

PRIMARY

# GEOGRAPHY

**Focus on** empowering geography

Number 104 | Spring 2021

"What does it mean to be happy?" asked the fox.



"Happiness is letting go of what your life is supposed to look like," answered the horse.

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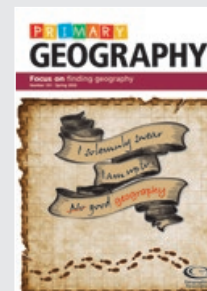
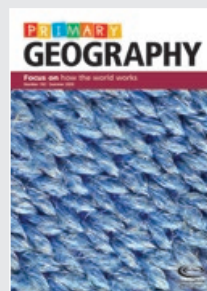
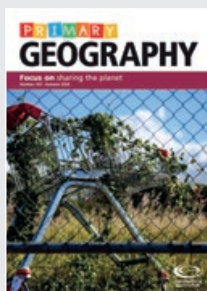
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Please cast your votes by 1 March 2021. The winners will be announced at the Annual Conference.





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Writing the world

# Editorial

Paula Owens, Tessa Willy and Sharon Witt

## Empowering geography

### Introduction

Welcome to 'Empowering Geography'; an issue of *Primary Geography* that we have felt empowered to co-produce and one that has given us the chance as an editorial team to take a moment, reflect and (re)affirm what really matters in *Primary Geography*. As this goes to press we have just witnessed democracy in action with the election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States and Kamala Harris, the first female vice-president, reminding us all that: 'We, the people, have the power to build a better future'.

We find ourselves in critical times. We continue to live within a time of crises but also opportunity: climate, biodiversity, economic, environmental, social justice and a pandemic, all of which are entangled, interlinked and complex. Children are growing up in a world that may not seem full of awe and wonder, but rather inexplicably full of danger and uncertainties. As educators we bear a responsibility to temper pupils' fears by challenging misconceptions and providing access to factual knowledge and alternative points of view; to banish apathy by enabling access to tools of enquiry and critical thinking; to counter despair with hope by teaching through the possibilities of many stories and narratives rather than through a single story; and to empower through opportunities for genuine participation and agency.

### Geography has power

Geography is the subject that can help pupils and adults think about and make better sense of complex issues. These are times that require us all to seek and know key facts about the world, consider what and whose knowledge matters, develop empathic viewpoints and think critically, as well as holistically, across a range of scales. In needing to connect local and global issues and events, we need, in short, to think like geographers.

Our teaching and learning of geography needs to be broad, expansive, messy and innovative, while also having a clear curriculum vision, purposeful and effective teaching, and sound strategies for assessing impact. If that were not challenging enough, we also need, more than ever, to nurture hope and fan the flames of purpose among our pupils by giving them the tools and knowledge they need to make decisions and take action. Empowerment in this context seems a most desirable ambition.



Guest Editors, Paula, Sharon and Tessa, with Chair of the PG Editorial Board, Steve Rawlinson.

### Empowering geography

Empower is a word most often used to describe the act of giving someone confidence or control. The term empower has been carefully chosen as it suggests notions of freedom, positivity, and strength, all desirable qualities, but we acknowledge and argue that the term 'empowerment' comes with a warning. Confidence to act without knowledge or awareness of others' values and ways of knowing is hollow and lacks authenticity. What are the implications for empowering geography then?

Around the country, pupils have been campaigning for climate change action, taking their own action for changes they believe are needed. We hope that we can give pupils the safe spaces they need to feel that they can enact agency, in everyday seemingly small matters as well as those concerning the bigger and more pressing issues of the day. However, we also argue that to have authenticity, agency needs to be underpinned with core knowledge and empathic understanding. In the case of pupils campaigning to raise awareness of the climate crisis for example, we would hope that they have been empowered by being able to appropriately use climate and weather vocabulary, explain the difference between weather and climate, and reasons why climate might change over time, and also be aware of how the climate crisis is caused by and impacting on, human activities around the world.

Agency without relevant knowledge and understanding is not empowering, it is just hope-inspired action fuelled by shallow conviction. Conversely, factual,

encyclopaedic geographical knowledge on its own lacks the necessary empathic understanding pupils need to engage in meaningful problem solving where they need to better understand the importance of differing perspectives. Empowering geography needs it all: factual knowledge, empathic knowledge, critical thinking, and agency (Figure 1).

### Primary geography matters

For more than 20 years, the Charney Primary Conference has been a place where evidence-led teaching and learning has provided powerful discussions and CPD for primary geography, empowering primary educators through its recognition that we teach pupils in uniquely different settings and contexts from secondary schools (Figure 2). We cannot water down secondary requirements and approaches to make them fit the primary context – we need distinct pedagogical approaches and geography subject knowledge that build on the foundations of the Early Years in a bottom up approach as opposed to a top down model.

- Naturally curious
- Spatially aware
- Deeply concerned
- Globally connected
- Critically engaged

Figure 1: What are we empowering our young geographers to be?

'As a group of over 30 primary teachers and educators with extensive experience in both formal and informal settings, from the UK and abroad, we re-affirm the essential contribution that geography makes to pupils' education. Not only does geography develop pupils' sense of belonging and place knowledge, it makes a unique contribution to their understanding of the world and how it is changing. At a time of growing planetary crisis, we believe a deep understanding of the reciprocal relationship between people and their environment is ever more important for primary age pupils and that geographical concepts and spatial awareness provide a unique and essential perspective on current realities. More specifically:

- we believe that geography contributes to children's health and well-being as well as their cognitive and social development
- we value and seek more effectively to include the contributions that children bring and make to their geographical education
- we recognise that the geography curriculum has changed remarkably little over the last century and that there is now a need for new thinking and different strategies
- we see an on-going need to decolonise global learning and international understanding
- we reaffirm the importance of signature pedagogies, such as fieldwork, mapwork and enquiry, that have stood the test of time and are the hallmark of effective, high-quality geography
- we believe there is significant potential for new approaches in geography that embrace notions such as divergence, disruption, enchantment, hope, imagination, creativity, criticality, humility and confident uncertainty
- we appreciate the significance and importance of progression and assessment in the primary geography curriculum that will benefit from continuing reflection and deeper, sharper definition and shaping.'

Figure 2: Comment from the Charney Manor Primary Geography Conference February 2020.

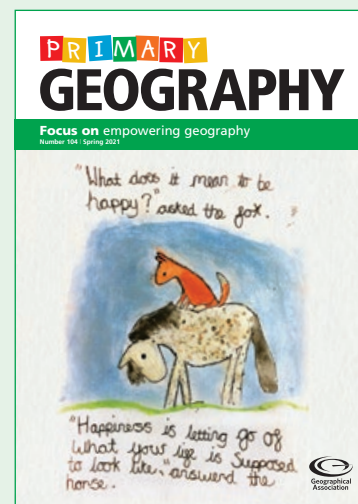
## Using the front cover in the classroom

The cover of this issue takes inspiration from the book *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy, (see page 7). This magical inspiring book has themes of empathy, compassion and thinking deeply about how we live in and with the world, and how we treat others. The artwork here and in the linked PowerPoint (see web panel) was produced by Oak Class at Redfield Edge Primary School, Bristol, as part of their Recovery Curriculum. They were challenged to create a new page for the book including their own inspirational quote or message.

The book offers a way of opening conversations with pupils to consider what really matters in the world. Geography is about taking a different view and Charlie Mackesy has created a world where acceptance, peace and kindness are key. Try exploring the following questions with your pupils:

- What kind of world would they want to live in?
- What are the values that might be important in their new world?
- What would matter in their world? What are the issues they would like to address?
- Can they suggest actions to move towards this new world?

Download further ideas for geographical inspiration (see web panel).



## Empowering teachers and learners

The coming together of a community of practice is an empowering act, and the primary geography community has historically been especially empowering as we have long shared our expertise and wisdom – not least through the pages of this journal. In this issue for example, Stephen Scoffham discusses the importance of hopeful geographies and the need to put hope at the forefront of our geography at a time of crisis, reminding us of the affective dimension. The article from Julia Tanner seeks to enable teachers to address the fieldwork requirements of the National Curriculum by empowering them with a practical progression document, highlighting that careful planning and teachers' subject knowledge matter. Our interview shares the stories of two sisters, Amy and Ella Meek, who are taking action against plastic pollution, illustrating the power of informed agency. All of the content in this issue underpins our belief in the unique capacity of geography to inspire and empower us.

Uncertainty in times of crisis can create worry and anxiety, but it can also reveal new possibilities, offering opportunities to think, do and be differently. As teachers, we may need to follow a set curriculum, but we can populate it with precise content of our choosing and teach it according to the context and needs of our pupils.

We feel it is important to celebrate and share the power that we have as a primary geography community to inspire, support and guide each other. We hope you will find these strengths apparent within the pages of this issue.

## Web Resources

View this issue, its online extras, and all issues of PG back to 2004 online: [www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography](http://www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography)  
Download ideas for using the front cover: [www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography](http://www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography)

Paula Owers

Scott

T.M. Wilby.



# Empowering pupils, geography and geographers

Simon Catling, Paula Owens, Tessa Willy and Sharon Witt

## Simon, Paula, Sharon and Tessa suggest activities you can use with your pupils on the theme of this issue.

Primary pupils' geographies keep changing, not only because primary pupils develop but because the world nearby and 'out there' keeps changing too. At present viral geographies are a big part of this. Classrooms have been spaced out, pupils' routes in and around schools have been reorganised, and playgrounds have been divided up. What has it been like? Figure 1 offers some insight into lockdown from pupils.

Places, spaces, environments and their access and uses have changed, even though these places probably look the same. Who can do what, where and why? This situation is empowering and inhibiting: pupils discovering places, routes and views; relating to others in 'shifted' and new ways in these spaces; liking or being frustrated in what they can and cannot do where; enjoying what they notice anew; even thinking about what the new 'spatiality' of their classroom and school means to and for them. This is happening out of school too, around home and in familiar streets and places used and visited regularly, where access has changed: where to mask up, and keeping or not keeping 'distance'.

It's amazing what an invisible 'thing' can do; how we respond to it, how it shifts our lives, realigns our contacts and interactions, and so plays with our geographies. It creates difference and a real opportunity for pupils to look at how everyone uses and makes their daily spaces, how we all see our environments, the ways we relate to others, and what we feel about our places. Our geographies are not simply our own; they are collective and influenced, not always obviously. This is one way it happens. And it can be empowering.

'When I go outside there is less people around, I've noticed a lot less litter on the ground. I wonder if this is because all the campsites around me are closed? I have also noticed that when I am in the garden I can see more birds and hear them singing their songs. Due to Covid-19 I have been going out for walks more often, because I can't stay inside all day! In my opinion staying at home has made me happier, because I'm not getting as stressed as I would be getting in school, with tests and pressure. I am really missing my friends, but luckily I have managed to stay in contact with most of them. I can also be in contact with my teacher because my school has set up an online app. I prefer to do my work this way because I can do it in my own time, and have my own breaks when needed. I have also seen ducks and partridges from my window – which I have never seen here before – That's how my world has changed for me.'

Lola, aged 10, St Clements School, Leysdown

'Seasonal change, houses are being built, more lorries, more people walking. The change I would like to see is get rid of Covid and have a better football pitch in our park.'

Seb, aged 10, Oxfordshire

'Different colours on the trees and less traffic but more lorries. I would like Covid to leave.'

Lilah, aged 7, Oxfordshire

Figure 1: 'How my world has changed'.

## Empowering say over space

The question is: Do our pupils have a say? They know what goes on and where. Have they been asked about how best to (re)arrange school spaces and routes? Not only what are their opinions but what are their suggestions and designs?

Go one step further: In moving out of a virus 're-spaced' school space, are there improved ways to better use and enjoy school places, spaces and environments, across the whole school site, inside and outside, for everyone? Ask the pupils. Employ their daily geographies of school to best effect. It is a whole curriculum opportunity, with (pupils') geographies leading. Remember there are adults there as well. Let their geographies in: what could work better for them, for you all? Geography can be empowering, if you look at it, think about it and use it.

## Issue-based enquiry

Use issue-based geographical enquiry questions to support the pupils to investigate a local issue/matter in their neighbourhood or explore a more global concern. These questions can guide their thinking:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it an issue?
- Why is it important locally/nationally/globally?
- What groups/individuals are involved?
- What views do they hold?
- What views do you hold?
- What alternative solutions are there?
- How will a decision be made?

There are possibilities to link this work across the curriculum to write protest songs and persuasive letters, to design banners and to use drama techniques, e.g. teacher/pupils in role to simulate meetings and explore the issues further.

## Going national

Why not become involved in a national campaign with your class/school? One project that is designed to engage pupils with the global issue of climate change is Lets Go Zero 2030 (see web panel). This campaign enables schools to make a public commitment to take action themselves to reduce their own climate impact.

## The power of story

Stories and poetry can empower pupils to learn about their world. They can connect people with places and offer possibilities to stimulate pupils' engagement with the outdoors. Stories can also communicate ideas and geographical concepts, such as place, space, scale, interconnectedness, diversity, human and physical processes,

providing pupils with opportunities to develop their thoughts and feelings. Stories can also empower pupils through developing their geographical vocabulary, fostering their imagination and empathetic thinking. We have selected a few books below to inspire geographical learning and empower pupils to build relationships with the world.

