning and implementation to enhance pupil engagement and learning outcomes. Here’s a structured approach to maximise the impact of these resources:
- Align Resources with Learning Objectives:
- Identify Goals: Before selecting resources, clarify the specific learning objectives for the lesson or unit. Ensure that the resources directly support these goals.
- Curriculum Mapping: Utilise the Cornerstones curriculum maps to identify resources that are relevant to the current topic, ensuring coherence in teaching.

Adaptation:

- Tailored Tasks: Select resources that cater to the diverse learning needs of the children. Cornerstones often provides multiple versions of resources, allowing you to choose those that best meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.
- Flexible Grouping: Implement resources in small groups or pairs, enabling pupils to collaborate and support each other.

Integrate Resources into Lesson Planning:

- Structured Activities: Plan how and when to incorporate resources into your lessons. For example, use them as guided practice following direct instruction or as independent practice to reinforce learning.
- Contextual Relevance: Introduce resources by connecting them to real-world applications or previous lessons. This helps pupils see the relevance of what they are learning.

Encourage Active Engagement:

- Interactive Elements: Motivate pupils to actively engage with the resources. This could involve annotating, highlighting key points, or discussing answers with peers.
- Hands-On Activities: Pair resources with hands-on activities that allow pupils to apply what they've learned in a practical context. For instance, if a resource covers a geographical concept, follow it with a field study.

Use Resources for Assessment:

- **Formative Assessment:** Utilise resources as tools for formative assessment. Review completed resources to gauge pupils' understanding and identify areas needing further support.
- **Feedback Opportunities:** Provide timely feedback on resource tasks. Highlight strengths and areas for improvement, encouraging pupils to reflect on their learning.

Promote Reflection and Discussion:

- **Class Discussion:** After completing resources, facilitate a class discussion to review answers and clarify misconceptions. This reinforces learning and promotes critical thinking.
- **Reflection Activities:** Encourage pupils to reflect on their learning process after completing resources. This could involve writing a brief summary of what they learned or discussing how they approached the tasks.

Monitor Progress and Adapt:

- **Track Performance:** Keep records of pupils' performance on resources to monitor progress over time. This data can inform future planning and instruction.
- **Adapt Resources:** Be flexible in your approach. If a particular resource isn't resonating with pupils, consider adapting it or selecting a different resource that might be more effective.

Lesson Structure for EYFS

1. **Theme-Based Learning:**

- **Cornerstones Themes:** Geography lessons will be integrated into the Cornerstones themes, ensuring that geographical concepts are explored within a broader context. Each theme will provide opportunities for pupils to investigate and learn about different geographical features, cultures, and environments.
- **Example Themes:** "The Enchanted Woodland," "The Magic Toymaker," and "Why Do We Love to be Rude?" will serve as contexts for geographical exploration.

2. **Learning Objectives:**
   - **Clear Objectives:** Each lesson will have specific, measurable learning objectives that focus on key geographical concepts such as understanding maps, locations, and the use of various geographical tools.
   - **Alignment with EYFS Framework:** Objectives will align with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, particularly the "Understanding the World" area of learning.
3. **Engagement Activities:**
   - **Hands-On Exploration:** Lessons will begin with engaging, hands-on activities that stimulate curiosity. This may include outdoor exploration, sensory play with maps and globes, and interactive demonstrations related to the theme.
   - **Use of Resources:** Incorporate a variety of resources such as maps, globes, and digital media to enhance learning experiences.
4. **Vocabulary Development:**
   - **Focus on Vocabulary:** Each lesson will introduce new geographical vocabulary relevant to the theme. Teachers will model language through storytelling, songs, and discussions, reinforcing understanding through repetition.
   - **Visual Aids:** Use visual aids, such as word walls and picture cards, to support vocabulary acquisition and retention.
5. **Investigative Learning:**
   - **Enquiry-Based Approach:** Encourage pupils to ask questions and make predictions related to their geographical explorations. Provide opportunities for them to experiment with different geographical tools and record observations.
   - **Structured Investigations:** Design structured investigations that allow pupils to explore geographical concepts through guided inquiry, fostering a sense of curiosity and discovery.

