How learning builds in Geography

A guide for parents and carers | Years 3 to 6

Children explore places, people and the natural world. They build from investigating Kempshott to explaining how places and environments are connected, using maps, fieldwork and evidence with increasing accuracy and independence.

Area	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Locating places and using maps	Locate Basingstoke in Hampshire and the UK, major mountain ranges, the Equator, Tropics and hemispheres. Use maps, aerial photographs and four compass directions.	Locate France and Alençon in Europe. Use four-figure grid references to find river features. Explore how time zones help organise time in different places.	Locate North America, its countries and key features, and the Arctic and Antarctic Circles. Use eight compass directions, latitude and longitude. Explain time zones.	Use six-figure grid references, Ordnance Survey maps and digital maps. Locate Asia and the Pacific Ring of Fire. Describe locations using latitude, longitude and compass directions.
Understanding and comparing places	Investigate Kempshott and Basingstoke, including settlement types and land use. Compare a UK woodland with a tropical rainforest.	Compare Alençon and Basingstoke through their natural features, buildings, land use, climate and economic activity. Investigate the local river.	Explore how climate and biomes shape North America's natural resources. Investigate the countries that produce food for the UK.	Compare local sites for a playground using fieldwork evidence. Study countries and regions within the Ring of Fire and explain patterns in volcanic and earthquake activity.
People and the natural world	Distinguish natural features from those made by people. Explore how mountains form and how distance from the Equator affects climate, vegetation and resources.	Explain how erosion and deposition change rivers and how the water cycle supplies them. Explore how climate, settlements and economic activity shape places.	Explain how people use natural resources and how food production and trade connect countries. Explore imports, exports, food miles and effects on climate change.	Explain how moving tectonic plates cause volcanoes and earthquakes. Use knowledge of land use and local needs to evaluate possible playground locations.
Investigating through fieldwork	Observe the local area, identify features and record how land is used. Collect and present simple fieldwork data and use it to answer geographical questions.	Observe, measure and record river features. Use maps and fieldwork to explain how a river and the surrounding land use change from source to mouth.	Use atlases, climate and biome maps to investigate patterns. Interpret information about natural resources and food journeys to explain connections and environmental impacts.	Carry out a fieldwork enquiry using different ways to collect data. Present, analyse and compare findings. Use clear criteria and evidence to justify a geographical decision.

Revisiting knowledge

Year 3 learning about the Earth's crust and mountain formation prepares children to explain volcanoes and earthquakes in Year 6. Understanding climate and rainforests in Year 3 supports their study of North America's biomes and natural resources in Year 5. Map skills and geographical vocabulary connect the units throughout the school.

Applying learning in new contexts

Children return to familiar ideas through new places and questions. These examples show how earlier learning supports more detailed investigations later in Key Stage 2.

Area	Earlier learning	Later application
Map skills and location	Year 3 · Kempshott, mountains and rainforests Use maps and four compass directions. Locate the Equator and Tropics. Year 4 · The local river Use four-figure grid references.	Year 5 · North America Use eight compass directions, latitude and longitude. Year 6 · Playground enquiry and Ring of Fire Use six-figure grid references and digital maps; locate natural hazards.
Investigating the local area	Year 3 · Should the Douglas family move to Kempshott? Observe local features, record land use and use evidence to explain whether the area would suit a family.	Year 6 · Where would be the best place to build my playground? Return to local land use, collect and analyse data, compare sites and justify a choice against clear criteria.
Explaining changing landscapes	Year 3 · Where do mountains come from? Explore the Earth's structure, tectonic plates and how fold mountains form. Year 4 · The local river Explain how erosion and deposition change landscapes.	Year 6 · What is the Ring of Fire and where is it? Apply knowledge of tectonic plates to explain volcanoes and earthquakes, and use maps to identify global patterns.
Climate and global connections	Year 3 · Why do we not have rainforests in the UK? Explore how latitude affects climate and how climate influences vegetation and natural resources.	Year 5 · North America and the ice-cream enquiry Explain how climate and biomes affect resources and food production. Trace food journeys and evaluate their environmental impact.

Understanding people and the environment

Children explore how people use places and depend on the natural world. They build from describing local land use to comparing towns and explaining how resources and trade connect countries. In Year 5, they consider how food production and transport affect the environment and suggest more sustainable choices.

Reflecting and explaining

In Year 3, children use evidence to explain whether Kempshott would suit a family moving to the area. In Year 4, they explain how rivers change and compare two towns. In Year 5, they evaluate the environmental impact of food journeys. In Year 6, they analyse fieldwork findings and justify where a playground should be built.

Geographical vocabulary, maps and fieldwork help children describe what they notice, explain patterns and support their ideas with evidence.