### The Lost Spells

*The Lost Spells* (Macfarlane and Morris, 2020) is a collection of poems that celebrates a sense of wonder and shares poetry of underappreciated animals, birds, trees, and flowers. The book may be used as an initial stimulus for a school grounds or local neighbourhood walk in which pupils are asked to look for Beech, Oak, Daisy, Silver Birch, Goldfinch etc. Challenge your class to learn the jackdaw rap and post it on twitter for @RobGMacfarlane and @JackieMorrisArt. Following a walk around their local area the pupils could write a charm to conjure the magic of the neighbourhood. You may like to consider using Heartwood as a stimulus to write a spell of protest for a place-based issue. Heartwood was written to be read for any tree anywhere that faces unjust felling, but especially for the street trees of Sheffield.

### Bloom (Hope in a scary world)

*Bloom* (Booth and Wilson-Owen, 2020) is a wonderful tale of positivity, noticing the tiny things around us, and the power of kind words. It could be used to prompt some worthwhile discussions about how we engage with the world and treat other people and places.

### Hike

*Hike* (Oswald, 2020) is a wordless book that empowers pupils to create the narrative and to consider the wonders of the natural world. The boy and his father head off on a hike up a mountain. The pictures illustrate the child's fascination and curiosity with a feather and a ladybug. It may provide a stimulus for the pupils in your class to venture out on local expeditions around the school grounds or local park. Perhaps the pupils could illustrate and map their journeys.

### Last

*Last* (Davies, 2020) explores a vital issue – conservation – and considers longing for home, feeling 'out of place' and ends with a sense of hope. What stories of conservation have interested the pupils? Where are these stories located?

### Migrations: Open Hearts, Open Borders

*Migrations* (The International Centre for the Picture Book in Society, 2019) is a collection of postcards that were shared by children's book illustrators around

the theme of migration. In the opening pages Sean Tan (2019) suggests small gestures, such as pictures and friendly messages, can make a difference through fostering creativity, provoking questions and confronting despair. This is a book of provocations for geographical lessons on departures, long journeys, arrivals, and hope for the future.

### The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

*The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy is a magical, inspiring book with themes of empathy, compassion and thinking deeply about how we live in and with the world, and how we treat others. The images and conversations between the Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse have been shared thousands of times on social media and have inspired pupils to create their own work (see page 5). This is a book with a wide reach and appeal and could be a stimulus for many subject areas within the primary classroom.

For more inspiration for empowering geography and empowering pupils read on!

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## Web Resources

Lets Go Zero 2030:  
[www.letsgozero.org](http://www.letsgozero.org)

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# Finding hope at a time of crisis

Stephen Scoffham

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Figure 1: When conditions are less than perfect, it is hope that shines through. Photo © Paula Owens.

**At a time when the world community is in the grips of a pandemic and when global warming and biodiversity loss threaten to undermine our civilization, the story of Pandora's Box takes on a contemporary relevance. Here Stephen explores how hope shines a light on the future and encourages us to move forward.**

The story of Pandora's Box is one of many myths that the Ancient Greeks devised to express their ideas about the world and the enigma of life. The story goes that Zeus (the king of the gods) gave Pandora two gifts – the gift of curiosity and a sealed box that she was not to open under any circumstances. Understandably, Pandora found herself fascinated by the box and

eventually her curiosity got the better of her. She decided to take a peek inside to see what it contained. To her dismay, as she opened the lid, a swarm of evil spirits rushed out into the world taking disease and suffering with them. Just one spirit stayed behind. This was the spirit of hope.

## Hope and primary geography

Hope is a complex idea. It goes deeper than wishful thinking and optimism, which tend to be passive and lack any clear sense of purpose. Instead, it can be seen as an active quality – as a grounded vision for the future. This means that hope is a creative process of imagining possibilities and harnessing energy and potential. However, hope also has a darker side in that it stems from a recognition that the current circumstances are far from perfect (Figure 1). Indeed, the way that hope often arises from a disaster means that it encompasses pain and mourning as well

as happiness and love. Such considerations make it clear that hope cannot be accessed by the intellect alone, but that it also involves the heart and soul, as Dave Hicks (2014) argues.

These reflections may seem rather abstract but they have considerable implications for primary geography. Geography is a very broad subject that focuses on the inter-relationships between the physical and human environment. Finding out about how the world is changing and what might lie ahead is one of its central concerns. The scale and extent of current problems can easily seem overwhelming and learning about them is potentially traumatic. Hope offers an antidote to despair and the possibility of constructing a better future.

Putting hope at the forefront of your teaching brings about a profound shift of emphasis. Rather than focusing on a long list of seemingly intractable environmental problems, the hopeful geography teacher



will present them as challenges to which we can seek solutions. Pupils can be encouraged to consider the kind of future that they would like, focusing on what they think is preferable, what they think is possible and what they think is probable. This is one way of initiating a process that will move pupils from being passive observers of events to more active agents who feel they can influence what is happening around them.

Factual knowledge and active learning are part of the arsenal of the hopeful geography teacher. Pupils are often aware of environmental problems from an early age, but confused about the implications. Their sense of vulnerability and need for personal security can then lead to exaggerated or unjustified fears. With respect to global warming, for example, Robin Alexander noted in his review of primary education that the pupils who knew about climate change and aware of practical strategies for energy reduction and sustainability were most confident that they would not be overwhelmed by it. In a telling phrase Alexander reports, 'pessimism turned to hope when witnesses felt they had the power to act' (2010, p. 189). Giving pupils a sense of agency whether through knowledge or action helps to empower them.

## Nature, awe and wonder

Nature has inspired people throughout history. The way in which we attach meaning and derive benefit from the natural world is summed up in the notion of 'biophilia'. Among other things, biophilia highlights how reaching beyond ourselves contributes to our health and well-being and nourishes our spirituality. The ecologist, Stephen Kellert, amplifies this point when he contends that the wondrous beauty of nature is our 'magic well', which he believes is the 'source of who we are and can become' both as individuals and as a society (Kellert, 2012, p. xiv). For geographers, finding out about habitats and biomes is one way of engaging with nature, but local studies and investigations in and around the school are also absolutely crucial in giving pupils direct contact with their surroundings and developing their sense of place and belonging.

It is valuable to give pupils the chance not only to experience the world around them, but also to reflect on its wonders. We live on a remarkable planet with a huge variety of physical environments and forms of life. The cycles of the seasons, the beauty of the landscape and the glory of a summer sunset are all examples of things that people treasure. The delicate interplay of forces, which keeps the planet in harmony, is also something to marvel at. In physical geography, for example, the

processes of erosion are balanced by the processes of mountain-building – multiple feedback loops maintain stability in a world of continual change. Recognising that Earth is a living organism was the core realisation of Gaia theory, first proposed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis in the 1970s. And remembering that we are utterly dependent on the planet which supports us evokes the sense of humility that serves to counter arrogance and allows hope to flourish.

Getting pupils to consider the things they are grateful for both in their own lives and in the world at large is another way to promote a positive mindset. This idea has been developed recently in *Letters to the Earth* (Thompson, 2019) in which people of all ages and different walks of life write about love, loss, hope and action as they share their ideas about a planet in crisis. This reaches out beyond the purely cognitive to access emotional and spiritual responses. Musical compositions, paintings, poetry and dance are other ways of touching deep layers of meaning. A cross-curricular approach, which draws on different disciplines to explore our feelings about the world, has great potential to enrich and nourish geographical understanding

## A new approach

It is increasingly apparent that schools need to adapt to changing circumstances. In many instances educational practice has remained remarkably similar for well over a century while the surrounding world has become dramatically and irreversibly different. The latest annual Charney Manor Primary Geography Research Conference recognised this when delegates concluded that there need to be new approaches that embrace notions such as 'divergence, disruption, enchantment, hope, humility and confident uncertainty' (Charney Manor Geography Conference, 2020).

The present formulation of the primary geography curriculum for England sets out an uncompromising agenda that focuses on knowledge. However, deeper questions about disposition, purpose and values lie beneath the factual statements that schools have to follow. Finding time and space to explore and nurture feelings and emotions is important. As Laura Piersol (2014) points out, presenting learning as almost fully known has the effect of removing the possibility of uncertainty and mystery from lessons. Awe, wonder and hope may be difficult to evaluate but they are qualities that are sorely needed at the present time.

Pupils come to school to be inspired, not to be depressed, and hope is fundamental to their educational experience. This is widely affirmed. Tessa Willy and Steve Rawlinson conclude

their introduction to the GA's flagship publication, *Leading Primary Geography*, that education in the 21st century should be about 'preparing for an unpredictable future with realism, hope and optimism' (Willy and Rawlinson, 2019, p. 19). The Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, declares that one of the tasks of the progressive educator is to 'unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be' (1993, p. 3), and Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (2012) argue that hope is an active process of bringing healing to the world.

The ills that the evil spirits that escaped from Pandora's Box have wrought on Earth have already done terrible damage. However, the spirit that stayed behind – the spirit of hope – can be harnessed in the service of creating a better future. It may not be powerful enough to bring about change on its own, but it is certainly an essential quality as we grapple with unprecedented challenges. Hopeful geography teachers will seize the opportunity.

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# Anne Dolan and Joe Usher

The greatest disaster since the Second World War, the Covid-19 pandemic is an unanticipated event of epic proportions that has exposed human fragility in an interconnected and interdependent world. A global calamity, to date thousands of people have died from the virus and millions remain vulnerable, hospitals and care services have been stretched

1. What impact has the corona virus had on me and my friends?
2. What impact has the corona virus had on my local area?
3. What impact has the corona virus had on my country?
4. What impact has the corona virus had on my world?

During lockdown any non-essential movement beyond home must take place within a 2km radius for exercise. Pupils can use Google Maps or the 2km From Home website (see web panel) to draw a circle (using a 2km radius, 4km diameter) with their home in the centre. They draw a map to illustrate all of the things they can do within a 2km radius of their home. Pupils can share maps and observe differences in contrasting localities. As restrictions are lifted, they can increase the scope of their maps accordingly (to 5km, 10km and 20km distances) providing opportunities for exploring distance and scale in context (Figure 1).





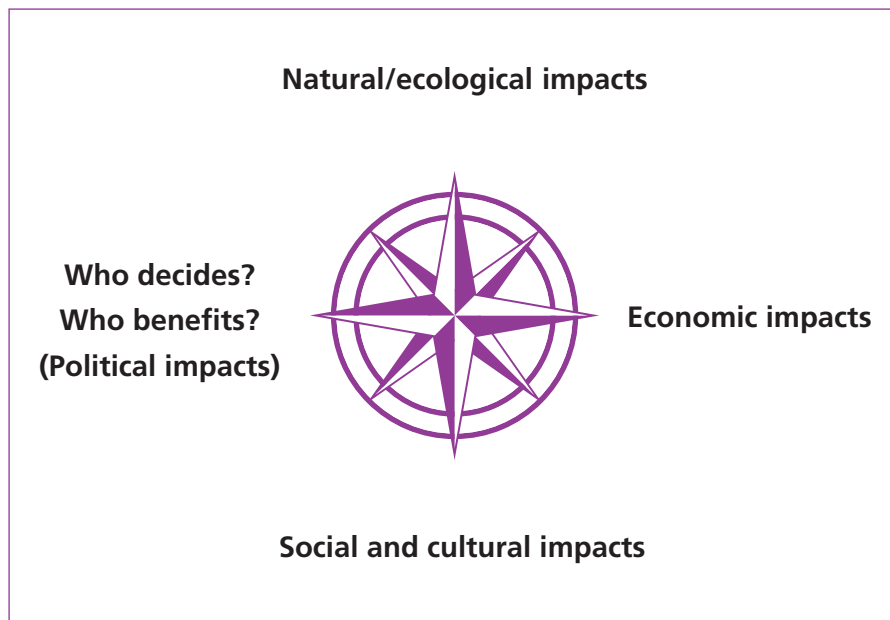


Figure 2: The Development Compass Rose. After: Tide~ Global Learning.

## Categorising impacts

Discuss the impacts of Covid-19 with the class. The pupils' responses can be categorised using the framework of the Development Compass Rose (Figure 2) by the teacher or pupils as appropriate.

Discuss the impacts of the pandemic in terms of family, school, local area, county and country. When the pupils are familiar with categorising responses, distribute the scenario cards (Figure 3) and ask them to sort the cards by impact using the compass framework (see Figure 2). Further discussion can highlight issues such as personal, community and national impacts; the difference between personal, local and national decision-making; and pupils' personal reflections on the activity.

## Investigating local services

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, except for essential services, most businesses and services were required to close. Ask pupils to list all of the shops and businesses in their locality and then categorise them into 'essential' and 'non-essential' services. They could produce a land-use style map using their lists. Alternatively, the teacher can provide a set of cards showing local jobs (Figure 4) and ask pupils to sort them into 'essential' and 'non-essential' workers, with the pupils providing justifications for their choices. Cards such as 'factory worker' could lead to a discussion of the different types of factory work and factories, leading pupils to think more about what is 'essential' work.