6. Reflection and Assessment

- **Reflective Practises:** At the end of each lesson, pupils will engage in reflection activities, such as sharing what they learned about geographical concepts or discussing their findings from investigations.
- **Informal Assessment:** Teachers will assess understanding through observation and discussions, ensuring that misconceptions are addressed and that all pupils are making progress in their geographical skills.

7. Inclusive Practises

- **Differentiated Activities:** Lessons will be tailored to meet the diverse needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Differentiated tasks and support will be provided to ensure every pupil can engage meaningfully with the geography curriculum.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Foster a collaborative learning environment where pupils can work together, share ideas, and support each other in their geographical explorations.

Lesson Structure Year 1

Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Engage:** Show pupils a variety of maps and images of different geographical features (e.g., mountains, rivers, cities) and ask how these places make them feel. Discuss feelings associated with different environments (e.g., mountains = adventure, oceans = calm).
- **Explain:** Introduce the concept of key geographical terms (e.g., landforms, habitats) and explain how these features can be found in different parts of the world.

Main Activity (40 minutes)

- **Demonstration (10 minutes):**
    - Show how to read a simple map, pointing out key features such as the legend, compass rose, and symbols.
    - Use a large map to demonstrate locating different geographical features, allowing pupils to see the process.
- **Practical Task (30 minutes):**
    - Pupils will create their own simple maps of a familiar area (e.g., their classroom or home) using symbols to represent different features (e.g., desk, door, window).
    - Encourage pupils to think about how they want to represent their environment and what symbols they will use.
    - Walk around the classroom to offer support and encouragement as pupils create their maps.

Enhanced Provision Activities:

- **Texture Exploration:** Provide natural materials (e.g., sand, soil, leaves) for pupils to incorporate into their maps, enhancing their sensory experience and creativity.
- **Mood Map:** Set up a station where pupils can create a mood map that represents different feelings associated with various geographical features (e.g., mountains for adventure, forests for exploration).
- **Geography Gallery Walk:** Create a mini gallery in the classroom where pupils can display their maps. Encourage them to walk around and discuss their peers' maps, focusing on the use of symbols and representation.

Plenary (10 minutes)

- **Share:** Invite pupils to share their maps with the class, describing the symbols they used and what features they represent.

- **Reflect:** Discuss as a class how different geographical features can evoke different feelings and how they can use this in their future geographical explorations.

Assessment:

- **Formative Assessment:** Observe pupils during the practical task, providing encouragement and feedback on their map-making techniques and symbol choices.
- **Summative Assessment:** Evaluate the final maps based on creativity and the effective use of symbols to represent geographical features.

Adaptation Strategies:

- **For Advanced Learners:** Encourage them to create more complex maps that include additional features (e.g., roads, parks) and a key to explain their symbols.
- **For Struggling Learners:** Provide templates with pre-drawn symbols to help them focus on applying symbols rather than drawing from scratch.
- **For Pupils with SEND:** Work closely with the SENCO to identify specific needs and provide additional support, such as using assistive technology or tailored resources.

Extension Activities:

- Create a class geographical features chart displaying the different features explored by pupils.
- Explore the work of a local cartographer and create a piece inspired by their style.

Lesson Structure Year 2 – 6

Below is a structured framework for teaching Geography using the Cornerstones Curriculum, focusing on engagement, skill development, and critical thinking. Each lesson is designed to last approximately 60 minutes, with specific timings for each component:

1. Learning Objectives (5 minutes)

- **Clear Goals:** Begin the lesson by presenting specific learning objectives that outline what pupils should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Communicate these objectives clearly to set expectations and motivate pupils.

