

Making Sense of Our Surroundings: How Geography is Taught at Tudor

TUDOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Updated: Autumn 2023
Authored by: Ella Mckenzie

Mission Statement

Together we create a happy and caring community where all our children love to learn and want to achieve

Introduction

This document sets out Tudor Primary's approach to the content and organisation of geography in accordance with national curriculum and the school's thematic approach. At Tudor, we are committed to providing all pupils with high-quality opportunities to access all areas of the geography curriculum. Geography is an essential part of the curriculum that provides a focus for understanding world environments, expanding knowledge of different places, the relationship between people and the earth, and developing practical and fieldwork skills.

'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. Teaching should equip pupils with knowledge about diverse places, people, resources and natural and human environments, together with a deep understanding of the Earth's key physical and human processes.'

DfE 2014



UKS2 Children using fieldwork equipment in the school grounds

Aims

At Tudor, we aim to:

- Stimulate children's interest and engagement of areas outlined in the national curriculum through a thematic approach; this can be found here both for [KS1](#), [LKS2](#) and [UKS2](#).
- Provide a supportive environment that allows children of different abilities to demonstrate their geographical skills
- Enable children to ask questions and develop curiosity about places, landscapes and the connection between people and their environment
- Enhance learning in geography through the use of IT and technology
- Plan and teach to allow the children to progress and develop their skills further
- Provide children with opportunities to develop their skills with hands-on, memorable experiences

Planning, teaching and assessing geography at Tudor

At Tudor, geography is taught through a thematic approach – geography is given a real and relevant context achieved through the theme of the termly topic.

Lessons are planned with the intent to engage and inspire children in lessons that link to their termly topic; the links are strong, but also do not lose the importance of the geographical skills that are being taught. This is done through teachers use of the creative curriculum map.

Teachers encourage the use of accurate geographical language in lessons, and the use of key words displayed in the classroom reinforces this use of vocabulary. A list of vocabulary that should be taught by the end of each phase, in line with the Tudor thematic curriculum, can be found [here](#).

Pupil success is assessed during and after lessons through use of the school's assessment grids – this may be based on conversations had with pupils that demonstrate their understanding or their completion of a set activity, whilst also considering their use of correct geographical vocabulary. This allows teachers to plan for additional support or challenges when planning for progression. Feedback is given verbally either during the following geography skills based lesson, or when next revisiting a learning objective or target tracker statement from the same area, e.g. map skills.

Coverage of the curriculum is highlighted in individual classes termly overview, so that teachers are fully aware of any areas of geography that still need to be covered or revisited. An example of how coverage is recorded in termly overviews can be found [here](#). Phases also work together to ensure consistent coverage throughout the two-year cycle, and the Tudor method of assessing pupils allows teachers to know what has already been covered, and to what extent in previous years. Pupil success is assessed and recorded on Target Tracker as 'working towards', 'achieved' or 'mastered'; this may be assessed over a single lesson, or a sequence of lessons. Examples of what teachers may be looking for when assessing the pupils at any of these three levels can be found under 'progress indicators' on Target Tracker. At the end of each academic year, teachers complete a summative assessment on Target Tracker for each pupil levelling them at 'beginning', 'working within' or 'secure', using the Target Tracker statements to support and provide evidence for pupil levels. In 2020 a gap analysis was completed by the subject lead (EM) to identify target trackers gaps for each year group that need addressing. An example of a gap analysis can be found [here](#).

Although geographical objectives are taught through timetabled topic sessions, teachers also provide additional opportunities for children to progress their skills and understanding through cross-curricular opportunities. For example, children are frequently provided with non-fiction texts that develop locational knowledge and vocabulary during guided reading sessions – Tudor has a Curriculum Visions subscription, which holds a variety of non-fiction texts that relate to our termly topics; hard copies of these can be found in the English room. Children are also encouraged to use the knowledge they have acquired when covering geography objectives in other subjects or areas of learning, such as writing.

Mountains of frost and ice

Mountain peaks stand high above the rest of the land. The air at the top is cold, and in winter snow falls.