To answer the question 'What jobs (essential services) were involved in the chain of connections?' pupils take one product and list all the people involved in its production, transport, use and disposal. Pupils could focus on essential products

(e.g. face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser) or more common, less obvious essential products (e.g. pet food, household cleaning products, basic food items). For example, face masks produced in Britain need factory workers to make them from raw materials, which are transported to the factory by lorry drivers. The lorry drivers need to purchase diesel at filling stations. The raw materials have to be shipped in crates or containers made by other factory workers. Once made the masks are then transported by lorry drivers to health centres or hospitals for nurses, doctors, cleaning staff, porters and receptionists as well as patients to wear. Used masks are disposed of and refuse workers take them to a waste disposal centre.

Pupils can represent this flow of jobs in a comic-strip format, as a flow chart or on a map, illustrating the supply chains and distances travelled. Explore different scenarios, for example, when part of the supply chain has to close, or if the factory runs out of raw materials. By engaging in such an activity, the pupils can identify the interconnectedness and interdependency between jobs and the complexities of determining what constitutes an essential service.

## Empowering geography

The Covid-19 crisis offers an opportunity for empowering geography. It has given us a reason to pause and contemplate our individual and connected futures. Recent education policy in both the UK and in Ireland emphasises the development of life skills: pupils' critical thinking skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills in real-world contexts (Dolan, 2020). Usher (2019a) argues that geography is best positioned in this regard as it is based on the everyday lives and experiences of people and the pupils themselves; it is critical and relates to real-world problems and events and is concerned with issues beyond the classroom. Furthermore, Jackson (2006) alludes to geographical thinking about the entanglements of space and place, proximity and distance, scale and connection. He maintains that thinking geographically 'provides a language – a set of concepts and ideas – that can help us see the connections between places and scales that others frequently miss' (Jackson, 2006, p. 203). A geographical perspective encourages a deeper understanding of how phenomena are inter-related and interdependent, locating wider public, global scale events to their private, local impacts.

Natural/ Environmental impacts	Economic impacts	Social/Cultural impacts	Who decides? impacts
Ciara loves to go for a walk in Hyde Park in London. Unfortunately, the park was closed during a lockdown.	John wants to buy a birthday present for his sister, but high street retailers such as Next, Primark, John Lewis, Argos and B&Q had to close during the lockdown.	The Wimbledon championships were cancelled for the first time since the Second World War.	British scientists are advising the government about actions to prevent the spread of the corona virus. Who makes the final decision?
During the lockdown Jane spent more time in her garden. She planted some vegetables and is thrilled as she watches them grow.	Sarah looks forward to reading her local newspaper <i>The Luton Herald</i> . However, many local newspapers are no longer in production due to the economic impact of Covid-19.	The British Olympics Team did not travel to Tokyo for the 2020 Olympics as planned, as the games had to be re-scheduled	Some senior government ministers, including the Prime Minister, contracted Covid-19. The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, deputised for Boris Johnson while the Prime Minister was in hospital

Figure 3: Scenarios of the impacts of Covid-19 for different individuals in the UK.

Hairdresser	GP	Bookshop assistant
Lorry driver	Local takeaway worker	Food bank delivery person
Care home supervisor	Community nurse	Midwife
Dentist	Supermarket checkout worker	Postperson
Zookeeper	Chemist's assistant	Factory worker
Bicycle repair shop worker	Nail salon technician	Refuse worker

Figure 4: Cards showing jobs in essential and non-essential services.

Degirmenci and Ilter (2017) maintain geography's innate ability to provide for 'authentic learning experiences' where real-world events and issues form the foundation for effective geography teaching and learning. Pupils are motivated to engage in a problem or issue that affects them, their area, or people and places familiar to them. Exploring real-world events and problems is more exciting, engaging and memorable for pupils than if learning is confined to abstract issues in the classroom (Usher, 2019b). Here, pupils can see the relevance and significance of geography to their lives and the wider world.

## Handling the issue

Pupils are curious about the virus and they have important questions that need to be answered in an age-appropriate manner. The need for teacher sensitivity is paramount. Bear in mind the pupils in your class will feel the impacts of Covid-19 in myriad ways. Some pupils may have experienced a bereavement. Parents may have lost jobs and many families may be suffering because of economic uncertainty. There are several free online resources explaining Covid-19 in age-appropriate language for primary pupils (see web panel).

If pupils are expected to adapt and change their behaviour due to Covid-19, they need to be given opportunities to learn about it and become empowered to participate in these decisions and changes.

*'Agency is not just about thoughts or feeling. It is about the opportunity and capacity to act on goals... Pupils need to be given the opportunities to change their behaviour. It is only through this experience of taking action that child agency can be developed... Developing agency is not just about what we teach, it is about how we teach. It is not just about developing a "critical eye", it is about developing a "hopeful heart"'* (Dolan, 2020, p. 238).

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## Web Resources

- Cavalla, F. *Doctor Li and the Crown Wearing Virus*: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YOyr5DZeWOyR57IZemFZ1SyxfguKLyN/view>
- Dave the Dog is Worried about Coronavirus*: <https://nursedottybooks.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/dave-the-dog-coronavirus-1-1.pdf>
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- Molina, M. *Hello my name is corona virus*: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- Unicef *My Hero is You – How kids can fight Covid-19*: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/my-hero-you>
- 2km From Home: [www.2kmfromhome.com](http://www.2kmfromhome.com)

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# Progression in geographical fieldwork experiences

Julia Tanner

**In this article Julia reminds us why fieldwork is such a valuable and vital component of high-quality geography, and provides us with practical guidance for effective progression.**

Recent Ofsted reports suggest that both the use of the local area and development of fieldwork skills are weak in many primary schools. This article outlines a framework for progression in fieldwork, suggesting opportunities pupils should have in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS – ages 3–5), KS1 (ages 5–7), Lower KS2 (ages 7–9) and Upper KS2 (ages 9–11). For each age range, it identifies:

- possible geographical issues and themes for investigation through fieldwork approaches
- possible locations and sites for fieldwork activities
- a range of fieldwork techniques for observing, recording, analysing and presenting fieldwork data.

The purpose of this framework is to offer guidance to teachers and schools in planning for meaningful fieldwork experiences that are integral to a stimulating, coherent and progressive geography curriculum. The framework is laid out on pages 16–17 and is also available to download as an online extra along with an ‘auditing your local area’ sheet (see web panel). This article supports the framework by defining the spectrum of fieldwork experiences primary-aged pupils should experience, by considering the power of enquiry-led fieldwork as a pedagogical approach, and by exploring and analysing the nature of progression in fieldwork. It also provides details of useful resources to support teachers’ planning for fieldwork experiences.

## A spectrum of fieldwork experiences

Fieldwork experiences bring learning alive across the curriculum. In geography, purposeful fieldwork experiences are engaging and stimulating, inspiring in pupils ‘a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people’ (DfE, 2014).

Fieldwork can include a range of ways of coming to know a place, from holistic experiences that nurture pupils’ sense of place to building their knowledge and understanding of the physical and human geographical processes that shape our environment. This spectrum is illustrated in Figure 1. Open-ended explorations involving immersion, sensory exploration, playing, wondering and affective engagement nurture pupils’ sense of place (Witt and Clarke, 2020), while more structured investigations develop pupils’ core locational and place knowledge, through opportunities to ‘observe, measure, record and present’ geographical information (DfE, 2014).

## The power of enquiry-led fieldwork

Fieldwork empowers pupils. It offers endless opportunities for authentic learning activities, which are themselves empowering for pupils because they offer real purposes, real audiences and (ideally) outcomes in the real world

(Tanner, 2019, p. 77). Every school’s site and local area abounds with issues for potential investigation, from site problems with litter, parking or plastic use, to proposals for local developments or facilities improvements, and much broader questions of environmental quality and sustainability. Investigating real life issues ensures that pupils have a genuine ‘need to know’ the answers to the questions the enquiry will generate (Roberts, 2013). Such authentic learning activities are motivating for pupils, especially where, from the outset, they know that they will report their findings to a relevant, real audience – be it their peers, the Head teacher, school governors, local officials/ politicians, or the wider community. It can provide the impetus for practical action or campaigning to change things for the better, ensuring pupils develop a sense of agency as local and global citizens who can make a difference.

Fieldwork also empowers pupils by affording a fantastic context for the development of enquiry skills and specific geographical knowledge and understanding.

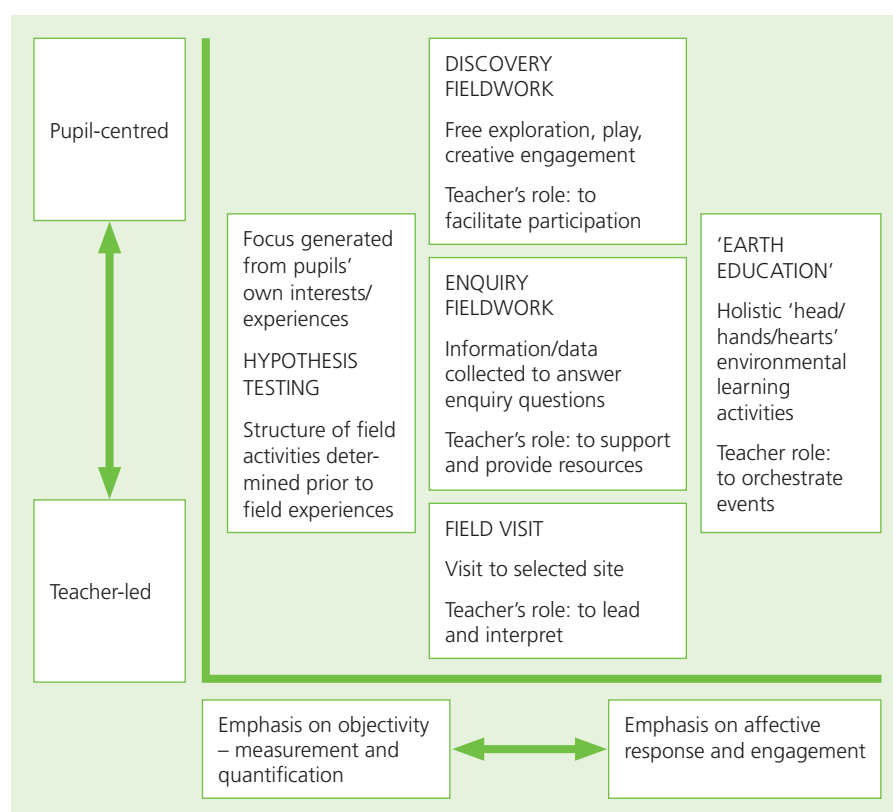


Figure 1: A classification of fieldwork experiences. After: Kinder, 2013 and Job, 1996.

What do we already **KNOW**?  
 What do we **WANT** to know?  
**HOW** can we find out?  
 What have we **LEARNT**?

Figure 2: The KWHL grid.

First, meaningful fieldwork is embedded in an enquiry approach, which provides pupils with a model of the enquiry process and associated enquiry skills. These can be applied in a variety of other subject areas, especially history and science. In enquiries, eliciting what pupils already know or feel about the topic to be investigated is a powerful starting point. It engages pupils by valuing their existing knowledge and opinions, and provides an excellent baseline for later reflection and evaluation of what pupils have learnt. A group or whole-class KWHL grid (Figure 2) is a powerful device for structuring and recording an enquiry as it progresses from initial thoughts to conclusions.

An enquiry approach can be applied across the curriculum and used to investigate a range of topics and issues. In geography, the complete enquiry cycle involves distinct stages: establishing

a 'need to know', asking questions, collaborating and selecting how to organise the investigation, carrying out the investigation, reflecting on the results or outcomes, communicating what has been learnt to someone, and evaluating the whole process (Figure 3). A copy of this diagram is available to download for use when planning (see web panel).

Second, meaningful fieldwork builds, through memorable real-life learning activities, the geographical knowledge that is essential for pupils' understanding of the geographical processes that shape their environment. Fieldwork involves 'doing geography', and through this active learning, makes otherwise abstract geographical concepts concrete. Pupils who have observed a fast-flowing stream *in situ* are likely to have a much better understanding of the power of water to erode, transport and deposit material than those who have only read about it, studied a diagram or watched a video. Equally, pupils who have interviewed bus users about proposed reductions in local bus services will gain a vivid understanding of how public transport provision is critical. For example, for people to get to essential services (such as food shops and health centres) or to access education, work and leisure opportunities.

## Progression in fieldwork experiences

Progression in fieldwork is concerned with pupils' competence in geographical enquiry, and the development and application of their skills in collecting and presenting fieldwork data (GA, 2020). As pupils move through the primary school, they should have opportunities to:

- undertake fieldwork in the school grounds, local area and increasingly unfamiliar environments
- ask and answer increasingly more complex geographical questions
- use increasingly specific vocabulary to name and describe the features they observe
- employ an increasingly sophisticated range of techniques to collect, analyse, evaluate and communicate geographical data.