2. Introduction (Engage) (10 minutes)

- **Hook Activity:** Start with an engaging question, artefact, or demonstration that captures pupils' interest. This could involve showcasing a piece of geographical data, a map, or a thought-provoking theme related to geography.
- **Activate Prior Knowledge:** Encourage pupils to share what they already know about the topic or geographical features. This helps to connect new learning to existing knowledge and prepares them for deeper exploration.

3. Direct Instruction (Explain) (15 minutes)

- **Clear Explanations:** Provide concise and clear explanations about the specific geographical concepts being taught. Use visual aids, exemplars, or demonstrations to illustrate key points and ensure pupils understand the expected outcomes.
- **Model Techniques:** Demonstrate geographical skills or processes, making abstract ideas concrete and accessible. For example, show how to read a map or interpret geographical data.

4. Main Activity (Explore & Create) (20 minutes)

- **Hands-on Creation:** Allow pupils to engage in hands-on exploration and creation of their own geographical projects. Encourage them to apply the skills demonstrated during direct instruction.
- **Guided Practice:** Circulate around the classroom, providing support and guidance as pupils work. Use formative assessment to monitor progress and offer constructive feedback.
- **Pupil Choice:** As pupils gain confidence, provide opportunities for them to make choices about their themes, materials, and methods, fostering a sense of ownership in their learning.

5. Reflection (Evaluate) (5 minutes)

- **Class Discussion:** Facilitate a reflective discussion where pupils share their projects and the processes they used. Encourage them to articulate their thoughts about what worked well and what they found challenging.
- **Peer Feedback:** Promote a culture of respect and constructive criticism by allowing pupils to give and receive feedback on each other's work.

6. Assessment & Closing (5 minutes)

- **Constructive Feedback:** Provide individual feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Set targets for future work to encourage continuous development.
- **Wrap-up:** Reinforce the learning objectives and connect the lesson to upcoming topics or projects. Encourage pupils to think about how they can apply what they learned in future lessons.

Impact

The implementation of this structured framework for teaching Geography at The Stour Academy Trust is designed to have a profound impact on pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. By clearly defining learning objectives, engaging pupils with thought-provoking activities, and providing direct instruction in geographical skills, we aim to foster a deep understanding of geography.

Impact:

- **Enhanced Geographic Skills:** Pupils will demonstrate improved proficiency in various geographical techniques and concepts, leading to a greater understanding of the world around them.
- **Increased Engagement:** A structured and engaging curriculum will motivate pupils to participate actively in lessons, fostering a love for geography and exploration.
- **Critical Thinking Development:** Through reflection and peer feedback, pupils will enhance their ability to think critically about geographical issues and their implications.

- **Stronger Communication Skills:** Pupils will develop the ability to articulate their geographical ideas and evaluations effectively, facilitating meaningful discussions about their work and the work of their peers.
- **Greater Inclusivity:** The inclusive nature of the curriculum will ensure that all pupils, regardless of background or ability, feel valued and capable of engaging with geographical content.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Exposure to diverse geographical contexts and cultures will broaden pupils' perspectives, fostering empathy and appreciation for different ways of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our Geography Policy reflects the principles of the Cornerstones curriculum, ensuring a comprehensive approach to geography education that meets the diverse needs of our pupils. We foster an environment that values inquiry and exploration, aligning with our commitment to providing a 21st-century education.

This policy emphasises both technical proficiency and innovative thinking, nurturing critical skills while encouraging individuality in geographical exploration. By integrating technology and contemporary practises, we engage pupils in meaningful learning experiences.

We recognise the importance of enhanced provision activities to cater to various learning styles, promoting an inclusive environment where every pupil can thrive. Our commitment to ongoing reflection and adaptation ensures that our practises remain relevant and effective.

Through this Geography Policy, we aim to inspire a lifelong appreciation for the world, equipping pupils with the confidence to explore and engage with their environment. Together, we will cultivate a vibrant learning community that celebrates diversity and fosters a passion for geography.