Hampshire County Council
Improvement and Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

Creating a Local Fieldwork Study

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Overview

This document contains…
A guide to creating a fieldwork study in the local area.

Points to consider when using this resource
This resource was created prior to the 2028 National Curriculum and content may need updated in the future for curriculum coverage. This resource supports schools in creating a local fieldwork study through subject knowledge, planning prompts and examples. Teachers will need to adapt the ideas in this resource to create an enquiry that reflects their locality.

What is fieldwork?

Fieldwork is a core part of being a geographer. It is when we investigate our surroundings, gathering data that helps us make sense of the world. It helps children develop their disciplinary knowledge, knowing what geographers do and practise key geographical skills outside the classroom. It can happen around the school and its grounds, around the local area or further afield. It is important to remember that high-quality fieldwork does not need to involve an expensive school trip. Many fieldwork enquiries can happen by walking around the school site or local area. This guide focuses on how to create a fieldwork enquiry in the locality of the school.

There are many fieldwork skills that we can also find in the Working Scientifically part of the Science National Curriculum including predicting, questioning, observing, recording and concluding. Fieldwork can also offer a purposeful opportunity to apply measuring and data handling skills from the maths Programmes of Study. It can also encourage communication and foster personal development.

Keep in mind that high-quality fieldwork involves a level of analysis. If we are gathering information about a place, there needs to be a clear purpose so that the data can be interpreted meaningfully. Simply identifying human and physical features is not high-quality fieldwork. When children identify these features, they should consider what the features tell us about that place.

For example, in Key Stage 1, children might identify human and physical features in the school grounds to find the best location for a bird feeder or to decide which area would make the most effective calm space. The analysis comes when children evaluate the features they have identified against the purpose of the fieldwork, explaining their thinking. *Why is that area the best place for a bird feeder or calm space?*

An enquiry question can provide a purposeful context for fieldwork and encourage information to be evaluated against a key question. Working in an enquiry-based way also allows us to practice a variety of disciplinary and substantive skills. See below for further information on fieldwork enquiries.

How can fieldwork studies support the geography National Curriculum?

The Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 geography National Curriculum each have an attainment target that specifically relates to fieldwork:

Key Stage 1

- use simple fieldwork and observational skills to study the geography of their school and its grounds and the key human and physical features of its surrounding environment.

Key Stage 2

- use fieldwork to observe, measure, record and present the human and physical features in the local area using a range of methods, including sketch maps, plans and graphs, and digital technologies.

However, when we consider the context of our fieldwork and the analysis that follows, we can also choose to link it to other areas of the geography National Curriculum. The tables below outline possible fieldwork linked activities that could connect to particular attainment targets. In this way, fieldwork does not have to be a standalone activity but an investigative tool that helps us discover information as part of a broader enquiry, building both disciplinary and substantive knowledge.

Key Stage 1

National Curriculum Attainment Target	Possible activities
• **understand geographical similarities and differences through studying the human and physical geography of a small area of the United Kingdom, and of a small area in a contrasting non-European country**	Children could gather information about their local area through fieldwork and compare this to a non-European settlement using tourism videos, photographs and digital maps.
• **identify seasonal and daily weather patterns** in the United Kingdom and the location of hot and cold areas of the world in relation to the Equator and the North and South Poles	Children could measure the temperature or rainfall (using a rain gauge) across the different seasons or for each day in a month. See the Moodle+ Longitudinal Studies in Key Stage 1 resource for further information.
• **use basic geographical vocabulary to refer to:**	*Fieldwork can support children in learning and using key geographical vocabulary. This can occur when children are identifying human and*

○ **key physical features, including: beach, cliff, coast, forest, hill, mountain, sea, ocean, river, soil, valley, vegetation, season and weather** ○ **key human features, including: city, town, village, factory, farm, house, office, port, harbour and shop**	*physical features but can also occur when children are comparing data from one place to another place.*
• **use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West) and locational and directional language [for example, near and far; left and right], to describe the location of features and routes on a map**	Children could plot and describe route they will take to gather their data for the fieldwork using directional language including compass directions. They can also describe the locational of the features they have identified, eg the climbing frame is in the east of the playground.
• **use aerial photographs and plan perspectives to recognise landmarks and basic human and physical features; devise a simple map; and use and construct basic symbols in a key**	Children can record the human and physical features they see by drawing symbols on a given map, eg triangles for trees, circles for flowers. When conducting fieldwork in a smaller area, children can create a map by drawing the human and physical features they can see. Data can also be collected by taking photographs of different human and physical features, which could later be matched to satellite photographs of the area to explore this viewpoint.