The Framework for Progression in Geographical Fieldwork Experiences (see pages 16–17) illustrates how this progression can be embedded in a school curriculum plan. It exemplifies the range of experiences pupils should encounter and the fieldwork techniques they should have opportunities to learn, apply, practise and evaluate.

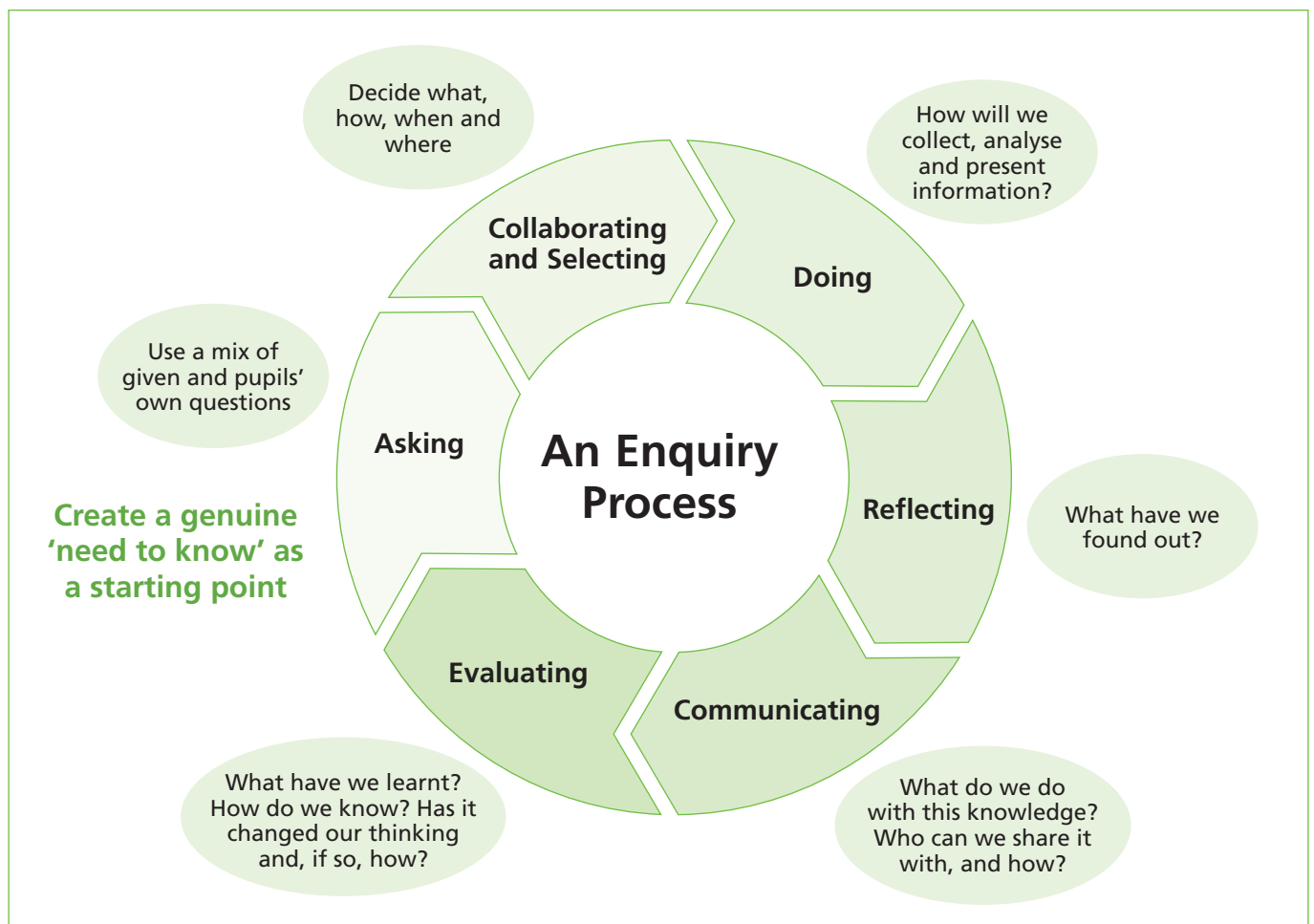


Figure 3: The enquiry cycle in geography. Source: Paula Owens/Geographical Association.





Collecting data in the school grounds. Photo © Shaun Flannery.

The school grounds and local area are the best contexts for many fieldwork experiences throughout the primary age range (Tanner and Whittle, 2015). An audit of your school's local area will reveal the specific opportunities it offers. (A document to support your audit is available to download with the framework – see web panel.)

## EYFS

Early Years Foundation Stage pupils should have plentiful opportunities for free exploration of their setting and outdoor area and to visit places in the immediate vicinity (e.g. local streets, park, shop, church or mosque). They can become familiar with these places through first-hand sensory exploration, observation and talk. Pupils should have opportunities to ask questions and follow their own interests. These early experiences provide opportunities for language development as pupils name and describe what they see to peers and adults.

## Key stage 1

Pupils in key stage 1 should have a wider range of fieldwork experiences, from free exploration and imaginative engagement to more structured enquiries that involve the use of simple techniques to record field data and answer geographical questions. Fieldwork should continue to involve plentiful opportunities for first-hand sensory exploration, observation and discussion with peers and adults. The school grounds and the local area within walking distance of the school provide many opportunities for pupils to plan and conduct simple geographical enquiries that involve fieldwork. Where feasible, pupils should have an opportunity to visit a place that is different from the local area. Fieldwork investigations in KS1 should be linked to the themes and topics in the Key Stage Curriculum Plan, to enhance and enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of place, and of physical, human and environmental geography.

## Key stage 2

Pupils in key stage 2 should continue to have an extensive range of fieldwork experiences, including free exploration and imaginative engagement, as well as more complex and systematic enquiries requiring them to use more specific fieldwork techniques. As with younger pupils, fieldwork should continue to involve plentiful opportunities for first-hand sensory exploration, observation and discussion with peers and adults. Although the school grounds and local area remain the most important contexts for fieldwork, pupils should have more opportunities to visit unfamiliar places to extend their knowledge and understanding of the wider world, and of unfamiliar environments. Fieldwork investigations in key stage 2 should be linked to the themes and topics in the Key Stage Curriculum Plan, providing opportunities for pupils to develop, extend and apply their fieldwork skills, enhancing and enriching their knowledge and understanding of physical, human and environmental geography.

## References and further resources

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## Acknowledgement

Thanks to all the members of EYPPC who gave invaluable feedback on earlier versions of the framework.

## Web Resources

Downloads to accompany this article: <https://www.geography.org.uk/pg>  
Selection of Primary Geography progression articles: <https://www.geography.org.uk/eBooks-detail/55e6c4b0-0c32-4ef2-81a9-737fc082dad6>  
GA fieldwork information: <https://www.geography.org.uk/Geography-fieldwork>  
GA guidance on progression: <https://www.geography.org.uk/Announcements-and-updates/ga-guidance-on-progression/247164>  
GA maps and mapping information: <https://www.geography.org.uk/Curriculum/Mapping>  
Ordnance Survey Digimap for Schools: <http://digimapsforschools.edina.ac.uk>

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## A framework for progression in geographical fieldwork experiences

This framework for pupils in EYFS (ages 3–5 years), key stage 1 (ages 5–7 years), lower key stage 2 (ages 7–9 years) and upper key stage 2 (ages 9–11 years) is concerned with providing opportunities for learning. Individual pupils will inevitably develop their understanding of the enquiry process and fieldwork skills at different rates. Progress can be secured only if the long-term curriculum plan provides for frequent and repeated opportunities for fieldwork as an integral element of purposeful geographical investigations.

The framework is organised in terms of the range of experiences pupils should have, and the fieldwork techniques they should have opportunities to learn, develop and apply in geography. Most fieldwork experiences in primary schools can take place in the school grounds and local area within easy walking distance of the school. A local area audit (see web panel) will reveal the specific opportunities available in each school's local area.

### Fieldwork experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage (ages 3–5 years)

EYFS pupils should have plentiful opportunities to freely explore their EYFS setting and outdoor area, and to make visits to places in the immediate vicinity of the school (e.g. local streets, park, shop, church or mosque). They can become familiar with these places through first-hand sensory exploration, observation and talk. They should have opportunities to ask questions and follow their own interests. These early experiences will provide opportunities for language development as pupils name and describe what they see in discussion with peers and adults.

Young pupils should be provided with opportunities to:

- explore their setting's outdoor area, noticing and naming its features (e.g. play equipment, different areas and surfaces, flower beds)
- experience different weather conditions and their impact on the environment
- examine and discuss natural objects (e.g. leaves, twigs, stones)
- explore the immediate local area through walks and visits to selected sites

During and after their explorations, pupils should have opportunities to record what they observe and notice by:

- using small world play or the role play area to represent a visited place
- making drawings (e.g. of their favourite place in the outdoor area, what they saw at the park)
- taking digital photos (e.g. of a collection of natural objects, buildings in the locality)
- sequencing photos to recall features seen on a visit or short walk
- drawing a map (e.g. of the outdoor area)
- counting (e.g. cars parked at the start/end of the day)
- expressing their feelings about places they visit, saying which features they like/dislike

### Fieldwork experiences in key stage 1 (ages 5–7 years)

Pupils in key stage 1 should have a wide range of fieldwork experiences, from free exploration and imaginative engagement with outdoor environments to more structured enquiries, which involve the use of simple techniques to record field data to answer geographical questions. The school grounds and the local area within walking distance of the school provide many opportunities for pupils to plan and conduct simple geographical enquiries that involve fieldwork. Where feasible, pupils should have opportunities to visit a place that is different from the local area. As with younger pupils, key stage 1 fieldwork should involve opportunities for first-hand sensory exploration, observation and discussion with peers and adults.

Fieldwork investigations in key stage 1 should be linked to the themes and topics in the Key Stage Curriculum Plan. Fieldwork opportunities should be planned to enhance and enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of places and of physical, human and environmental geography.

Fieldwork opportunities	Fieldwork techniques
<p>Pupils in key stage 1 should be provided with opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigate the physical and human features of the school and school grounds: naming and describing what they see (e.g. different areas including playground, car park, field, wildlife area) and how these areas are used; routes around the school site, people's jobs, places that have been/could be improved, and so on</li> <li>• investigate different weather conditions through observation and by making and using simple measurement devices (e.g. to record wind direction, to measure rainfall)</li> <li>• observe and record seasonal changes (e.g. to flowering plants and deciduous trees) in the school grounds and local area</li> <li>• explore the local area of the school to investigate the range of buildings, roads, green spaces and other local features</li> <li>• visit some local facilities (e.g. shops, a library, a health centre) and talk about what happens there and investigate why people go there</li> <li>• take a short journey by bus, tram or train to investigate a slightly more distant site that contrasts with the immediate local area</li> <li>• visit a park or local green space to observe its physical and human features and investigate how people use and enjoy it</li> <li>• investigate environmental issues (e.g. lack of play facilities, where litter collects, road safety issues) in the school grounds or local area</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should have opportunities to plan and conduct geographical investigations that include fieldwork, and to develop skills in using a range of simple techniques for collecting, analysing and presenting what they learn through fieldwork, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using small world play, model making, or the classroom role-play area to represent a visited place (e.g. a shop, the library or Health Centre)</li> <li>• adding details to a teacher-prepared drawing (e.g. doors, windows and other features to the outline of a house)</li> <li>• making annotated drawings to show variations (e.g. in a row of houses in a local street)</li> <li>• drawing a freehand map (e.g. of the school grounds, local street or park)</li> <li>• relating a large-scale plan (e.g. of the school grounds or a local street) to the environment, identifying known features</li> <li>• marking information on a large-scale plan (e.g. of the school grounds or a local street) using colour or symbols to record observations</li> <li>• using a simple compass and cardinal compass directions (north, south, west, east)</li> <li>• taking digital photos (e.g. of buildings in the locality, things seen on a bus journey)</li> <li>• making digital audio recordings when interviewing someone (e.g. shop worker, librarian, nurse) about their job</li> <li>• collecting quantitative data (e.g. to create a pictogram of favourite places to play or how pupils travel to school)</li> <li>• using a questionnaire (e.g. to find out the most popular options for improving playtimes)</li> <li>• collecting and sorting natural objects (e.g. leaves, twigs, stones) to investigate their properties</li> <li>• using a simple recording technique (e.g. smiley/sad faces worksheet) to express their feelings about a specific place and explaining why they like/dislike some of its features</li> </ul>

## Developing fieldwork experiences in lower key stage 2 (ages 7–9 years)

Pupils in lower key stage 2 should continue to have a wide range of fieldwork experiences, including free exploration and imaginative engagement. They should also undertake structured enquiries that involve the use of specific fieldwork techniques to record data to answer geographical questions. The school grounds and the local area will provide many opportunities for pupils to plan and conduct geographical enquiries that involve fieldwork. In lower key stage 2, pupils should have more opportunities to visit unfamiliar places to extend their knowledge and understanding of the wider world, and to develop and apply their fieldwork skills. As with younger pupils, key stage 2 fieldwork should continue to involve opportunities for first-hand sensory exploration, observation and discussion with peers and adults.

Fieldwork investigations in lower key stage 2 should link to the themes and topics in the Key Stage Curriculum Plan. Fieldwork opportunities should enhance and enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of places, and of physical, human and environmental geography.