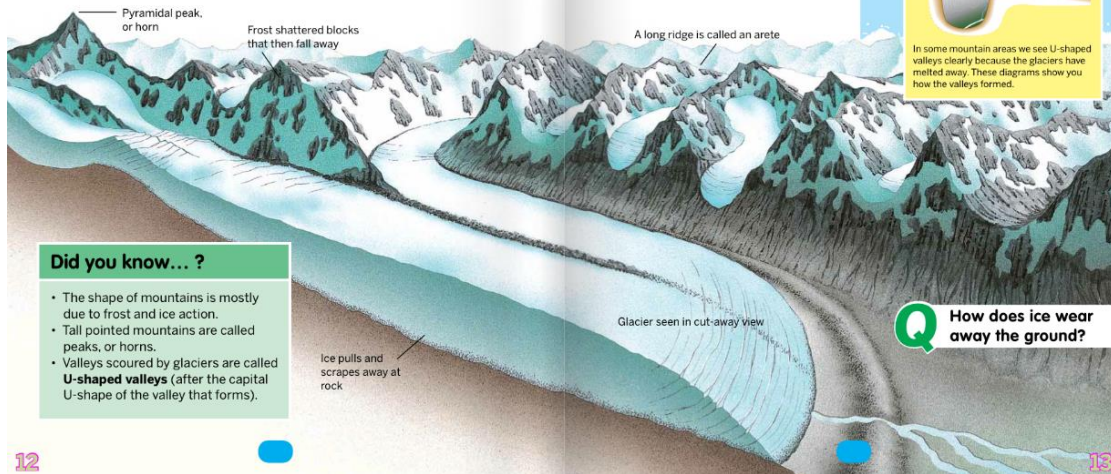
For month after month the snow piles up on the ground, and the snow is crushed to ice. Summers are short and not all of the ice melts, so that

more ice is added each winter. The ice fills mountain hollows and valleys, forming rivers of ice called **glaciers**.

The glaciers slowly slide down valleys under their own enormous weight.

The ice also drags against the valley floor, pulling out pieces of rock. These sharp rocky fragments are then scraped across the valley floor, grinding yet more rock away.

On the mountainsides it is too steep for ice to build up and the rocks stay bare. These bare rocks are attacked by frost. The frost loosens pieces of rock, which then fall onto the glaciers below.



Did you know... ?

- The shape of mountains is mostly due to frost and ice action.
- Tall pointed mountains are called peaks, or horns.
- Valleys scoured by glaciers are called **U-shaped valleys** (after the capital U-shape of the valley that forms).

How does ice wear away the ground?

In some mountain areas we see U-shaped valleys clearly because the glaciers have melted away. These diagrams show you how the valleys formed.

12

13

Curriculum Visions – Exploring Mountains
Used for guided reading during the UKS2 Extreme Environments topic

In line with the thematic approach, classrooms are decorated to 'transport' children to other world locations that relate to their topic to inspire and spark curiosity. Pupils' geography work is frequently displayed around the school to showcase their skills. More examples of geography work produced by children at Tudor can be found [here](#).



KS2 Classrooms decorated for termly topic

Inclusion and equal opportunities

At Tudor we endeavour to ensure every child, no matter what their individual needs or barriers to learning are, has equal access to learning and the same opportunities to achieve. The curriculum is designed to be ambitious and meet the needs of all pupils. In geography we ensure that children with additional needs are supported, and lessons are adapted to overcome possible barriers to learning in a variety of ways, including:

- Using multi-sensory approaches to teaching and learning, including the use of information and communications technology (ICT)
- Use of visual aids e.g., vocabulary mats, checklists
- Pre teaching

- Over learning
- Additional adult support
- Resources to support individual physical needs
- Use of learning partners
- Having a variety of resources and materials accessible to all
- Tasks and activities being simplified/adjusted as required
- Alternative ways to record ideas e.g., voice recorders, Clicker, Seesaw
- Scaffolding of tasks e.g., use of writing frames
- Setting appropriate learning challenges based on previous assessment (this is done through the use of feedback sheets)
- Use of geographical terms that relate to the termly topic on displays – this may also include terms that are translated into members of the class' first language, or ones that include pictures

More about inclusion at Tudor can be found [here](#).