Key Stage 2

National Curriculum Attainment Target	**Possible activities**
• **understand geographical similarities and differences through the study of human and physical geography of a region of the United Kingdom,** a region in a European country, and a region within North or South America	Fieldwork can help children to understand the geographical diversity within Hampshire by encouraging them to discover information about their locality and compare it to another area. For example, if your fieldwork is taking place in a Hampshire village, you could compare its features to a city in Hampshire, eg Southampton or Winchester.
• **physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers,** mountains**, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle**	Children could decipher if certain fruits could be grown naturally in their locality by measuring seasonal weather changes and then linking this to UK climate data. This could then be compared to a place in a tropical climate. Children could investigate a local woodland in autumn and winter and then compare the data gathered about the trees to those found in tropical rainforests. Children could decipher where would be the safest place in their school in the event of an earthquake.

	Children can gather data on a local stream or river during fieldwork. This can include creating a sketch map and labelling different features, measuring depth and velocity and looking for signs of wildlife or pollution, eg litter. There are also local organisations that offer river workshops that include river fieldwork. Children could track evidence of the water cycle happening around the school grounds: measuring temperature, measuring cloud coverage using a large mirror and an okta grid, collecting rainfall and watching it evaporate and measuring light using a digital app.
• **human geography, including: types of settlement and land use, economic activity including trade links, and the distribution of natural resources including energy, food, minerals and water**	Children could identify human and physical features and deduce how the land is being used in their locality. Digital maps could then be used to explore land use over a larger area of the locality. Economic activity in the local area can be explored by looking at the types of shops, services and any potential tourist locations. Following fieldwork, food mileage could also be investigated by deducing where certain items or their ingredients might have come from. For example, children might look at the ingredients in locally sold ice cream or the origins of fruit and vegetables in a nearby shop.
• **use maps, atlases, globes and digital/computer mapping to locate countries and describe features studied**	Before fieldwork is completed, the fieldwork site could be identified at a smaller scale using physical and digital maps. See use of technology below for further information on using GIS in fieldwork.
• **use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey maps) to build their knowledge of the United Kingdom** and the wider world	Prior to starting fieldwork, children could identify the four or six-figure grid reference of the fieldwork site. Children could look at Ordnance Survey maps and use this to predict what human and physical features they might see in their fieldwork investigation.

Fieldwork in the EYFS

Children in the EYFS are introduced to the skill of making observations of their immediate environment. The holistic pedagogical approaches of the EYFS support children in gaining a foundational understanding of knowledge and skills that will support later fieldwork. Though we do not introduce geography as a discipline at EYFS, the 'Understanding the World' area of the curriculum embodies geography, science, history and Religious Education. As demonstrated earlier in this resource, there is a natural crossover between many of the disciplinary skills in geography and science. Providing children with opportunities to engage in early fieldwork can support many areas of the EYFS curriculum as shown in the table below.

Area of the EYFS Curriculum	**How early fieldwork supports this area**
Characteristics of Effective Learning	Fieldwork encourages children to investigate their environment and 'have a go' at new activities. They need to concentrate as they make observations and think critically and creatively as they evaluate their environment. The Characteristics of Effective Learning create a foundation for children's disciplinary skills in geography.
Prime Areas (Communication and Language, PSED, Physical Development)	Children orally describe their environment using key vocabulary and work collaboratively with others during early fieldwork activities. Children could compare their views on the environment with their friends' views. Fieldwork encourages children to try new activities and explore new settings. Children can also improve their fine and gross motor skills by handling equipment, eg iPads, pencils.
Specific Areas (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design)	Children can write labels to record their description of their environment. Human and physical features can be counted and language relating to comparing quantities can be introduced, eg more/less, most/least. Children can also use artistic tools or small world resources to capture and recreate the features in their environment.

Though children in the EYFS do not need to gather and analyse data in the same detail as the later key stages, it is important that children develop the skill of making observations about their environment, describing or sometimes drawing what they can see. A level of evaluation can be applied to this by asking children to discuss how the environment makes them feel and what they like to do in the environment.

An example fieldwork activity that could take place in the early years is emotion mapping. Children in small groups could evaluate the different human and physical features in their environment by placing emotion signs to label how it makes them feel. For example, they might place a sign with an excited face in the bike area or a calm face in the book corner.

