

The Everyday Guide to Primary Geography:

Local Fieldwork



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Series introduction

Geography is a vitally important component in a rich, broad and balanced primary curriculum. It is a subject that is driven by curiosity about the world as it is now and how it might change in the future. It provides the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to address the great social, economic, environmental and ethical challenges that face humankind in the 21st century. It involves not only finding out where places are and what they are like, but also investigating how they have evolved and changed in the past, and how they may develop in the future. It enables children to make sense of places they know from first-hand experience, and of the wider world they have yet to explore. It helps them to understand their place in the world, and how people and places are linked at every level from local to global. It invites them to consider the impact of their actions on the environment, what they value locally and globally, and how they can contribute to the creation of a better future.

As series editor, I hope to inspire you to engage in active 'curriculum making' by providing stimulating ideas, which you can adapt, extend or modify to meet the needs and interests of your class and your school's curriculum. All the activities are tried and tested, demonstrating how everyday and easily accessible resources, used creatively, can enhance and enrich pupils' geographical learning. Each double page is divided into panels with the key geographical learning opportunities on the left, supported by downloadable resources available from the webpage for this Guide (see below).

High-quality geographical work incorporates three key interrelated elements (Table 1). The first of these is an enquiry approach that involves asking geographical questions and using a range of skills, some specifically geographical, to find the answers. The second is the study of places, such as the local area, town, region, country or, at a global scale, continent, or the whole world. The third element involves learning about the physical and/or human and/or environmental geography of the places studied. Combining these different elements can enable pupils to think geographically in authentic learning activities that have real purposes, audiences and outcomes.

Enquiry, geographical skills and fieldwork	Asking and answering questions Planning and undertaking geographical enquiries Communicating the outcome of enquiries Making and using maps Using globes, atlases and digital mapping Fieldwork skills Using secondary resources such as books, websites and images Understanding differing points of view
Studying places – place and locational knowledge	The school grounds and local area The UK, Europe and the wider world Localities in the UK, Europe and the wider world Locational knowledge
Physical, human and environmental geography	<p>Physical geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> landscapes, volcanoes, rivers, coasts the weather, seasons and climate landscapes, plants and animals <p>Human geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> homes, buildings, villages, towns and cities journeys and the movement of people, goods and ideas jobs, agriculture, fishing, mining, manufacturing, transport, services land use and the location of activities <p>Environmental geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> change and development caring for the environment and the planet sustainability and environmental responsibility



Table 1: The three elements of high-quality geographical work

This series illustrates the amazing scope of geography in the primary curriculum, and the stimulating range of learning approaches it encompasses. It showcases high-quality geographical work contributed by primary classes in the UK and beyond. I hope it will be an inspiration to you to create challenging, exciting and satisfying geographical learning experiences for the pupils you teach.

Julia Tanner, June 2014



Resources to accompany this Guide, including activity sheets, teacher guidance, extra activities and cross-curricular links, are available to download from the Geographical Association website.

Go to www.geography.org.uk/everydayguides

Click on the button for this Guide and then enter the password **WT13KB**

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Geography and local fieldwork

This Guide is about exploring the potential for fieldwork in the school grounds and local area to stimulate, enliven and enrich geography at key stages 1 and 2. It demonstrates a wide range of practical fieldwork and classroom strategies for developing pupils' geographical thinking, knowledge and understanding, and geographical skills. It also explores some rich possibilities for cross-curricular work through linking local geography with other subject areas.

The aims of the Guide are to:

- demonstrate the value of local fieldwork as a context for promoting geographical thinking, including using geographical skills, concepts and vocabulary
- exemplify strategies for developing fieldwork skills, such as observing, identifying, measuring and recording aspects of the local area, and using key resources such as maps and plans, photos, weather instruments, surveys and digital technologies
- illustrate creative ideas for enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the local area, and its unique physical and human geography, through fieldwork-based enquiries
- provide valuable ideas and resources to use during fieldwork and associated classroom activities.



Photo © Helen Martin

The importance of fieldwork

Fieldwork involves work outside the classroom – in the school grounds, the local area or further afield. It is an essential element of a rich and satisfying geography curriculum. Research shows that pupils enjoy escaping the confines of the classroom, and that taking learning outside boosts their achievement and has a positive impact on personal and social development. This is not surprising, as fieldwork and other outdoor learning provide opportunities for first-hand experiential learning that is both motivating and memorable.

Fieldwork enables pupils to 'do' geography. It provides opportunities for pupils to see, hear, feel and touch things for themselves, making learning more vivid and interesting. Real-life examples help pupils understand geographical concepts, and geography fieldwork engages pupils and stimulates their curiosity, encouraging them to think critically and creatively. Enquiries that involve fieldwork enable pupils to act as geographical researchers and employ the skills and techniques adult geographers use to investigate the world.