Fieldwork opportunities	Fieldwork techniques
<p>Pupils in lower key stage 2 should be provided with opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to use the school and its grounds as a site for studying aspects of physical and human geography by investigating questions such as 'Where does the water go when it rains?', 'How do we travel to school' and 'Where does the food for school dinners come from?'</li> <li>when learning about the water cycle, weather and climate, to investigate and record different weather phenomena through observation and by using standard measurement devices (e.g. thermometers, rain gauges and anemometers)</li> <li>when learning about biomes and vegetation belts, to visit a woodland to study the trees, plants and animals, as an ecosystem</li> <li>when learning about land use, to investigate local buildings, land use, and local facilities and explore issues of environmental quality and value (e.g. by investigating which spaces or places are valued by the local community)</li> <li>when learning about economic activities, to investigate local shops (e.g. to find out how far people travel to them and why) or investigate local journeys and routes, including road safety, public transport provision and more sustainable travel choices</li> <li>when learning about natural resources, to explore issues of sustainability in everyday life (e.g. energy generation and use, water supply and use)</li> <li>take fieldtrips to more distant places (e.g. farm, water treatment plant, botanical gardens) to investigate their physical and human geography, as appropriate to the curriculum plan</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should have opportunities to plan and conduct geographical investigations that necessitate fieldwork, and to develop skills in a range of standard techniques for collecting, analysing and presenting what they learn through fieldwork, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>making models, annotated drawings and field sketches to record observations</li> <li>drawing freehand maps of routes (e.g. of a walk to a site in the local area)</li> <li>relating a large-scale plan of the local area or fieldwork site to the environment, identifying features relevant to the enquiry</li> <li>recording selected geographical information on a map or large-scale plan, using colour or symbols and a key</li> <li>taking digital photos and annotating them with labels or captions</li> <li>making digital audio recordings for a specific purpose (e.g. traffic noise)</li> <li>collecting, analysing and presenting quantitative data in charts and graphs</li> <li>designing and using a questionnaire to collect quantitative fieldwork data (e.g. to compare how far people travel to different types of shop)</li> <li>designing and conducting interviews (e.g. to investigate which spaces/places local people value)</li> <li>using simple sampling techniques appropriately (e.g. time sampling when conducting a traffic survey)</li> <li>using a simplified Likert Scale to record their judgements of environmental quality (e.g. in streets near the school)</li> <li>developing a simple method of recording their feelings about a place or site</li> </ul>

## Extending fieldwork experiences in upper key stage 2 (ages 9–11 years)

Pupils in upper key stage 2 should continue to have a wide range of fieldwork experiences, including free exploration and imaginative engagement as well as more structured enquiries that involve the use of more specific fieldwork techniques to record field data to answer geographical questions. The school grounds and the local area provide many opportunities for pupils to plan and conduct geographical enquiries that involve fieldwork. Upper key stage 2 pupils should have more opportunities to visit unfamiliar places, including (wherever possible) a residential visit. As with younger pupils, fieldwork should continue to involve opportunities for first-hand sensory exploration, observation, and discussion with peers and adults.

Fieldwork investigations in upper key stage 2 should link to the themes and topics in the Key Stage Curriculum Plan. Fieldwork opportunities should be planned to enhance and enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of places, and of physical, human and environmental geography.

Fieldwork opportunities	Fieldwork techniques
<p>Pupils in upper key stage 2 should be provided with opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to use the school and its grounds as a site for studying aspects of physical and human geography by investigating questions such as 'How can our school reduce its plastic waste?' and 'How can we make our school grounds more bee friendly?'</li> <li>when learning about rivers, to visit a local stream or river to investigate its physical features (e.g. meanders, sites of erosion and deposition) and its use by people now and in the past</li> <li>when learning about settlements, to investigate how buildings, land use and local facilities have changed over time; and investigate local development plans through visits to derelict sites, empty shops or buildings or places where developments (e.g. road, housing, industrial, retail or leisure schemes) are proposed</li> <li>when learning about economic activities, to investigate the range and location of primary, secondary and tertiary businesses in the local area</li> <li>when learning about natural resources and trade, to explore issues of sustainability in everyday life, including how everyday goods (e.g. food or clothing) are produced and traded, as well as consumption, waste and recycling</li> <li>take fieldtrips to unfamiliar environments to investigate the physical and human geography of those areas (e.g. mountains, rural areas, beaches) as appropriate to the curriculum plan</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils should have opportunities to plan and conduct geographical investigations that necessitate fieldwork, and to develop skills in a range of standard techniques for collecting, analysing and presenting what they learn through fieldwork, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>making models, annotated drawings and field sketches to record observations</li> <li>drawing freehand maps (e.g. of a site they have visited)</li> <li>relating large-scale plans to the fieldwork site, identifying relevant features</li> <li>recording selected geographical data on a map or large-scale plan, using colour or symbols and a key</li> <li>taking digital photos and annotating them with labels or captions</li> <li>making digital audio recordings (e.g. to create soundscapes)</li> <li>collecting, analysing and presenting quantitative data in charts and graphs</li> <li>designing and using a questionnaire to collect qualitative data (e.g. to find out and compare pupils' views on plastic waste)</li> <li>designing and conducting fieldwork interviews (e.g. to establish the range of views local people hold about a proposed development)</li> <li>using standard field sampling techniques appropriately (e.g. taking water samples from a stream)</li> <li>designing and using a tool to record their feelings about the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed development, for instance</li> <li>conducting a transect to observe changes in buildings and land use</li> </ul>



# Empowering geography – a view from Ofsted

Iain Freeland HMI

**In this article, Iain Freeland HMI offers the Ofsted view that where school leaders and teachers place emphasis on location and place knowledge, we see the empowering nature of the subject on pupils' experience.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought back into focus the centrality of geography. The use of a map with proportionate symbols or choropleth shading helps people to visualise the extent and spread of the disease and, sadly, the concentrations of those who have died. As geographers, this is second nature to us. However, for pupils and some colleagues in schools they do not have the benefit of this analytical viewpoint. They, therefore, do not get the depth of insight that those with a geographical understanding do.

## Building locational knowledge

Where school leaders and teachers place emphasis on location and place knowledge, we see the empowering nature of the subject on pupils' experience. For example, in a small primary school that a colleague visited, teachers had devised a curriculum where Reception-aged pupils

were introduced to the concept of locality and scale and used the area surrounding the school to broaden pupils' horizons. As pupils progressed through the school, their conceptual understanding of maps and location was systematically developed and deepened leading to pupils making informed location-based decision-making activities. Therefore, when it came to other subjects, such as history, pupils could use their knowledge of locations and topography (through their mapwork) to enhance their historical knowledge.

However, sometimes pupils do not have the geographical knowledge that would help them to see the big picture; to spot the spatial patterns; to appreciate the landscaping processes; or to consider the human decisions that shape people and places.

In one school I enjoyed a conversation with some primary school pupils about the book they were reading as their class text. The story involved a refugee who had arrived in England during the Second World War. The geographer in me was excited by the thought of journey and the appreciation of the concept of migration. The concept of seeking refuge was understood a little by the pupils; however, their recount of the story had the refugee travelling from Australia to the United Kingdom when in fact she had travelled from Austria. Their locational

knowledge was not strong. Consequently, their appreciation of the journey, through different landscapes and in all weathers, lacked the richness that would have brought the story very much to life.

## Subject knowledge and good curriculum plans

Geography is an empowering subject. The cohesion of curriculum plans is enhanced when pupils gain a secure knowledge of place. The relationships that define the subject are so fundamental, they are life-giving to not only the geography curriculum, but to other subjects as well.

With the arrival of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) in September 2019, Ofsted inspectors are looking more closely at the reasons that underpin the strengths and any weaknesses in the quality of education. From our research and inspection experience, we know that teachers' subject knowledge is key. Schools that support teachers to have confidence in subject content and how that content might best be taught, are well placed to ensure/help pupils know more and remember more.

The case for a well thought through, carefully organised, geography curriculum has never been stronger. Our pupils deserve to understand where and why things happen, to appreciate the impact of physical and human processes on their lives and on the lives of others. Geography has a major part to play in empowering the curriculum. It also raises a call to arms. Pupils respond to the content we teach. They show greater empathy for others, develop their sense of what is 'right and proper' and build appreciation of the planet on which they live.

Geography is too important a subject to marginalise; to do so is to risk undermining the whole curriculum. The need to ensure teachers receive the training and support they need in both geographical subject knowledge and their understanding of how best to teach it has never been greater.

**Iain Freeland HMI is one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with Ofsted and is the lead inspector for geography. Iain undertakes research into geographical education and leads training about the subject within the inspectorate.**



Exploring places and spaces is an empowering experience for pupils. Photo © Paula Owens.

# Empowering change

Paul Rose

**In this article, Paul explains the empowering nature of geography, especially field trips, as a catalyst for education and action. He is one of the world's most experienced science expedition leaders who helps scientists unlock and communicate global mysteries in the most remote and challenging regions of the planet.**

## Ground-truthing

I was 14, peeling potatoes into a bucket in the rain at the Merthyr Tydfil Youth Hostel and had never felt so alive. This was a defining moment that delivered focus, joy and a desire to succeed – all thanks to Mr Grey, my geography teacher. School life was claustrophobic and dense with incomprehensible lessons, old books that I could not understand, grim teachers and the never forgotten smell of overheated paint from the radiator that I sat next to.

Mr Grey led the school's Brecon Beacons field trip and on the coach journey he became less of a stiff teacher and more of a friendly, cagoule-wearing man of action. The further we travelled the more enthusiastic and animated he became. His transformation was completely unexpected and so genuine that against my defensive instincts I started to like him.

Our days in the Brecon Beacons were wonderful. I discovered I had a natural affinity to wild and wet places. Map reading and navigation was no problem, I romped up the hills and had an easy feel for route finding. I especially liked it when those kids that were cruising classroom life were struggling and particularly when one of them, frightened by the exposure, tried to run off down a gully and Mr Grey boomed into the wind: 'You'll lose your life down there boy!'

One long day high on Pen y Fan in thick cloud, Mr Grey walked next to me for a while and told me that I was doing well and thanked me for getting stuck in. What a moment that was; I can still feel the pride. Back at the hostel sharing the chores, hanging up the gear – doing my bit for our small damp, hungry, noisy community was brilliant and I loved everything about it – I just knew that this was for me. Stupidly, I was too immature



**Figure 1: His experience of Pen y Fan in thick cloud led Paul as far as the opposite side of the world to the Rothera Research Station, Antarctica. Photos © Fred Figgens (Pen y Fan) and Adam Bradley, British Antarctic Survey (Rothera).**

to thank Mr Grey, but, if we ever invent time-travel, it will be him I see first. I owe that man.

My formative experience in the Brecon Beacons reinforced my sense that the right place for me to operate was outside and that to understand things, I would do well to connect with them physically (Figure 1). Only through ground-truthing have I ever learned anything; this has been the compass for my personal and professional life. It is the most satisfying thing to meet a science team with an ambitious, risky hypothesis that requires real on-the-ground data collection and then convert that hypothesis into a technical support team of cooks, mechanics, divers, climbers, drivers, medics, ships, boats, aircraft and field camps in challenging places at the end of long, complex supply chains.

This same practical-based approach works for television: the first time I was Vice-President for Fieldwork and Expeditions at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS – see web panel), I was helping the BBC programme development team with the technical side of their planning – high altitude diving, remote location camps, equipment, training and the like. At one of our sessions they asked if I could give the team a quick tour of the RGS on camera. Unknown to me this was a selection process because they were hunting for a non-scientist to present science programmes. The BBC were about to launch a climate change season, knew that I was working with science teams in Antarctica (see web panel) and, fortunately for me, had experienced complications when scientists explained the issue. This was 18 years ago.





**Figure 2: Reporting from a sub in the Pacific Ocean. Photo © Dave McAloney.**

Today most scientists are brilliant at communicating their work, but I am grateful to the few poor communicators that the BBC bumped into as it gave me a boost. There is great satisfaction in diving under polar ice to describe the loss of multi-year sea ice, or in the caves of Mallorca to explain the history of sea level changes (Figure 2). I know from experience that half of the audience are saying 'This looks great, I'd love to do that', while the other half say 'There is no way I'd do that'.

Either way they are listening to a description of a key issue.

The desire for practical action is a beautiful thing. My colleague, Dr Enric Sala, was at the time a Professor at Scripps Research when he realised that 'every science paper he wrote was like writing the obituary of the ocean'. He needed action and it propelled him to leave academia, join National Geographic and start Pristine Seas (see web panel) in order to find, explore and help to protect the ocean's last pristine places.

He brought me in to lead the expeditions. Since then we have been busy with three or four expeditions a year, making a total of 30 expeditions, creating 22 marine reserves, protecting more than 5 million square km of ocean and publishing 112 science reports.

Enric had just read about Mike Fay's Megatranssect expedition, in which Mike walked 3219 km across the Congo Basin and in partnership with the President of Gabon, Omar Bongo, helped to establish 13 new national parks – a powerful demonstration of the power and effectiveness of influencing smart decision-making by ground-truthing (see web panel).