Storybooks can also make a great springboard for fieldwork in the EYFS and Key Stage 1. For example, children could deduce which areas of the school grounds are most like the settings in the story *We're going on a bear hunt* by Michael Rosen *Where is our long, wavy grass? Where do we have thick, oozy mud in our school?* Children could orally retell the story as they move around the school in the different areas and follow/create a simple story map during their route.

How often should we be doing fieldwork?

The table above shows how fieldwork can link to many areas of the geography National Curriculum. The section below will further demonstrate how fieldwork can sit within a wider enquiry cycle or be delivered as a standalone enquiry.

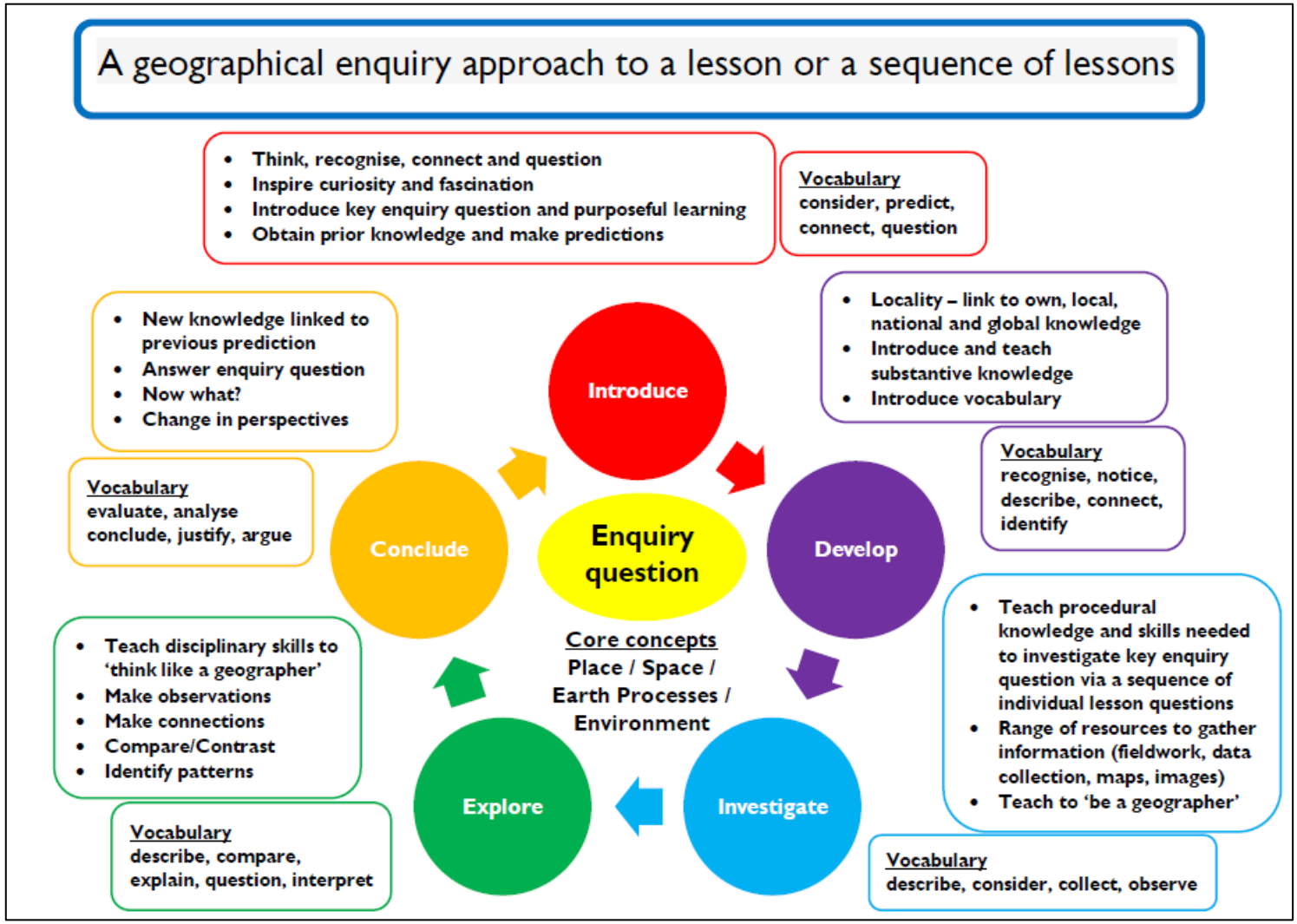
Fieldwork is a statutory requirement of the geography National Curriculum, and children should have the opportunity to take part in fieldwork at least once a year in every year group. Remember that fieldwork does not need to involve expensive coach journeys or trips. It can take place on the school site or within walking distance of the school.

