



Geography Skills Progression from Nursery to Year 2

Purpose Children develop a sense of place by exploring their immediate surroundings, locating places and asking how they are alike or different. In Nursery and Reception this begins in Understanding the World. In Years 1 and 2 it develops into the Key Stage 1 geography programme of study. Our outdoor spaces, local walks and planned group challenges give children places to observe, map and revisit.

Our geography curriculum in practice

A local starting point. Children know the classroom, school grounds and nearby Sprowston places through first-hand visits. Adults introduce accurate place words and ask children to explain what they notice.

Progression with real maps. Floor plans, aerial photographs, globes and atlases sit alongside small-world play. Children move from landmarks and simple routes towards keys, compass directions and world locations.

Provision and independence. Nursery and Reception provide repeated place play and outdoor observation. Year 1 links provision to explicitly taught geography. Year 2 uses targeted, increasingly independent map, comparison and fieldwork tasks.

Values and access. Kindness appears when children listen to others' experiences of places; resilience when they check a route; creativity when they represent a place. Use tactile maps, photographs, walks and spoken answers so every child can participate.

The progression at a glance

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Sense of place	Name familiar spaces and people in them.	Describe familiar places and how to reach them.	Name and locate school, local area and UK places.	Locate and compare a wider range of UK and world places.
Human and physical features	Notice buildings, trees, paths and weather.	Describe simple features of school and locality.	Identify and describe taught human and physical features.	Compare features and explain similarities and differences.
Maps and direction	Move through familiar spaces using near/far.	Follow a simple route and draw a picture map.	Use plans, symbols, a key and four compass points.	Select maps and give more precise routes with keys and compass language.
Fieldwork	Explore and talk about places outdoors.	Observe and record a feature through talk or pictures.	Make observations, simple maps and labelled records.	Ask a geographical question, gather evidence and explain findings.
Weather and world	Notice weather and seasonal change.	Discuss local seasons and different places.	Describe UK weather and locate continents and oceans.	Compare place and climate; locate hot/cold areas using Equator and poles.

How to read the tables. These are progressive teaching and observation prompts, not an age-based checklist for every child. EYFS experiences build foundations; the full Key Stage 1 programme is taught across Years 1 and 2. Teachers use assessment to revisit or extend a skill.

Places and geographical knowledge

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
My place and community	Recognise own room, outdoor space and route from nursery.	Identify familiar places, people and features in the local community.	Describe school and Sprowston using locality vocabulary.	Explain how two nearby places are similar or different using evidence.
UK knowledge	Notice that people live in other places shown in books/photos.	Talk about places visited in the UK; recognise UK on a globe with help.	Name and locate four countries, capitals and surrounding seas using a map.	Recall and use locations and characteristics to compare UK places.
World locations	Explore globes, photographs and books about other places.	Find familiar named places on a picture map or globe with support.	Name and locate seven continents and five oceans.	Retrieve locations and describe a place in relation to a continent/ocean.
Comparing places	Notice that places and homes may look different.	Describe one similarity and difference between two pictured places.	Compare a small UK area with a named small non-European area.	Use human and physical evidence to explain a comparison more precisely.
Weather and climate	Say what the weather is like today.	Notice weather and seasonal patterns in the UK.	Describe daily/seasonal UK weather; identify hot/cold areas on a globe.	Locate Equator and North/South Poles to explain broad hot/cold patterns.
Physical features	Name features such as tree, puddle, hill and water.	Use terms such as beach, river, sea and forest when meaningful.	Use taught words for beach, coast, river, hill, soil, vegetation and weather.	Choose accurate terms when comparing environments and map features.
Human features	Identify a house, shop, road or school.	Describe the use of a familiar building or road.	Use taught words including city, town, village, farm, shop and harbour.	Explain how human features differ across two places.

In practice. Classroom link Year 1 challenges include local fieldwork, UK country mapping, a contrasting area of China, continents and oceans, and coastal places. Revisit each with actual maps rather than treating a festival as evidence of geographical study.

Mapping fieldwork and geographical enquiry

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Follow and describe routes	Use gesture and positional words during movement.	Follow a familiar route and use near, behind and next to.	Give directions using near/far and north, south, east and west on a map.	Follow, draw and refine a route using a key and compass points.
Plans and aerial views	Recognise a familiar place in a photograph.	Look at a bird's-eye picture of a room; begin a simple plan.	Use aerial photographs and plan views to identify landmarks/features.	Compare photograph and plan; explain what each helps us find.
Symbols and keys	Match an object or picture to its place.	Represent landmarks with simple pictures on a map.	Make a simple map with basic symbols and a key.	Choose and explain useful symbols and a key for another reader.
Maps atlases and globes	Explore a globe and picture maps with adult talk.	Find the school/UK on an age-appropriate map with support.	Use world maps, atlases and globes for the UK and places studied.	Choose a suitable map/globe and locate places independently.
Field observation	Notice changes on walks and in outdoor play.	Describe and record what is seen on the school site.	Observe and record local human and physical features.	Pose a fieldwork question and collect simple evidence to answer it.
Compare and communicate	Say how two places look different.	Talk about one similarity and difference using photographs.	Share a labelled map or spoken comparison using taught words.	Use observations, a map and vocabulary to explain conclusions.

What counts as evidence. Evidence may be a child's annotated map, a photograph with their explanation, a route followed successfully, or talk recorded by an adult. An attractive map is useful only when the child can explain its places, symbols or route.

Provision and independent application

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Construction and small world	Build a familiar street or garden with blocks.	Create a route between small-world landmarks.	Add a plan and key to a model street.	Choose a settlement layout and justify the location of features.
Outdoor and local visits	Notice trees, paths, buildings and weather.	Take photographs and draw a simple school route.	Survey human and physical features of the grounds.	Collect evidence to compare two locations or routes.
Maps and travel	Match photographs to familiar places.	Use picture maps to guide a partner.	Locate UK countries, continents or seas on accessible maps.	Select atlas, globe or aerial view to answer a place question.
Weather station	Name today's weather and choose a symbol.	Compare weather observations over several days.	Record UK weather and relate it to seasons.	Compare records and explain a pattern cautiously.
Continuous provision to Year 2	Adults enrich place talk in play.	Plan a map-making invitation after a walk.	Revisit taught symbols, fieldwork and globes in provision.	Set independent mapping, evidence and explanation tasks with review.

Curriculum links and coverage

EYFS. Understanding the World supports observations of place, community and natural world; Reception children may draw information from a simple map.

KS1 geography. Cover locational knowledge, a small UK and a contrasting non-European area, human/physical geography, and geographical skills/fieldwork by the end of Year 2.

Check in planning. Name the actual localities, include UK capitals and seas, all seven continents and five oceans, Equator and poles, aerial views, keys and four-point compass.

Sources. EYFS 2026 statutory framework; DfE Development Matters; DfE KS1 geography programme of study.

Official programmes. EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2026; national curriculum in England for Key Stage 1. Development Matters is non-statutory guidance.

EYFS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Key Stage 1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-geography-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-geography-programmes-of-study>