## Being useful

Being useful is my key to this pandemic period and it has been rewarding to work on the education and outreach side of Pristine Seas, and to continue our work remotely by supporting our in-country hosts and partners. We should be back at sea in the latter half of 2021 and until then I am surprisingly happy with a more static life. It helps to have a good supply of weights and a pull-up bar, regular bike rides, runs, and cold swims in Windermere.

Covid-19 has meant a tough swap: from expeditions to being a 'professional Zoomer'. I am finding it hard and rely on my field experience, because thriving during periods of forced inactivity is an essential technique. When camping, it is all about getting outside regularly to check the tent and gear stored outside, shovelling snow, having enough food and fuel inside the tent, keeping the batteries charged up and the communications equipment in good order. At sea, life revolves around securing and stowing the gear safely, keeping a close watch on our passage



**Figure 3: Only controlling what you can control! Paul's dog decides not to behave too well in the Arctic. Photo © Maureen Dolan-Galaviz.**



and looking after team-mates with sea sickness. No matter what the circumstances, the main elements are to be totally organised, accept that we cannot change the storm conditions and that it will pass eventually, do a good job of controlling what we can control, and do not drive your mates crazy (Figure 3).

It has also been helpful to think of the opportunities that this pandemic has presented: with trust in political leadership, business motivations and ethics at an all-time low, the things that we fall back on are our instincts and the indisputable accuracy and beauty of science data.

Field scientists have warned us for many years about the dangers of our out-of-balance relationship with nature, but it has taken a global pandemic for us to finally understand that everyone's health is reliant on everyone else's health, which in turn is reliant on nature. We have confidence in the science that has developed a Covid-19 vaccine, but we also know that the only long-term vaccine will come from protecting nature. The way to do that is:

1. Protect what we have
2. Restore what is damaged
3. Re-set our values so it does not happen again.

Answers to 1 and 2 can be found in the smart decision-makers leading the '30x30' campaign (see web panel) bringing it to be a truly global ambition. At the 2020 United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, 71 global leaders endorsed the Leaders Pledge for Nature to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

Even better, is that the 30% by 2030 is now seen as a waypoint to the '50x50' goal – E.O. Wilson's Half-Earth (see web panel). It is also great to see the recent report that the benefits of protecting at least 30% of the planet outweigh the costs by a ratio of at least 5:1 and that nature conservation is smart business – it drives economic growth and is a net contributor to a resilient global economy. Oh, and by the way, it will keep us alive too.

These feel like revolutionary times and represent the best opportunity we have had in recent history to reset our values.

1. We need to be close to nature through all of our formative years. The best way to do that is to have every subject always taught outside of the classroom. Special dispensation would be required to run a class inside a classroom.
2. Scuba diving, sailing, camping, climbing, skiing and cycling should be available in all schools. These activities are the best way to learn and there is no excuse for them only being available in the private school system.
3. Sharpen up our voting practices: before a politician takes office, a business leader accepts a boardroom position or a community influencer accepts their role, they must display their values by proving their record of fieldwork, charity efforts, humanitarian, arts, social, sports activities and their relationship with nature; and not just giving financial support, but real hands-on life-defining efforts. Surely, this will go some way to reduce empathy gaps?

The way we vote can easily change to reflect these values. I imagine election forms that display the candidate's values at the top and, if voting online, then the values section would flash red if none were shown and display 'Danger, danger. The candidate you are about to vote for has not demonstrated any values!'.

4. To help us become better-informed consumers and to encourage/force better-informed business decision-making, all businesses must display their values. Before any purchase, it should be routine for us to question the company's values, especially for big purchases like houses, insurance, investments, mortgages and vehicles.
5. We must have enforceable international environmental law. There is progress and I am hopeful that in the next few years we will see certain politicians and business leaders behind bars at The Hague for crimes against humanity and the environment.

Covid-19 really can be the catalyst for change. When it comes to our values there is no time to lose, so I have my list ready (Figure 4).

I would also love to know what our politicians and business leaders actually do with their lives beyond politics. Are they scuba divers, climbers, cyclists, runners, wild swimmers, skiers, photographers, painters, singers, dancers, actors, poets, walkers, campers, birdwatchers? It would be a beautiful thing to see our society influencers with that spark in the eyes or spring-in-the-step that comes from having had a hairy adventure or truly rewarding personal experience.

This is an approach to be celebrated in a toast to Mr Grey. Cheers Sir, and thank you!



## Web Resources

British Antarctic Survey:

<https://www.bas.ac.uk/>

Mike Fay Megatransect:

<https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2017/04/09/mike-fay-discusses-his-expedition-through-the-heart-of-africa-and-his-plan-to-keep-on-walking-for-ten-years/>

Mike Fay Outside Online:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/1887471/how-nomad-found-home>

Half-Earth Project:

<https://www.half-earthproject.org/>

National Geographic Pristine Seas:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/pristine-seas/>

Ocean Unite 30x30 campaign:

<https://www.oceanunite.org/30-x-30/>

Paul Rose website:

<https://www.paulrose.org/>

Royal Geographical Society:

<https://www.rgs.org/>

**Paul Rose is a broadcaster, author and journalist, and presents BBC television programmes on current affairs, science and the environment. Paul is currently Expedition Leader for the National Geographic Pristine Seas Expeditions. As well as being a former Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society and recipient of the Ness Award and the Founders Gold Medal, he is Ambassador for the UN Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Paul was also the Base Commander of Rothera Research Station, Antarctica, for the British Antarctic Survey for ten years and was awarded HM The Queen's Polar Medal. For his work with NASA and the Mars Lander project on Mt Erebus, Antarctica, he was awarded the US Polar Medal. A mountain in Antarctica is named after him.**

Figure 4: A plan for re-setting our values.

# THE PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY

## Interview

Amy and Ella Meek

Amy and Ella Meek, aged 16 and 14, are the founders of Kids Against Plastic. This is a youth action charity project that seeks to address plastic waste through learning, doing and mapping. In this interview Amy and Ella share their thoughts on what geography means to them and consider how geography has empowered them to take action for the environment.

### What does geography mean to you?

**Ella:** For me, geography is all about understanding Earth and the complexity of it, but also how fragile it all is. And that understanding can really give you more of an appreciation for the planet that we live on.

**Amy:** Yes, similar to Ella, what geography means to me is just understanding more about how the world works so looking at the different processes that help to keep us and the other species alive and also looking at how Earth has evolved over time to become the planet that it is today.

### What is your most memorable experience of geography at school?

**Amy:** Well my most memorable experience of geography wasn't actually when we were officially at school. It was when we



Amy and Ella Meek. Images all courtesy of Kids Against Plastic.

were being home-schooled by our parents for about three years. I remember we went to East Yorkshire and we were looking at the coast there. We were looking at coastal erosion. I remember seeing these pictures of this house that a couple of decades ago was on top of the cliff and yet now when you looked at it there was no house there. There was some bits of rubble and some bricks, drainpipes, and things, but the house was somewhere at the bottom of the cliff in the ocean. That was really memorable to me because we could see first-hand the impact that coastal erosion is having on coastal communities and the defences we are developing against it.

**Ella:** It is the same for me in terms of my most memorable experience was probably also whilst we were being home-schooled. For me it was probably when we were learning to read maps, learning about contours, grid references, co-ordinates, everything like that. It was really interesting for me, and an important skill for later on in life that I'll never forget.

### What is your favourite place?

**Ella:** My favourite place that we have been to is probably the Azores. It is a group of islands that are a thousand miles away from Portugal and any other land, which is incredible as a fact on its own. But also, the culture there is amazing. They still actually cook in the ground because there's

still geothermic activity there. It is also still volcanically active, which really added an amazing experience when we were there. Also, when you are going to different parts of the islands the landscape is completely different. It is crazy to think that it can be so different just on such a small group of islands.

**Amy:** My favourite place has to be France. When we were travelling we had an amazing trip where we went from in the North around near Paris. Then we went through the Alps and then down to the south coast. The Cote D'Azur, in particular, that was breath-taking. You would be driving along the coast and you would see these incredible red rock features and stony beaches and just to see how much the landscape changes in one country, it was so incredible. Then we even got a chance to go through the Pyrenees, down to Spain to explore some of the mountains around Madrid. That was really memorable for me and France and Spain have to be at the top on my list of favourite places.

### What is your favourite geographical activity?

**Amy:** I think my favourite geographical activity is picking up litter then logging it on our app that we have got. So, we developed it last year in collaboration with ESRI. It is really interesting because it creates a map of different types of litter around the UK and around the world.





It is also freely accessible for students so you can collect litter and log it on the app as part of your GIS work in geography in school.

**Ella:** My favourite activity would have to be geocaching. I think it is a really fun activity because it mixes in the skills of map reading and trying to find out where the object is through co-ordinates and grid references. But it also mixes that with a bit of technology, which can make it really fun and also more engaging for you and your kids.

## How important is geography?

**Ella:** I think geography is really important because it helps the younger generation really understand our planet and how it works. I think through that understanding they can develop a real care and respect for it. So hopefully as they grow up, they will want to protect and preserve the planet in any way they can.

**Amy:** Also, I think geography shows how interconnected so many things on Earth are. Geography is so closely

linked to environmental issues, like climate change, because some of the key issues of climate change are more extreme weather patterns, storms and the need to develop more sustainable cities. So, I think in order to think of solutions for this and to combat our negative effects on the planet we need to be able to understand it in the first place.

## What have you learnt from geography?

**Amy:** Geography has taught me what my place on the planet is, I think, as just one person on the planet. Geography really shows you all the different complex systems there are on Earth, things like the different weather patterns, different landscapes, ocean currents and you know it really shows how complex all of these systems are and how vital they are for our life on Earth and other species as well. I think it has really shown me how important it is to try to combat environmental issues and to protect the planet.

**Ella:** We both grew up with an understanding and care for the environment. Some of that came through the learning that we did from geography. It has really given us this passion we have developed about these environmental issues facing the planet. So that's probably now why we do what we do – Kids Against Plastic.



### Web Resources

Kids Against Plastic website: <https://www.kidsagainstplastic.co.uk/>  
Ted talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVWxtlqHjxvo>  
PowerPoint links to videos of this interview: [www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography](http://www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography)

Inspired by the UN's Global Goals and concerned by the impact of single-use plastic on the environment, Amy and Ella launched the Kids Against Plastic campaign. This group has three key aims:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the problems caused by plastic misuse
- Encourage and support others to become 'Plastic Clever' and reduce single-use plastics
- Empower children and young people to believe they can make a difference.

Find out more at the website.



# Capturing Croydon

Deborah Myers

**Deborah's experience of teaching in inner London schools over the last 20 years means she has encountered a diverse range of pupils from all backgrounds, in independent as well as state schools. Here, she explains how a novel approach to fieldwork empowered pupils to think more carefully about their home town of Croydon.**

## Introduction

At the time of this project, 'Capturing Croydon', I was working at All Saints C of E Primary school as the teaching and learning coach. One of my roles included being the Pupil Premium champion, taking on raising the attainment and progress of our disadvantaged pupils across the school, as well as supporting teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) in pedagogical skills for achieving the best outcomes for all pupils. After many years of underachievement and the changes in the National Curriculum, my role was vital in securing better outcomes in the entire curriculum. I mention this because the pupils who took part in this project were from the vulnerable pupil group. We chose to give these pupils the opportunity to learn a new skill: taking meaningful photographs as a way of engaging with their local area.

As the teaching and learning coach, I read numerous books (including *Outstanding Teaching: Engaging learners*; *Outstanding Teaching: Teaching backwards* (Griffin and Burns, 2012; 2014); *Talk-Less Teaching* (Wallace and Kirkman, 2014); *Inspirational Teachers, Inspirational Learners* (Ryan, 2011); and *Don't Change the Light Bulbs* (Jones and Lewis, 2014)) with every effort geared towards innovation and engagement for our pupils. 'The curriculum is designed not to cover but to uncover' – the heading of chapter 2 in *Inspirational Teachers* (Ryan, 2011) really sums up the principles of what I was trying to achieve as a coach. In essence, inspiring our pupils to engage with their learning in ways they had never encountered before. Alongside me, teachers were actively thinking about learning activities that were more appealing for our pupils. It was with great delight that we agreed to be involved in an innovative project sponsored by The



Figure 1: The Whitgift Almshouses, Croydon. Photograph by Ygor Sousa.

John Whitgift Foundation – a charity based in Croydon. The Capturing Croydon project would be a great advocate of humanities subjects, particularly geography, so I snapped up the chance of being involved in a local project to bring geography alive and give our disadvantaged pupils a new experience.

## Capturing a sense of place

The idea behind 'Capturing Croydon' is for key stage 2 pupils to receive lessons from a professional photographer (in our case, Richard Chivers), and from a geographer, to find their 'sense of place' in their local area. Public perception of Croydon can be negative to say the least; however, to my delight (and unbeknown to those who refuse to visit), there is a wealth of history just waiting to be uncovered – hence my earlier quote from Will Ryan. Also, the first sentence on the National Curriculum framework came to life in this project: 'A high-quality geography education should inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives' (DfE, 2013). Who best to uncover its richness, but the pupils and staff who live and are educated in Croydon?

