



St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Geography Policy

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"Geography is all about the living, breathing essence of the world we live in. It explains the past, illuminates the present and prepares us for the future"

Aims of the Policy

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy in relation to the teaching and learning of Geography. At St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we are committed to providing high quality teaching and learning through the use of discrete and structured Geography lessons which will allow balance, progression, breadth and continuity throughout the school whilst meeting the needs of the individual and raising standards of achievement for all children.

Through our Geography curriculum at St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we aim to inspire children's curiosity and encourage their interest to explore the world in which we live. We aim to equip children with skills that will enable them to develop their Geographical knowledge by studying a variety of places, people and natural and human environments. This will support the development of children's understanding of the Earth's human and physical forms and processes. All staff and governors have been consulted in developing this policy, which summarises expectations and common working practices. This policy reflects the aims and objectives of St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy and supports its "Christ-Centred" vision and ethos. It clarifies what has been agreed in terms of approach and consistency as best practice in Geography teaching and learning, to which all members of St. George's Catholic Academy aspire to.

Introduction

At St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we recognise that education involves children, parents, staff, governors, the community, diocese and the local authority, and that for optimum benefit, all should work closely together to support the process of learning within Geography. Working in partnership, we aim to:

- provide a Christ-centred, supportive, positive, healthy, caring and safe environment, which has high expectations and values all members of the school community;
- recognise the needs and aspirations of all individuals and provide opportunities for all pupils to make the best possible progress and attain the highest personal achievements; to enable them to 'grow in faith and have faith in growing'.
- ensure children can develop competent individuals, within a broad, balanced, exciting and challenging Geography curriculum;
- provide rich and varied contexts and experiences for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding;
- provide a Geography curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, physical, mental and emotional development of the pupils;
- develop individuals with lively, enquiring minds, good thinking skills, self-respect, self-discipline and positive attitudes;
- encourage all children to be enthusiastic and committed learners, promoting their self-esteem, self-worth and emotional well-being;
- develop children's confidence and capacity to learn and work independently and collaboratively.

Geography is an essential part of the curriculum at St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy. One of the fundamental roles of Geography is to help children to understand the world, its environments both near and far, and the processes that create and affect them. It provides a means of exploring, appreciating and understanding the world in which we live and how it has evolved. Geography explores the relationship between the Earth and its people through the study of place, space and environment. It contributes to the cultural, social, spiritual and moral life of children as they acquire knowledge of a range of different cultures and traditions, and enables them to develop tolerance and understanding of other people and environments.

The Geography Curriculum places great importance on the interaction between humans and their physical environments. Geography provides many opportunities for children to become aware of the effect they have upon their surroundings and the wider world; develops their understanding of how they can act responsibly and encourages them to begin to think about some ways in which they can make a positive contribution to improving their environment. Geography encourages a holistic appreciation of how the world works and develops an awareness of cultural diversity, community, interdependence and sustainability.

In addition to all of the above, Geography also creates endless possibilities for developing and extending language, mathematics and enquiry skills. Geography provides exciting and enriching opportunities for collecting and interpreting data, analysing results, drawing conclusions and presenting findings.

Geography Curriculum – Statement of Intent

Basic Principles

- Learning is a change to long-term memory.
- Our aims are to ensure that our students experience a wide breadth of study and have, by the end of each key stage, long-term memory of an ambitious body of procedural and semantic knowledge.

Curriculum Intent Model

We aim for children to have acquired the essential characteristics of Geographers:

- An excellent knowledge of where places are and what they are like.
- An excellent understanding of the ways in which places are interdependent and interconnected and how much human and physical environments are interrelated.
- An extensive base of Geographical knowledge and vocabulary.
- Fluency in complex, Geographical enquiry and the ability to apply questioning skills and use effective analytical and presentational techniques.
- The ability to reach clear conclusions and develop a reasoned argument to explain findings.
- Significant levels of originality, imagination or creativity as shown in interpretations and representations of the subject matter.
- Highly developed and frequently utilised fieldwork and other Geographical skills and techniques.
- A passion for and commitment to the subject, and a real sense of curiosity to find out about the world and the people who live there.
- The ability to express well-balanced opinions, rooted in very good knowledge and understanding about current and contemporary issues in society and the environment.

Implementation: Planning and Teaching of Geography

Curriculum drivers shape our curriculum breadth in Geography. They are derived from an exploration of the backgrounds of our students, our beliefs about high quality education and our values. They are used to ensure we give our students appropriate and ambitious curriculum opportunities. **Our curriculum drivers are community, spirituality, culture, democracy and possibilities.**

Cultural capital gives our students the vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community who understand and believe in British values.