UKS2 Children using the Google Earth app to find UK towns and cities

Geography in Early Years

'Early years' providers must guide the development of children's capabilities with a view to ensuring that children in their care complete the EYFS ready to benefit fully from the opportunities ahead of them.'

DfE 2014

In Early Years, we provide children with opportunities to look at the environment around them through 'Understanding of the World' and using directional language to describe routes and locations. There is a focus on looking closely at similarities, pattern and change. The pupils are taught and encouraged to:

- Draw information from a simple map
- Understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment
- Recognise some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries
- Explore the natural world around them
- Recognise some environments that are different to the one in which they live

In reception, children are supported in aiming to achieve two main early learning goals: to understand people, culture and communities by describing their immediate environment

and comparing life in different countries, and to understand the natural world by comparing the natural world around them and understanding changes in the natural world, such as the seasons.

Children's geographical and locational knowledge is expanded and inspired through the use of non-fiction texts as well as story books, such as 'Granny Went to Market, A Round-the-World Counting Rhyme'.

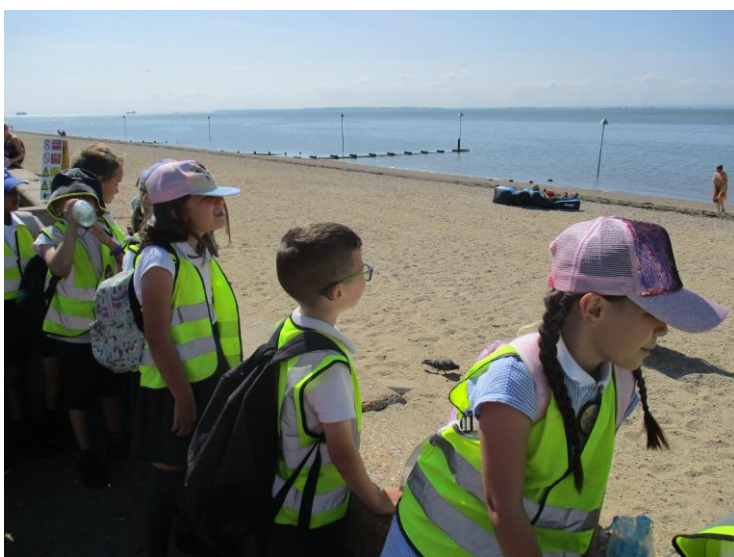
Geography in KS1

In KS1, children are taught to develop their place knowledge by using and creating maps to show where their food travels from, where different countries and continents are, and where different historical landmarks are located, inspired by the termly topic. For example, during the theme of 'Turrets and Tiaras' children discover locations of castles, and discuss why they think that location is suitable for a castle. Children explore land use and begin to make comparisons between the UK and another chosen country, considering both human and physical geography.

Children have opportunities to develop their fieldwork skills and understanding of the local areas by using local maps and making observations of different types of homes in the local area. There is also a focus on developing fieldwork skills within the school grounds and its surrounding environment, comparing it to other areas of the UK.



KS1 Children investigating types of houses in the local area



As part of the Seaside Rescue topic, children in KS1 take a day trip to Southend to explore human and physical features of the seaside.

Geography in lower KS2

In years 3 and 4, children are given opportunities to develop their knowledge of the local area, with a particular focus on land use and settlements. Children are able to expand on their fieldwork skills by making observations, measuring, recording and presenting their research of a local area.

"I have enjoyed presenting my work in different ways such as my weather forecast, I got to video myself!"

Year 3 pupil

Children use a range of resources to develop a wider understanding of the UK and the rest of the world, such as photographs and OS maps, whilst also looking at more complex issues such as the impact of tourism on a location. For example, the impact of tourism on popular Egyptian locations in the topic 'Tomb Raiders'. Pupils are taught about natural disasters, such as earthquakes and volcanoes, and how these impact people and their environments.