Working through enquiry

Like history and science, geography is an enquiry-based subject. When geography is taught effectively, it is taught through enquiry.

Fieldwork is a core part of the geography curriculum. Whether children experience it as part of a wider scheme of learning or as a standalone activity, it must be taught through enquiry. Instead of learning a wide range of disconnected facts about a place, children connect more deeply with the intended knowledge through discussion and analysis. Developing fieldwork skills within an enquiry also helps children feel like geographers, supporting the development of their disciplinary knowledge.

A fieldwork enquiry is guided by an enquiry question. Children gather data, analyse it and evaluate it against the enquiry question, forming conclusions and explaining their thinking.



The Hampshire Geography Enquiry Wheel

The Hampshire Geography Enquiry Wheel provides an example of how an enquiry can be structured in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. It outlines different stages of an enquiry and includes possible disciplinary skills (shown in vocabulary boxes) that children might demonstrate during the cycle.

Although the enquiry is presented as a process, it is completely appropriate to move between the middle stages in a non-cyclical way during a wider enquiry. For example, you may move back and forth between the 'investigate' and 'explore' stages as children gather data and then analyse it. In this model, fieldwork forms one element of the 'investigate' and 'explore' stages, and there may be additional lessons where children gather information for the enquiry from different sources, such as photographs or climate graphs. Whether you incorporate fieldwork as part of a larger enquiry or plan it as a standalone enquiry, the key point is that the key question is introduced at the start, with children having the chance to link to their prior knowledge. It is equally important that the enquiry concludes with children answering the key question after evaluating the information they have gathered.

Points to consider when planning an enquiry

Consider the following questions when planning an enquiry:

- what substantive knowledge do you want children to know? What substantive skills, eg map skills?
- how does this new learning link to previous learning or what children might know already? What might have to be taught to help them understand new learning?
- what misconceptions might arise? How are we going to address them?
- how are children going to find out the information you want them to know? How are they going to process that information? Identify, describe, compare, analyse, present data
- how are children going to stay safe when conducting their fieldwork? What clothing or equipment will they need?
- how will children explain what they know? Choose an enquiry question that allows them to critically use the information they have explored.

The table below shows different fieldwork activities that could be completed on the school site or in the local area. Each activity is presented with possible data collection methods and tasks to help children analyse and cognitively process the data, supporting later evaluations and conclusions. Consider which of these activities will allow children to gather the data they need to help answer the key question at the 'Investigative' and 'Explore' stages of the enquiry.

Fieldwork Activity	Possible data collection methods	Analysis
traffic count	tallying	bar charts
Environmental Quality Survey	Sliding scales in table (1-5 or -5 -5)	avg. point score charts
emotion mapping	Drawing or placing emojis or colour coding a given map	use pictograms or bar charts to show scores for each area
sound mapping	Digital recorder/computer tablet, record in a table using a given scale – can be types of sound or level of sound	plot on digital map,
litter survey	tallying, field sketches	plot on digital or physical map
Identifying land-use/ h & p features	Tallying or ticking human and physical features observed, drawing a sketch map.	plot on digital or physical map
questionnaire survey	digital/paper questionnaires	bar charts for scale responses, word clouds
Identifying microclimates (can be longitudinal study)	Measure temperature, light, or wind in different spots using equipment or apps	bar or line graphs, create map layers using digital drawing tools or tracing paper

Using technology

Technology can be a valuable tool during fieldwork. Tablets and cameras can be used to take photographs of different human and physical features to collect data and support later analysis. Apps can also help measure sound, light, direction and position.

The Ordnance Survey OS Maps app is an example of a digital tool that can identify the grid reference of a location. This information can then be used to support plotting data on a digital map using applications such as Digimap for Schools or ArcGIS.

Presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint, can act as a vehicle for children to explain their understanding through a presentation. Creative software can also be used to produce enquiry outcomes such as posters – for example, a poster encouraging people not to litter in the local area or a sign for a calm space in the school.

Geography

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