Curriculum breadth is shaped by our curriculum drivers, cultural capital, subject topics and our ambition for students to study the best of what has been thought and said by many generations of academics and scholars.

Our curriculum distinguishes between subject topics and 'threshold concepts'. Subject topics are the specific aspects of subjects that are studied.

At St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we have designed our Curriculum based on Cognitive Load Theory, and the three main principles that underpin it:

- Learning is most effective with spaced repetition.
- Interleaving helps pupils to discriminate between topics and aids long-term retention.
- Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

Our curriculum content is subject specific and we follow a 3 week cycle with either a History/Geography, ICT or Art and DT focus. In each Geography cycle, the children will learn and revisit a range of skills, concepts, attitudes and methods of working. Each lesson within a cycle begins with a revisit, whether it be a recap of the week before or a concept taught earlier in the term, to consolidate children's knowledge and understanding. Revisits and interruption slides are embedded across the curriculum to consolidate knowledge and skills and to make links to previous learning. Where possible, we also make intra-curricular links to strengthen schema.

As part of the Geography curriculum at St. George's voluntary Academy, pupils investigate a variety of places and environments both in the United Kingdom and abroad, and start to compare and make links between them. Children learn to ask Geographical questions, and use Geographical skills and resources, such as maps, atlases, aerial photographs and ICT. Pupils carry out Geographical enquiry tasks inside and outside the classroom, and in doing so, they acquire the appropriate practical skills associated with Geography, including using specific Geographical vocabulary and fieldwork techniques and skills.

Threshold concepts tie together the subject topics into meaningful schema. The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of topics. Through this 'forwards-and-backwards engineering' of the curriculum, students return to the same concepts over and over and gradually build understanding of them. In Geography, these threshold concepts are; ***Investigate places*** (*understanding the geographical location of places and their physical and human features*); ***Investigate patterns*** (*Understanding the relationships between the physical features of places and the human activity within them, and the appreciation of how the world's natural resources are used and transported*); ***Communicate geographically*** (*Understanding geographical representations, vocabulary and techniques*).

Knowledge categories: These categories help students to relate each topic to previously studied topics and to form strong, meaningful schema. In Geography these knowledge categories include: ***Location, Physical features, Human Features, Diversity, Physical Processes, Human Processes, Techniques.***

Milestones: For each of the threshold concepts there are three Milestones, each of which includes the procedural and Knowledge categories in each subject which give students a way of expressing their understanding of the threshold concepts.

- Milestone 1 is taught across Years 1 and 2,
- Milestone 2 is taught across Year 3 and 4
- Milestone 3 is taught across Year 5 and Year 6

Cognitive Domains: Within each Milestone, students gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength through three cognitive domains: basic, advancing and deep. The goal for students is to display sustained mastery at the ‘advancing’ stage of understanding by the end of each milestone and for the most-able to have a greater depth of understanding at the ‘deep’ stage.

| Progression through the Cognitive Domains | | |
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| Basic | Advancing | Deep |
| Acquiring knowledge. | Applying knowledge. | Reasoning with knowledge. |
| Knowledge is explicit and unconnected. | Knowledge is explicit and connected. | Knowledge is connected and tacit. |
| Relying on working memory. | Drawing on long-term memory, freeing working memory to consider application. | Relies on long-term memory, freeing working memory to be inventive. |
| Procedures processed one at a time with conscious effort. | Procedures being automatic. | Automatic recall of procedures. |
| Understands only in the context in which the materials are presented. | Sees underlying concepts between familiar contexts. | Uses conceptual understanding in unfamiliar situations. |
| New information does not readily stick. Schemes are limited. | New information is linked to prior knowledge. Schemas are strong. | Readily assimilates new information into rapidly expanding schemas. |
| Struggles to search for problem solutions. Relies on means-end analysis. | Combines searching for problem solutions with means-end analysis. | Draws on a vast store of problem solutions. |
| Requires explicit instructions and models. | Uses models effectively. | Prefers discovery approaches to learning. |