"It's interesting how geography can link in with other subjects, like history for example."

Year 4 pupil

Geography in upper KS2

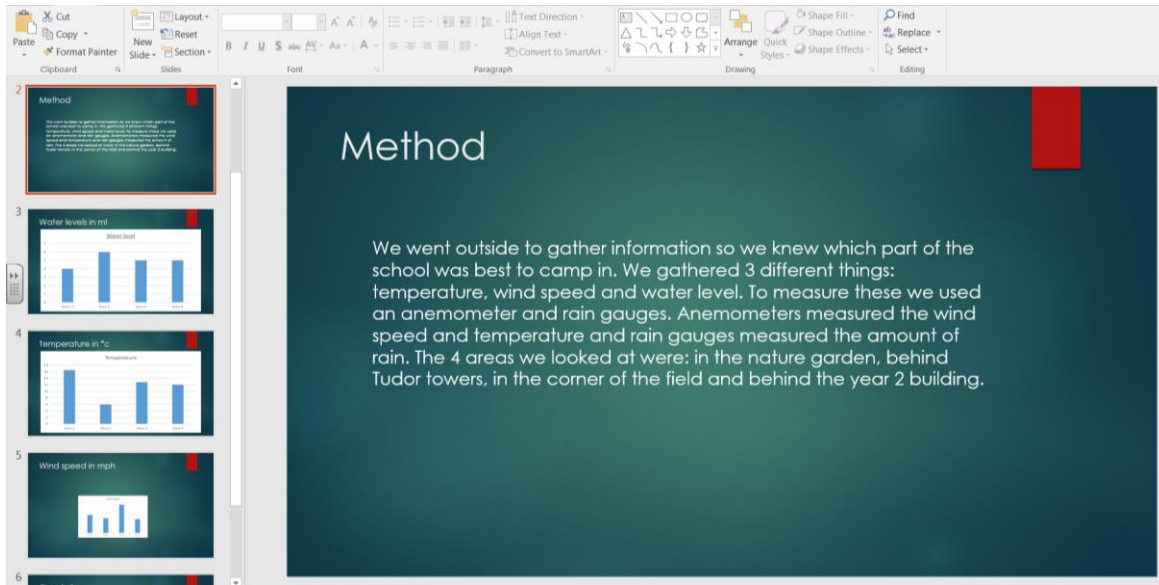
In years 5 and 6, children expand their geographical vocabulary to include words and their definitions such as longitude and latitude, and language that relates to particular climate zones, biomes and the water cycle. Children develop their fieldwork skills from lower key stage 2 by using geographical equipment to record data linked to features within their locality, and exploring different ways of displaying data. This is extended to both within the school grounds and in other local areas of Hemel Hempstead as year 5 pupils take part in a river study in Boxmoor, where the children are given the opportunity to collect and analyse samples of water from the river Bulbourne.



UKS2 River Bulbourne enquiry

Pupils develop their locational knowledge by diving deeper into the physical and human geography of specific countries, such as Mexico and Greece, and make comparisons between these locations and the UK. There is a particular focus on economic and activity, including changes in trade links and the distribution of natural resources. Children discover world issues such as climate change, and construct ideas on how people can care for the planet. Map skills are developed further with children

mapping their local area using OS map symbols and using maps to find changes in the local environment.



PowerPoint for method, results, and conclusion of a fieldwork enquiry made by UKS2 pupils

“I loved when we got out the computers and made PowerPoint presentations on our fieldwork results.”

Year 5 pupil

Further links between fieldwork objectives and the Tudor creative curriculum can be found [here](#).

Assessment guidance for progression between year groups at Tudor can be found on the progression document.