I thought Capturing Croydon would help me hone my teaching skills in the subjects, so I found it useful discussing the outcomes and what we wanted to achieve with them. However, when I discussed this with the pupils, their enthusiasm did not register far up the Richter scale and it was difficult for them to see the benefits of the project. For this group, experiences outside of school were few and certainly

did not venture into exploring Croydon's history. Even as a recent local myself, my knowledge of Croydon and its history was limited, so I had nothing to offer in terms of preparation.

The pupils' experiences and knowledge mirrored most people's views of Croydon: towering buildings that dominate the skyline. The idea of using cameras to help observe their surroundings raised pupil interest in the project and when I explained that they would be taught how to take, edit and evaluate their photos, I could see further flickers of interest; they had never done this before. It seemed to be a great way to teach the pupils about their local area.

## Learning to look more closely

Richard led a session on learning about camera angles, framing the picture and taking unusual shots, capturing the pupils' imaginations. His personal photos inspired the pupils to ask questions about his work and travels across the world. They explored using a camera and were given prompts about looking carefully from all angles. The geographer led a discussion about a sense of place and modelled Haiku creation with geographical vocabulary.

## Out and about in Croydon

After classroom preparation, we got the bus to Croydon town centre travelling to what we thought was the Whitgift Shopping centre. To our surprise, we entered an archway to the Whitgift Almshouses nearby (Figure 1). The gasps we made in unison indicated that none of us expected to see such



Figure 2: Adnam Niaz's photograph of the market was runner-up in the Croydon-wide competition.

history in the middle of Croydon: the age of the buildings, their history and the beauty of the area. Immediately, the pupils were capturing images. One pupil commented, 'This is amazing Miss. I didn't know this was next to the shopping centre'. The pupils were eager to discover what other hidden treasures Croydon held.

The paved thoroughfare caught our attention and pupils also captured the symmetries of nature. We moved on into the Grade I listed Croydon Minster, where six Archbishops of Canterbury are buried within its walls. As their cameras clicked and flashes lit up the altar, the pupils slowly gained a sense of what an amazing place Croydon was. My TA and I were similarly overwhelmed by this revelation; it made us proud to be locals. As yet none of the pupils realised that Croydon had captured them too.

Our journey took us inside the Whitgift Shopping centre where the pupils lay on the ground to find different angles to tell the story they wanted through their photos: Croydon has something to offer its residents and everyone should know about it. Surrey Street Market bustled with people oblivious to our project. The pupils captured the colours surrounding them, the busyness of the people's daily lives and the sense of community coming from shopping in the outdoor market. One pupil's image of the Market was runner-up in the overall Croydon-wide photo competition (Figure 2). The very reason why it was beneficial to this pupil in particular (and to us as a school), was that he excelled in this activity and achieved something that he had never done before.

## Unveiling the richness of place

The entire day uncovered aspects of the geography and history of the pupils' hometown in a novel way. Many of the pupils have taken the bus to Croydon town centre countless times before, but this time they observed more closely the place where they lived. Richard supported the learning by focusing pupils' attention on a permanent reminder of their place within the town and on uncovering its hidden treasures (Figure 3). As the National Curriculum states, this opportunity enabled them to be curious and reconsider their (often) negative views about Croydon.



Figure 3: With close observation, pupils found beauty and interest around every corner. Photo © Paula Owens.

## An amazing way to teach geography

'Miss, I enjoyed today. I'm glad we were able to do something fun.'

'Miss, I can take good pictures now.'

As these pupil comments show, this type of fieldwork benefitted the pupils enormously; it helped them to feel proud of their culture and opened their eyes to sights that they would not have encountered had we not joined the project. It captured Croydon, pupils' imaginations and developed their observation skills through photography – skills that will prove valuable throughout their lives. What an amazing way to teach geography.

## Acknowledgment

Thanks to the pupils at All Saints Church of England Primary School, Croydon; the John Whitgift Foundation and Kallaway for the Capturing Croydon Project, and to the project photographer, Richard Chivers, and geographer, Paula Owens.

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- Wallace, I. and Kirkman, L. (2014) *Talk-Less Teaching: Practice, participation and progress*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.



## Web Resources

Download NC links to the activities:  
[www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography](http://www.geography.org.uk/Journals/Primary-Geography)  
 Capturing Croydon John Whitgift Foundation: [www.johnwhitgiftfoundation.org/community/capturing-croydon/](http://www.johnwhitgiftfoundation.org/community/capturing-croydon/)

Deborah Myers is an independent teaching and learning coach who models aspects of teaching and assessment to teachers to achieve the best outcomes for all pupils.



# Inspiring at Spire

Dave Shaw

**Inspired by the 'Guerrilla Curriculum', Dave explains how at Spire Junior School in Chesterfield they changed their curriculum for one with more in-depth learning, subject-specific skills development and authentic outcomes.**

## Making the move

Spire Junior School serves an area of high social deprivation and many of our pupils struggle in their motivation for learning. We wanted to change our curriculum to meet the needs of our pupils and to inspire their learning. As a staff we discussed our current curriculum and what we would like to change moving forward. Common frustrations, such as 'there is too much to cover' and 'there is not enough time', were identified. We also asked the pupils who said 'we are just getting into a topic when it finishes at half-term so a new topic can begin'. As Head teacher, during my research into different models I came across *The Guerrilla Curriculum* by Jonathan Lear (2015) and used some of the ideas within this to develop our curriculum.

## Less is more

We took the bold move of only having three topics per year in each year group. The Autumn term would be our 'Discover theme' (history topic), the Spring term our 'Explore theme' (geography topic) and our Summer term our 'Create theme' (arts-based topic). This would give us 13 weeks on each theme and allow us to look in greater depth at the curriculum.

## Subject-specific skills

As well as teaching the curriculum we wanted to teach subject-specific skills to our pupils and build up on these, year-on-year. For geography, we looked at the skills required and divided them into four categories with some of the key words linked to skills in brackets:

1. Beginning (Name, Label, Draw, Identify)
2. Developing (Compare, Describe, Draw)
3. Securing (Analyse, Compare, Observe, Combine)
4. Enriched (Compare, Reflect, Combine, Appreciate).

Staff would plan activities for the pupils, matched to both National Curriculum objectives and subject-specific skills. As a staff we also discussed and agreed on the following key concepts we wanted pupils to learn within the geography theme:

- Recognise that pupils can impact their environment and community
- Show a commitment to justice
- Recognise their roles as Global Citizens
- Communicate learning in relevant ways
- Show empathy.

## Authentic outcomes

We were sure the pupils would enjoy our new curriculum model, but as ever there are no guarantees. We thought about how often, when we then set tasks, they would respond with 'why?', with the mentality 'What's in it for me?'. Following staff discussions and inspiration from Jonathan Lear's (2019) *The Monkey-Proof Box*, we devised a curriculum with authentic outcomes.

## Y3: Where in the world would you like to go?

Our learning journey began with the question 'Where in the world would you like to go?'. During the next few weeks, we read *Around the World in 80 days* by Jules Verne (2018). This took the pupils on a journey starting in London, England, and

travelling around the globe. We ventured to places such as France, India, China, North America and South America. Using *Around the World* we were able to focus on specific countries and the delights each country had to offer.

The pupils looked at maps, globes, and atlases to learn more about the location of these countries and the land use. They learned about 4-point grid references and how to pinpoint specific features, such as towns, cities and landmarks.

Once the pupils were armed with this information, they were able to create their dream island. Working in pairs the pupils began by building a 3D model from cardboard (Figure 1). Each square of the island fits together which shows contours and contrasts of how the land is used. The pupils thoughtfully made small structures using nets of shapes, linked to maths, to create their beach huts, hotels, recycling centre and even a hospital. They used mini marshmallows to fashion drystone walls in the undulating fields to contain the livestock.

Specific symbols of each country were identified, such as the flag, as were traditional food and the main religion of some countries around the world. We also incorporated some science into our project by looking at different rock types. For instance, Lanzarote as an island predominately formed of volcanic rock and the soft chalk of the White Cliffs of Dover.



Figure 1: Y3 created their dream island, which showed their knowledge of land use and physical and human geography developed by the topic. Photo © Dave Shaw.



We held discussions about why some places are safer than others for building houses due to the types and location of the underlying rocks.

Once complete, the pupils constructed their large models in an empty shop in the local shopping centre, also decorating the walls with work from their topic. Feedback sheets for the public were completed after visits. The shop received hundreds of visitors who gave much praise and constructive feedback, which really gave the pupils' confidence a boost.

Overall, the year 3 pupils found this project fascinating. During our recent parents/carers' meetings many of them said how much the pupils have talked about their work and places they would like to visit.

## Y4: Natural disasters

In year 4 we decided to focus on natural disasters that happen around the world and why. Over the term we allowed the pupils to decide which areas of this topic they wished to focus on. The four areas covered were tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes and tornadoes. The pupils produced an amazing class assembly for the school and their parents/carers, which enabled the whole school to see their learning across subject areas, such as art, design & technology, writing, drawing, tables, graphs and diary entries.

The authentic outcome of this work led to the pupils becoming published authors. We collated their work and sent it off to be professionally printed (Figure 2). Following this we held a book launch to sell the book and sign copies for parents and the public! The pupils are very proud of the book they were able to produce.



Figure 2: Y4 covered tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes and tornadoes and collated their work in a professionally printed book. Photo © Dave Shaw.

## Y5: Is plastic fantastic?

In Year 5 we started our enquiry with a sleepover at The Deep aquarium in Hull. We learnt about the creatures in the ocean, how they survive and how their habitats are rapidly changing due to human waste. The pupils had a private tour of The Deep, carried out workshops related to the sharks in our seas and, most impressively, had a sleepover next to the shark tank! It is safe to say that we all had a wonderful time. On our return to school we spent time in our topic lessons locating the continents and oceans around the world, while researching the question 'Is plastic fantastic?' and looking at the major plastic deposits in our oceans.

In our English lessons, pupils looked at a range of non-fiction texts, learnt about how water is purified, how bottled water is manufactured and investigated the vast quantities of bottles used just for water. Pupils worked hard to write persuasive pieces trying to combat the problem of plastic bottles. During the second half of the term, the pupils read the non-fiction text, *Song of the Dolphin Boy* (Laird, 2018), which addressed the issue of plastic pollution affecting seals off the coast of Scotland. The narrative told the story from the point of view of a young person allowing the pupils in year 5 to empathise with the characters and situation.

The pupils continued by working in groups to research the issue of plastic pollution and discover how different countries are addressing the problem. To raise awareness, the pupils wrote persuasive letters, designed posters and collected hundreds of bottle tops to create a visual presentation of how big the problem is.

As part of our research, we were fortunate to work with the Premier League and hear how they are tackling the problem of plastic pollution at stadiums around the United Kingdom. After carrying out workshops with members of the football team, the pupils designed re-usable water bottles and carrier bags for use at matches. They then arranged for bottles and carrier bags to be manufactured, and these products are now advertised by the Chesterfield FC Mascot, Chester the Fieldmouse (Figure 3).

For the final part of their enquiry, year 5 pupils created a 45-minute presentation to show their work from this term. They worked incredibly hard to produce PowerPoint presentations, videos, persuasive pieces of writing, posters and images... it was fabulous! The Premier League was so impressed with the pupils' promotional video they showed it at half-time in a Chesterfield FC match.



Figure 3: Chester the Fieldmouse advertises the re-usable bottles and bags designed by Y5 pupils. Photo © Dave Shaw.

## Inspiring aspirations

The authentic outcomes for each topic also enable the pupils to work with professionals from outside of education to create something tangible. This approach provides a critical audience for pupils' work and raises aspirations for their future careers. Our bold move is proving to be truly inspirational.

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- Lear, J. (2019) *The Monkey-Proof Box: Curriculum design for building knowledge, developing creative thinking and promoting independence*. Carmarthen: Independent Thinking Press.
- Verne, J. (2018) *Around the World in 80 Days*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.



## Web Resources

The Deep aquarium:  
<https://www.thedeep.co.uk>

Dave Shaw is Head teacher at Spire Junior School, Chesterfield.

# The sustainability of the global fashion industry

Hayley Grant and Ciara Leonard

Here, Hayley and Ciara show how the topic of global fashion enables pupils to address their own enquiry questions into where, how and why most clothing is produced in lower-income countries. They also outline how it encourages pupils to consider issues of sustainability and voice their own opinions and views.

## The importance of topical geography

Pupils are interested in the wider world and, as a result, have a wide range of geographical questions to ask. As Pike (2016) suggests, the inclusion of topical geography helps pupils understand current issues and the impacts these issues may have on the environment. Pupils' explorations of the global fashion industry can help develop their geographical knowledge and understanding. This topic also provides scope to discuss and explore human rights by focusing on the exploitation of workers in lower-income countries.