Teaching Methods

At St. George’s Catholic Voluntary Academy, our principal aim is to develop the children’s knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography. Therefore, we use a variety of teaching and learning styles in all our Geography lessons. We incorporate a mix of whole-class teaching methods, small group tasks and paired activities and combine these with enquiry-based research activities. We encourage children to handle artefacts and to ask as well as answer Geographical questions. We offer them the opportunity to use a variety of resources, such as maps, statistics, graphs, pictures, aerial photographs and geographical data. Children participate in “Talk-less teaching tasks”, “Market-place” activities and paired/whole class discussions, and they present their findings to the rest of the class in a variety of ways. They also engage in a wide range of problem-solving activities. Wherever possible, we involve the children in fieldwork tasks and ‘real’ geographical activities, e.g. research of a local environmental problem.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is explicitly identified in the planning for each of the Geography cycles. Driver words are linked to the Cognitive Domains and are used to determine the level and type of activity that children will undertake. Driver words are used in lesson objectives, success criteria, IWBS and displayed around the classroom and on working walls. **Basic** tasks may be driven by words such as, “locate”, “label” or “describe”. More **Advanced** tasks may be driven by “identify the similarities and differences”, “compare and contrast” or “demonstrate” and **Deep** tasks may be driven by words such as, “make generalisations”, “persuade” or “draw conclusions”.

Tier Three vocabulary is technical vocabulary specific to a Geography topic or theme. For instance, when learning about Mountains vocabulary such as “Plate Tectonics” or “magma” is introduced to the children.

Differentiation

At St. George’s Catholic Voluntary Academy, we recognise and embrace the fact that we have children of differing needs and abilities in all our classes, and so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this through a range of activities which are differentiated by task, expected outcome and/or support from peers or adults. Differentiated tasks will be detailed in the planning of each Cycle. Teachers will adapt their pedagogical content approach based on the progression through the cognitive domains. In this way, children gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength through three cognitive domains: basic, advancing and deep. Continuous provision, in the form of independent tasks and daily routines, replaces the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum and, in other cases, provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

Organisation

Classrooms provide a stimulating and purposeful learning environment, including thought provoking and stimulating displays that incorporate Geographical Knowledge Organisers, Driver words, Knowledge Category Icons and Key Vocabulary. The learning environment will be arranged in such a way as to facilitate the different styles of teaching and learning required to meet the needs of the children. The classroom environment will be set up to encourage the development of independence, in particular through the use of Continuous Provision activities which enable the children to revisit and complete tasks from previous lessons in order to help to embed learning into the long-term memory. All classrooms will have Geographical resources such as maps, atlases and globes available for the children to access.

Impact

Our Cognitive Load Theory research has shown us that learning is a change to long-term memory, and therefore it is impossible to see impact in the short term.

At St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we use probabilistic assessment based on deliberate practice. This means we look at the practices taking place to determine whether they are appropriate, related to our goals and likely to produce results in the long run.

We use comparative judgment in two ways: in the tasks we set, including the use of POP tasks (proof of progress tasks) and in comparing a student's work over time.

We also use lesson observations to if the pedagogical style matches our depth expectations.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Termly assessments are made of pupils' work in Geography in order to establish the level of attainment and progress and to inform future planning. Formative assessment is used to guide the progress of individual pupils. It involves identifying each child's progress in areas of the Geography curriculum, determining what each child has learned and what therefore should be the next stage in his/her learning. All results from assessments are analysed and used to inform future planning, and retrieval/revisit tasks.

Geography also has a positive impact on Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Spiritual development: Through helping pupils to recognise the beauty and diversity of the world. A Geographical awareness helps children understand their place in the world. Geography also provides opportunities for children to learn about sites of wonder, or physical features that they might wish to visit in the future.

Moral development: Through helping pupils to reflect on how the environment is affected by decisions made by people, so that the children can make informed choices in the future. Through discussion, the children learn to appreciate the moral dilemmas posed by introducing changes to the environment (for example, building a housing estate or a new road system) and the effects this can have on the surrounding area.

Social development: Through helping pupils to understand the need to consider the views of others when discussing localities, settlements and the environment. Work on a locality in a less economically developed country provides an opportunity to discuss social issues. Fieldwork encourages collaborative projects, making the most of different strengths and interests within a team.

Cultural development: By exploring different settlements, the children can gain knowledge of different cultures, learning tolerance and understanding of diversity.

Geography - Subject Leader

The Subject leader has a variety of roles. These include:

- taking the lead in policy development and quality assuring the Geography planning, Knowledge Organisers and Geography resources throughout the school;
- supporting colleagues in their development and implementation of Geography planning, assessment and record-keeping activities; Knowledge Organisers and resources.
- monitoring progress in Geography and advising the Senior Leadership Team on action needed; taking responsibility for the purchase and organisation of central resources for Geography;
- using release time to support colleagues;
- keeping up-to-date through research and continuing professional development.