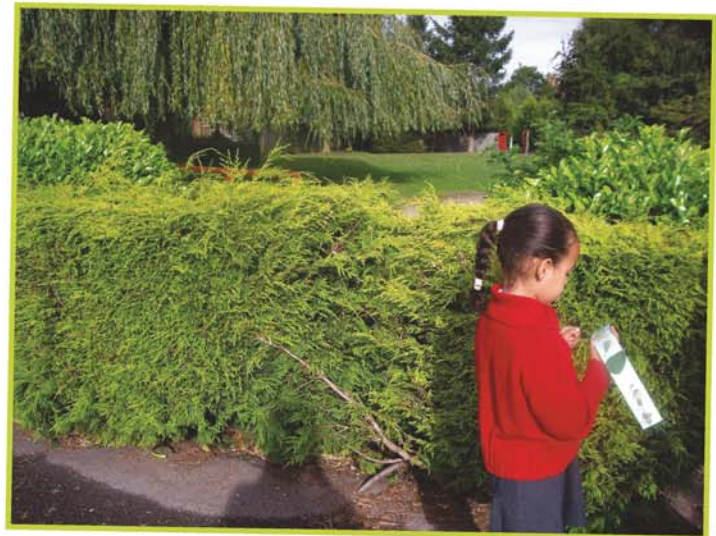


Photo © Carla Hill

The local area

High-quality geographical work incorporates three interrelated elements: enquiry and skills; places; and physical, human and environmental geography (see page 2). The local area is the single most important place to study in primary geography. It is best thought of not as 'content' to be taught, but as a resource you can capitalise on in constructing rich and satisfying geographical learning experiences.

The local area, which includes the school grounds, provides a unique and meaningful context for pupils to undertake geographical fieldwork enquiries, for a number of reasons:

- the area just outside your classroom/school is easily accessible for fieldwork
- local fieldwork draws from and builds on pupils' own knowledge and experiences of a familiar place. Most pupils know the area around their school and home well, and spend most of their time there. The principle of starting with what pupils already know, understand and can do means that the locality and community is an ideal location for fieldwork investigations
- fieldwork enquiries in the local area are engaging and motivating for children. Primary-aged pupils, like most of us, are interested in 'their place', its history and geography and what makes it special
- fieldwork involves experiential learning approaches, including practical activities, visits and engagement with the local community
- many local fieldwork investigations offer authentic learning activities, which have real purposes, audiences and outcomes. Pupils can investigate, take action on and campaign for positive changes on a real-life issue
- local fieldwork imbues the immediate area with intrinsic value as a place of interest, worthy of attention in the school curriculum. This is particularly important in schools that serve disadvantaged communities and where residents

Enquiry in primary geography

Geography in the primary school is best organised through geographical enquiries. At their most basic, geographical enquiries involve finding answers to geographical questions. The best enquiries, however, are much more sophisticated: they engage and motivate pupils by addressing real-world issues and concerns. Genuine enquiries do not have pre-determined answers, results or conclusions. Rather, they offer authentic learning activities with real purposes, audiences and outcomes and engage pupils in active, experiential learning. The most powerful enquiries enable pupils to take action that makes a positive difference and generates change. As the ideas and examples in this Guide illustrate, the school grounds and local area provide an excellent context for such enquiries.

An enquiry framework

The enquiry process is often thought of as cyclical, since genuine enquiries often raise as many new questions as they do answers. Typically, a geographical enquiry will involve several stages.

When deciding how to adapt any of the activities in this Guide, whether for an individual lesson or as part of a new unit of work, you may find it helpful to refer to the enquiry prompts in Figure 1.



Figure 1: An enquiry framework. Source: Owens and Richardson, 2010.

Figure 1 provides a useful guide for medium-term planning of geographical enquiries. Genuine enquiries develop organically, so it is sensible not to plan in great detail at the

medium-term or unit-of-work stage. While outline planning is necessary to relate the enquiry to the school's long-term geography plan, and to determine the overall focus and expected learning outcomes, too much detail will inhibit pupil involvement in shaping and planning the investigation.

Investigating our School


Pupils investigate their school using photos, large-scale plans and a toy.

Geographical enquiry and skills

- enquiry – asking and answering questions, planning investigations and fieldwork
- fieldwork – observation, photography, responding and making judgements
- map work – using large-scale plans to record and present information, using symbols
- using aerial images to recognise features
- using and understanding geographical vocabulary
- using and understanding locational and directional language

Geographical knowledge and understanding

- features of the school grounds
- jobs in school

 See page 8 for advice on risk management. You may want to limit the area used for the Barnaby Bear activity.

To access extra resources from the Everyday Guides web page, see page 2.



Your school – its buildings, grounds and the people who work in it – is an excellent starting point for geographical work at key stage 1. In these playful activities, pupils use toys and familiar objects and draw on their own experience and knowledge of the school grounds to develop their understanding of geographical concepts. Activities such as finding and relocating Barnaby Bear provide the context for pupils to use geographical skills and act as a foundation for more in-depth studies of the school grounds at key stage 2 (see pages 22–3).

Talk about your school

Initiate a discussion about your school. What is it called? Where is it? What is its address? What different places in the buildings and grounds (e.g. playground, wildlife area, car park, assembly hall, classrooms, offices, etc.) can pupils name? What do pupils like best about it?