Providing real-life examples of the clothing trade and the issues surrounding it allows pupils to make connections to such geographical concepts as space and place, proximity and difference and relational thinking (Figure 1). There are opportunities for the pupils to have agency through their actions by making more sustainable choices regarding the clothes they wear. By doing this, pupils will become knowledgeable citizens, who are aware of local communities in a global setting. Peter Jackson (2016) argues that tracing connections is one of the most powerful ways of making sense of the world in geography. It is our role as teachers to help young pupils negotiate the world they live in. Therefore, the exploration of topical geography will support pupils in critical thinking and decision making. Pupils can gain a sense of empowerment through an exploration of current issues within the global fashion industry that enables them to become active agents promoting the need for positive change.



**Figure 1: An enquiry into global fashion enables pupils to make connections to geographical concepts, and provides opportunities to explore the links between the industry and the environment. Photo © B Forenius/Shutterstock.com.**

## Key concepts and ideas

Teaching sustainability of the global fashion industry enables pupils to explore clothing and consider what materials clothes are made from and how and where they are produced. Furthermore, pupils can study the working environment and lives of lower-income workers in clothing factories. This helps pupils to build an understanding of trade issues associated with the clothes they wear. Pupils may recognise the impact that air miles have on the environment through their geographical enquiries and begin to investigate how reusing clothing can have positive effects on the environment. As a result, these concepts and ideas help pupils foster an appreciation of the ways in which people can make more sustainable choices.

Possible enquiry questions include:

- How and where do our clothes come from?
- Why is fashion considered a global industry?
- How much of our clothing is made overseas?
- How are the people who make clothing treated?

- Why is our clothing imported?
- What can we do to be more sustainable with our clothing?
- What impact does importing clothing have on the environment?

## Activities for 5- to 8-year-olds

1. Ask pupils to study a large world map and locate where their jumper/shirt is from. Usually pupils give the name of a shop where the item was bought. This is a common misconception, so ask them where they think their clothes came from before that.
2. Invite the pupils to look at the labels on their own clothes and find the country of origin on the world map. They can annotate it to create a collective map.
3. Pupils can consider recording the journey of their clothes. They may like to draw a flow chart of the process and add some research about the country of origin.
4. The pupils can produce an illustrated class booklet, 'Where our clothes came from'.



This can include images of the clothes, a map showing origins, a flow chart of the journey, information about countries of origin and drawings of the clothes being made.

5. The pupils can participate in an enquiry activity using a resource pack of images that illustrate the growing cycle of a cotton plant and/or how a t-shirt is made. They may work in small groups to discuss and analyse the processes.
6. Use the storybook *Where Do Clothes Come From?* by Christine Butterworth and Lucia Gaggiotti (2015), to strengthen pupil understanding.
7. In the final session, pupils can share ideas of how they may source locally produced clothes.

## Activities for 9- to 11-year-olds

1. Invite pupils to generate enquiry questions about the global fashion industry.
2. Share video footage offering an insight into the global fashion industry via *YouTube*.
3. Create photo packs and ask pupils to identify and describe the production chain of the global fashion industry. The pack can contain pictures of a clothing factory, a catwalk, a fashion magazine and a retail shop.
4. A pair of jeans can be used to explore how globalisation contributes to the production of an item of clothing. Invite pupils to examine the jeans in detail and identify the origin of each element, including fabric, buttons, zips, dye, design and threads. The journeys of these elements can be shared on a world map.
5. By looking at the labels on their school uniforms, the pupils can use an online resource (see web panel) to calculate the air miles and carbon footprint of their clothing. Air Miles Calculator, for example, asks pupils to share the export and import countries of goods. It will then provide information regarding miles travelled and kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> produced. This can lead to a whole-class discussion regarding the impact clothing has on the environment.
6. Once the origin of their clothing has been located, pupils can pin the location on a shared Google Map. This will help the pupils to make connections with the clothing trade and lower-income countries as they discover that many of their pins are located in southern Asia.
7. Pupils can consider exploring working conditions within the clothing trade and/or a case study of a factory worker in Bangladesh via video clips on *YouTube*.
8. First, design a case study based on the news and your own research. Then ask pupils to create a mind map describing the life and working conditions of the factory worker. To strengthen their knowledge of exploiting people, hand out a list of statements from your case study and ask pupils to rank them in order of severity of exploitation.
9. To initiate class discussion or a role-play activity, provide a range of scenarios for the pupils to consider. For example, 'the factory owner cuts the workers' pay', 'the workers go on strike', 'the government passes a law that the factory owners must pay a higher wage'.
10. In a final session, pupils could share ideas of ways to combat exploitation and encourage sustainability within the global fashion trade. These might include:
  - Buying clothing from second hand/charity/local shops, the importance of a school uniform, holding upcycling events
  - Making choices regarding where they purchase their clothes (i.e. their purchasing power) and the impact of fast fashion outlets (e.g. Primark, H&M)
  - P4C discussion – how many clothes does one person need?
  - Designing posters that examine large clothing production/retail companies' sustainability policies and/or writing letters to such companies seeking further explanation of their sustainability policies.

## Benefits and problems of teaching this topic

While this topic empowers young pupils to become active agents within an ongoing issue, problems may arise. Teachers need to approach the topic with suitable, age-appropriate resources. Videos are readily available and accessible online on *YouTube*, and short clips from documentaries are ideal, as are newspaper articles. It is important that teachers develop their own subject knowledge to empower pupils' understanding of this challenging theme, and ensure you can support pupils so that they do not feel scared or guilty because of their actions. The overall aims of these lessons are for pupils to become empowered through achievable actions, and, as teachers, we can promote and encourage pupils to consider the personal choices they can make that will have a positive impact on the environment.

## Looking at possible and preferable futures

Hicks (2013) suggests a four-dimensional approach to such investigations: knowing, feeling, choosing and acting. We believe this framework creates a safe space in which pupils are confident to share hopes and concerns about the issues surrounding the global clothing industry. We hope the impact of these activities will inspire pupils to take personal responsibility and action in the future.

## Conclusion

The geography curriculum creates opportunities for teachers to empower pupils. It is important to recognise that pupils cannot simply be abstracted from the environment they are growing up in and from the events that occur on a daily basis. 'Geography underpins a lifelong conversation about Earth as the home of humankind' (Geographical Association, 2009, p. 5). Undoubtedly, there is a relationship between geography and current events, which pupils can explore through active learning approaches based around their own interests and questions. By educating pupils about the global fashion industry, not only do we offer them a sense of empowerment, but also a sense of agency to take appropriate action to become a more sustainable citizen.

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## Web Resources

Air Miles Calculator:  
[www.airmilescalculator.com](http://www.airmilescalculator.com)  
Google Maps:  
[www.google.co.uk/maps/](http://www.google.co.uk/maps/)

**Hayley Grant and Ciara Leonard are Final Year Bachelor of Education Students at DCU and in the final stages of becoming Primary School teachers. They are so excited to put all their ideas into practice in their future classrooms!**



# GEOGRAPHY in practice

This page offers further ideas for using the contents of this issue of *Primary Geography in practice* in your classroom. Share your ideas inspired by this journal on Twitter @The\_GA #PriGeogJournal

Article	In practice
Finding hope at a time of crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss David Hicks' 'Probable, Possible and Preferred' futures and involve pupils in active decision-making through realistic and actionable geography-led projects. Give pupils space to talk about things that worry them and provide a factual context where this helps give a realistic perspective</li> <li>• Start a good news wall in the classroom with stories about how people and communities are tackling issues around the world. Have a world map in the middle and show where the different places are and consider what is happening in your local area as well and what you might be able to get involved with</li> <li>• Become involved in LESS CO2 Schools and learn about sustainable energy choices and actions <a href="http://www.lessco2.org.uk">www.lessco2.org.uk</a></li> </ul>
Where in the world is Covid-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask your pupils about the impact of Covid-19 on themselves and their friends. Can they draw their own 2km radius map from their house and show what activities are possible in this area?</li> </ul>
Progression in geography fieldwork experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Julia's framework to evaluate what you are already doing in school and where the gaps are</li> <li>• Discuss how you can best use the local area to build and support progression in geography into your curriculum</li> <li>• Identify achievable changes and implement them into practice</li> </ul>
Empowering geography – a view from Ofsted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how your vision for geography supports the subject and its planning and assessment. Investigate the GA CPD pack <a href="https://www.geography.org.uk/eBooks-detail/28380a45-df27-408e-9c9b-5a5a382bc2b9">https://www.geography.org.uk/eBooks-detail/28380a45-df27-408e-9c9b-5a5a382bc2b9</a></li> </ul>
Empowering change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What places would pupils like to explore? Can they locate these places on a map and a globe? How would you prepare for an expedition? What skills would they offer an expedition team? What skills would others in the team need?</li> <li>• Encourage the pupils to tell stories about people and places that have had an impact on their lives; ask the pupils to map the location of these stories and share images</li> </ul>
Capturing Croydon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you know about your local area? Investigate perceptions and knowledge and talk about the difference</li> <li>• Take photographs around the school grounds/wider locality and ask pupils if their own perceptions have changed after enquiring more closely. Suggest how these places might change in the future and what we have to do with that. Engage with the Meaningful Maps project <a href="http://www.meaningfulmaps.org">www.meaningfulmaps.org</a></li> </ul>
Inspiring at Spire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your curriculum planning and consider your learning outcomes. Are they authentic? Do they provide pupils with the opportunity to share their work with audiences outside the school? Do they help build links with parents and the community as well as raise future aspirations for the pupils? Could you explore different ways for the pupils to communicate their geographical learning in school and at home?</li> </ul>
The sustainability of the global fashion industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake your own classroom enquiries: Whose clothes have travelled the furthest? Whose clothes have travelled the shortest distance? Investigate the air miles travelled and carbon produced by different clothes at home. How many countries form part of a supply chain?</li> <li>• Investigate other commodities too, such as children's toys, food and other items you have in school. Discuss ways of reducing the number of miles that commodities travel while remaining realistic about price and access</li> <li>• Discuss the impact of Covid and leaving the European Union</li> <li>• For teacher subject knowledge have a look at the website: <a href="http://www.followthethings.com/">http://www.followthethings.com/</a></li> </ul>

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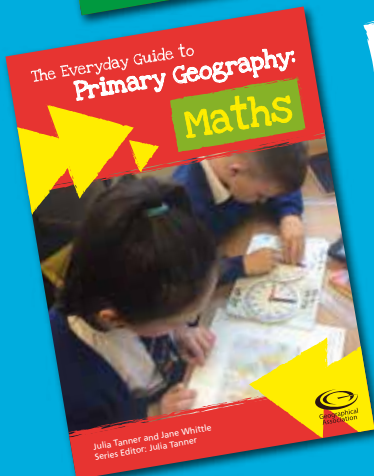
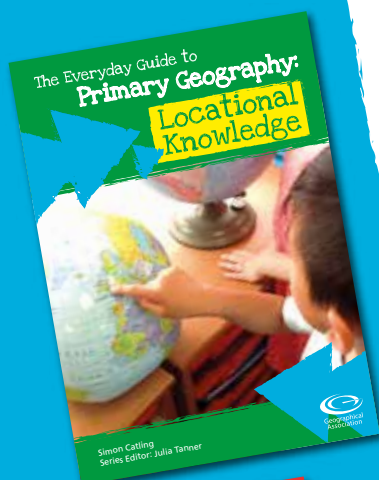
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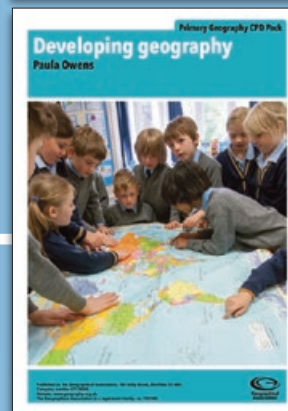
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Y4-6



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Exploring a  
distant place  
Y1-3



**Little Blue Planet:**  
Investigating  
spaceship Earth  
Y1-3



**Amazon Adventures:**  
Investigating  
the South  
American  
Rainforest  
Y3-4



**The UK:**  
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who we are  
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### Thinking critically webinar series

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This webinar series explores where we as teachers source our information on important global issues such as climate change, how to empower pupils to challenge its authenticity, and the role of bias at a personal, institutional and national level. Using a range of critical thinking strategies participants will have the opportunity not only to increase their geographical subject knowledge but also to learn how to better support pupils to unlock these complex issues with increasing independence and construct evidenced argument through social and natural investigation.

### Leading primary geography

This course will support participants in successfully leading a subject that plans with intent, implements with collective expertise and reflective best practice, and constantly assesses for impact. It will explore how to stimulate geographical learning that is relevant, authentic and progressive in order to raise the standard of teaching and learning in the subject.

For full dates and booking, visit the website:

[www.geography.org.uk/Primary-courses](http://www.geography.org.uk/Primary-courses)



## **Continue your CPD journey with the GA Professional Passport**

The GA Professional Passport is an online portfolio that allows teachers to reflect deeply and critically on the professional development they engage with, and to identify the impact that it has on teaching and learning geography.



[www.geography.org.uk/  
The-GA-Professional-Passport](http://www.geography.org.uk/The-GA-Professional-Passport)





# Geographical Association eConference and Exhibition

Thursday 8 - Saturday 10 April 2021

**"EXCELLENT VALUE FOR MONEY CPD"**

