

Fieldwork is an essential part of geography within the Primary Knowledge Curriculum. It allows pupils to observe, explore, and collect data about people, places, and the environment. Through fieldwork, children develop practical geographical skills, such as map reading, spatial awareness, data collection, and environmental observation.

To ensure effective fieldwork, pupils must first be taught procedural knowledge—how to gather information, use equipment, interpret maps, and ask geographical questions. This foundation prepares them to apply their learning meaningfully during their trips, linking closely to the local geography strand of the curriculum.

Fieldwork Progression

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Fieldwork at this stage focuses on spatial awareness, observation skills, and simple map concepts:

- **All About Me** – Pupils explore the school grounds, using simple location language such as near, far, next to, in front of, behind. They begin understanding basic directional language (e.g., north, east, south, west). They talk about where they live and places that are familiar to them.
- **Transport: Past & Present** – Teachers can opt to complete a walk around the local area. This helps pupils observe different types of transport and discuss their experiences, strengthening their understanding of location and connections between places.
- **Growing and Changing** – Pupils observe plants and trees, collect natural materials like leaves, and identify seasonal changes, introducing them to environmental geography.
- **Enrichment Opportunity** – A visit to a nearby landmark or site provides early exposure to local geography and encourages curiosity about places beyond their immediate environment. For example, when studying Kings and Queens, children may visit a local landmark or attraction with links to the Royal Family.

Year 1: Developing Spatial Awareness

Pupils begin using **basic mapping skills and observational geography**:

- **Spatial Sense** – Children look at the layout of their classroom. They think about the location of things in their classroom and position things on a very simple map. Teachers can plan a walk around the school perimeter introducing basic landmark recognition. Pupils could observe features like roads, entrances, and physical features such as trees and parks, depending on what is in the local area. They can build on the language that began to develop in EYFS by describing the locations of features e.g. Next to our school is a park.

Year 2: Mapping and Route Planning

Pupils build **mapping and navigation skills**:

- **Spatial Sense** – After walking around the school perimeter, pupils draw a simple map of their surroundings, learning about symbols and their meanings. They begin to locate and record physical and human features. This builds on the fieldwork from Year 1.
- **Route Planning** – Pupils plan a journey using a map and follow it to observe changes in the environment and understand distances.

Year 3: Rivers and Settlements

Pupils explore **physical geography and human settlements**:

- **Rivers** – If possible, teachers can plan a visit to a nearby river. This would help pupils learn about waterways, erosion, and the connection between rivers and civilisation. They can use maps to trace the route of the river, reinforcing their understanding of settlements near water sources.
- **Enrichment Opportunity** – Teachers may link a visit to a local museum to supports learning about settlements in the local area. This could help pupils understand concepts like population growth and urbanisation.
- **Sustainability and Human Impact** – Pupils explore how human activities affect rivers, encouraging discussion around pollution, conservation, and responsible environmental behaviour. This will support children's fieldwork in Year 5 when children undertake a local study.

Year 4: Local Change and Impact

Pupils explore **human geography and environmental change**:

- **Spatial Sense** – Children study the local area, using maps and data to understand more about the human and physical features of the local area. They then learn about change over time in the local area. These lessons can be enriched with fieldwork allowing children to experience aspects of the local area first hand. Teachers are encouraged to research an aspect of change that is relevant to the local area.

Year 5: Independent Fieldwork and Data Collection

Pupils begin **geographical research and data presentation**:

- **Local Study** – Pupils explore the local area, identifying road names, landmarks, and significant features, reinforcing their mapping skills. They build on their previous knowledge of the local area and use Ordnance Survey maps to locate key places.
- **Data Collection** – Pupils gather both qualitative and quantitative data on a local issue, such as transport or environmental concerns, then decide how to represent their findings using graphs, tables, or reports. They have the opportunity to write to a member of the local government or local council to share their findings.

Year 6: Geographical Investigation

Pupils conduct **in-depth exploration of geographical issues**:

- **British Geographical Issues** – Pupils use maps to identify local environmental concerns such as air pollution or flood risks. They have the opportunity to visit key locations, observe the causes (e.g., traffic levels, flight paths), and consider solutions.
- **Orienteering (Residential)** – Many schools undertake a residential trip in Year 6 and as part of this they can plan orienteering. This offers an opportunity to apply directional skills, strengthening children's confidence in map reading and outdoor navigation.