Resources

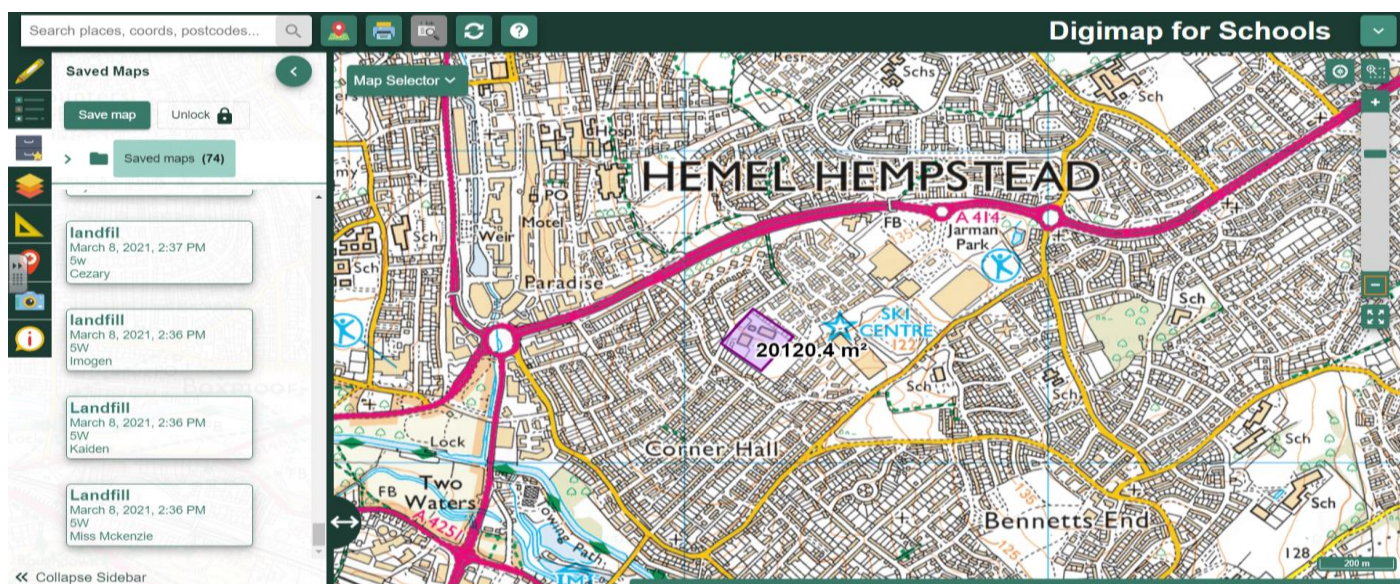
Resources are planned into geography based topic lessons to stimulate children's interests and support their learning. Tudor holds a variety of local ordinance survey maps, UK maps, and maps of the immediate area surrounding the school, varying in age. We have invested in fieldwork equipment, such as rain gauges and anemometers, to use when recording data around the school grounds. The resources are used in line with the termly topics and creative curriculum objectives. By the end of key stage two, children should be able to use resources, such as atlases, confidently.

The resources used in key stage 1 fieldwork are mostly based around ways of recording data and observations, such as using voice recorders or cameras I pads for taking photos and videos, as well as using technology such as Ipad apps for mapping. Like in EYFS, teachers in key stage 1 also use story books to support children's locational knowledge.

The lower key stage 2 resources available in school can be found [here](#).
The upper key stage 2 resources available in school can be found [here](#).

Digimaps

The school has bought into a Digimaps subscription to improve use of online/ digital mapping and understanding of Ordnance Survey maps. Resources and lesson plans by Digimaps linked to the Tudor termly topics can be found [here](#).



Year 5 child's outcome of mapping landfill enquiry using Digimaps

Our journey to improve our geographical enquiry

In 2018, a work scrutiny was carried out across the key stages which found that, whilst there were strengths throughout the school, in general the geography work produced by pupils had too much of a focus on writing and some of the rudiments of geography were being missed. There was a lack of evidence for fieldwork and staff did not feel as confident in delivering these sessions. In addition, some key geographical skills were being lost when map resources were not effective, and as a result, pupils were focusing too much on the colouring in of the map than on their locational knowledge.

Following this evaluation, Tudor's new [geography action plan](#) contains targets focusing on improving the teaching and holding evidence of fieldwork skills and the use of geographical vocabulary. A [staff session on fieldwork skills](#) was delivered in autumn 2019, aiming to help teachers develop ways of planning fieldwork into the Tudor creative curriculum, and how to evidence it. Although good fieldwork sessions took place after this staff development session, further evaluation showed that a lack of practical fieldwork equipment was limiting the children from progressing their skills to their full potential. As a result, Tudor invested in getting the right equipment to facilitate learning, and we now have anemometers and rain gauges.

Progression of the use of geographical vocabulary is something that we strive to improve on further over the next year to ensure that there is evidence of these key words being taught either in pupil's topic books or through conversations with them. To assist teachers with this, key vocabulary for each year group has been taken from the geography Target Tracker statements, and we are now exploring ways of matching this vocabulary to the thematic topics and directly planning in the teaching of these into our termly overviews.

In summer 2021, a HIP inspection revealed that although children were able to explain higher level concepts in geography, there were gaps in basic key knowledge, such as being able to explain the difference between a continent and a country. To help address

this, knowledge organisers have been made for each termly topic for staff to use when planning and assessing pupil knowledge, and recaps of basic key terms is being introduced as starters of geography lessons. There is also now a push for teachers to ensure that children know the skill they are learning, as opposed to the task being set – e.g. instead of 'I am learning to find where the Vikings came from', children will be able to say 'I am learning to locate different countries in Europe, including Scandinavian countries'.

During 2023-2024, a structured, investigative approach to geographical enquiry has been implemented. Fieldwork objectives will be in every term on the curriculum overview and each phase will have an enquiry question to solve using the following structure.

Geographical Enquiry

Question



Research

Maps
Aerial photographs
Internet
Books
Pictures
Fieldwork
Create surveys/ questionnaires



Evaluate

What have we learnt?
What new questions do we have?
Where next?
How reliable is our evidence?



Present

Presentations
Report
Create graphs
Role-play
Debate
Answer the question

The aims of this approach are for pupils to:

- Be able to build connections between theme and local environment
- Take more control of their learning
- Link geographical skills and knowledge together

- Spark curiosity, pupils able to ask and answer own questions about the world/ the local area
- Be provided with a genuine context for geographical skills and enquiry

What is fieldwork?

Fieldwork involves going into a natural setting to understand people within that context i.e. understanding people in their everyday natural setting. A field worker is comparable to a child who learn

Practical activities that involving measuring, following maps etc

Fieldwork is when you go outside and find out things about a place

An opportunity to learn new things, testing previous ideas in different environments.

Researching the local area. Using the local area to answer enquiries. Exploring the local area

using the outdoor environment to support learning through hands on experiences

Fieldwork is going outside and researching the environment.

Fieldwork is taking geography outside the classroom. This could be to collect data or take observations.

Responses from a staff development meeting on fieldwork, 2024

Evidence of impact

In November 2021, a [pupil voice](#) evidenced an improvement in basic geographical knowledge and vocabulary after across each year group, four children were asked about their understanding of basic key vocabulary.

By Summer 2022, an additional [pupil voice](#), carried out in May 2022, further evidenced progress in children's subject knowledge. Children across all key stages were able to answer confidently questions about what they had been learning in geography so far, and show examples of geography skills they had developed in their books. Children also shared their enjoyment of the subject and spoke passionately about some of their favourite lessons this year.

“My favourite thing has been learning about the river course. I liked drawing it out. I also liked making a tectonic plate jigsaw puzzle, it was so much fun!”

Year 5 Pupil

“I really liked when we used the bee bots for our maps.”

Year 2 Pupil



Knowledge organiser displayed on y6 working wall

In May 2022, a [book scrutiny](#) showed further improvements in making the learning objective clear to the geographical skill being taught, whilst also engaging children through our thematic curriculum. Progress between year groups was evidenced in books, and children were clearly building on previously learned skills. In year groups such as year 4, recap starters for vocabulary and basic geographical knowledge could be seen in topic books.