CELT Geography: Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

At CELT, we believe that a high-quality geography education enables children to understand the world they live in, their place within it and the connections between people, places and environments.

Geography helps pupils make sense of the world around them: from their immediate locality and the landscapes of Cornwall to the United Kingdom and an increasingly diverse range of places across the wider world. It develops curiosity about places, people and environments while enabling pupils to understand the physical and human processes that shape them.

This reflects the wider moral purpose of the CELT Primary Curriculum: to provide every child with an inclusive, equitable and inspiring education which opens doors to lives of choice and opportunity. Children should both see their own places and experiences reflected within the curriculum and encounter places, environments, cultures and ways of life beyond their immediate experience.

Geography contributes directly to our five curriculum aims. Through geography, pupils develop connection to place and environment as Happy & Healthy learners; build knowledge, vocabulary, enquiry and critical thinking which ensure they are Prepared for the Future; understand global connections, diversity and sustainability as Global Citizens; become curious about people, places and environments and therefore Inspired to Learn; and become Creative Thinkers who question, investigate, interpret, explain and evaluate the world around them.

Our geography curriculum is deliberately knowledge-rich, vocabulary-rich, enquiry-rich and disciplinary. Children do not encounter a collection of disconnected places or geographical facts. They progressively build increasingly sophisticated mental models of the world, making connections between places, processes, people and environments.

Building Geographical Knowledge

We develop both substantive knowledge – what pupils know about the world – and disciplinary knowledge – how geographers investigate, represent and make sense of it.

Recurring substantive themes provide pupils with increasingly sophisticated lenses through which to understand geography:

- **Place**
- **Space**
- **Physical Processes**
- **Human Processes**
- **Interdependence**
- **Sustainability**

Alongside these, pupils develop the disciplinary knowledge needed to work geographically through:

- **Asking Geographical Questions**
- **Using & Interpreting Maps**
- **Analysing Data**
- **Fieldwork & Observation**
- **Explaining Patterns & Processes**
- **Evaluating Evidence**
- **Understanding Scale & Perspective**

These are not taught as generic skills detached from geographical knowledge. Pupils become better geographical thinkers because they know more geography and can draw upon increasingly rich knowledge of places, processes and connections.

Our ambition is that children know more geography, remember more geography and are increasingly able to think and work geographically because of what they know.

A Coherent Journey from KS1 to KS2

Our curriculum creates a deliberate journey from children's first understanding of place and the world around them in EYFS and KS1 to the increasingly complex physical and human geography of Opening Worlds in KS2.

In KS1, pupils follow the CELT KS1 Geography Curriculum. Geography alternates with history and is usually taught in the first half of each term.

Through six carefully sequenced enquiries, pupils explore:

Where in the World are we?
What are the weather and seasons like here and around the world?
What is a map and how do we use it?
What do homes and life look like around the world?
How is where we live different to other places in the world?
What are the physical features of our landscapes?

These enquiries establish essential foundations in locational knowledge, place, space, weather and seasons, physical and human features, maps, comparison and human-environment interaction.

Pupils learn that they exist within places at different scales – from home, school and town to country, continent and world. They begin to understand how places are represented through maps and globes, how physical environments vary, how people live in different places and how physical and human geography interact.

Their own locality provides an important starting point, enabling children to observe, describe and investigate geography directly before making increasingly sophisticated comparisons with other places.

In the summer of Year 2, the usual history and geography sequence switches to support the transition into Opening Worlds.

From Year 3 onwards, geography is taught throughout the year through Opening Worlds. This increased frequency allows geographical knowledge to accumulate continuously and enables connections between places, processes and recurring concepts to remain active.

Opening Worlds provides carefully sequenced substantive and disciplinary knowledge, ambitious vocabulary, rich geographical case studies and powerful connections across geography, history and religion. Its design supports our commitment to ensuring all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, access an ambitious curriculum.

Place, Scale and Connection

A powerful geographical curriculum enables children to build an increasingly detailed mental map of the world.

Pupils begin by locating themselves and understanding that places exist at different scales. They progressively extend their locational knowledge from their local area, the UK, continents and oceans towards increasingly diverse regions of Europe and the wider world.

Their understanding of place progresses from identifying and describing features to comparing places and ultimately explaining how places are shaped by interacting physical and human processes.

Their understanding of space develops from simple maps, globes and compass directions towards recognising and explaining patterns of settlement, climate, population, migration, urbanisation and resources.

At the same time, pupils move from recognising simple connections between places towards understanding interdependence: that people, places and environments are connected through systems such as food, trade, tourism, migration, climate and resource use.

Our curriculum is the progression model: pupils progress because the curriculum systematically changes what they know about the world and their capacity to explain how and why it works as it does.

Implementation

Geography is taught explicitly as a distinct academic discipline through carefully sequenced substantive and disciplinary knowledge.

Curriculum Organisation

In KS1, teachers use the CELT Geography Curriculum. Geography generally alternates with history and is usually taught during the first half of each term.

Units are organised around meaningful geographical enquiry questions and identify precise core knowledge, common misconceptions, vocabulary, substantive themes, disciplinary concepts and assessment opportunities.

The sequence changes in the summer of Year 2 to support transition into the Opening Worlds curriculum.

In KS2, pupils study Opening Worlds Geography throughout the year, enabling prior knowledge to be continually activated and connections to be made between places and processes.

A Progressive Pedagogy: EYFS to KS2

Our KS1 pedagogy deliberately bridges the play-based, language-rich and adult-supported learning of EYFS with the increasingly explicit, knowledge-rich teaching of Opening Worlds.

The transition is progressive rather than abrupt. As pupils develop greater knowledge, language, independence and readiness for sustained learning, the balance of teaching approaches gradually changes.

We use three complementary modes:

Mode A – Independent Learning: pupils independently practise, retrieve, apply, record or demonstrate geographical knowledge.

Mode B – Adult-Led Learning: adults explicitly teach, model, explain, question and scaffold pupils' acquisition and application of geographical knowledge.

Mode C – Play-Based Learning: pupils explore and consolidate geographical ideas through purposeful provision, maps, globes, construction, small-world play, role play, practical exploration and investigation of their environment.

At the beginning of KS1 there is a greater proportion of Modes B and C, building upon effective EYFS practice. Short, carefully scaffolded opportunities for Mode A begin to develop independence.

Across KS1, Mode C gradually reduces but remains purposeful; Mode B continues to provide explicit teaching and rich interaction; and Mode A increases in frequency, duration and sophistication.

The balance of pedagogy changes, but the ambition of the curriculum does not.

Vocabulary and Geographical Language

Key geographical vocabulary is explicitly pre-taught. Teachers select high-leverage words, teach their meaning in context, model pronunciation and provide repeated opportunities for pupils to hear, say, retrieve and apply them.

Pupils learn that geographical language enables them to describe and explain the world with increasing precision. Vocabulary therefore develops cumulatively, from words such as *place, country, continent, ocean, map, weather* and *physical feature* towards increasingly sophisticated concepts and processes.

Vocabulary is repeatedly revisited in new contexts so that pupils do not simply remember definitions but understand and use geographical terminology with increasing confidence and precision.

Oracy as a Tool for Geographical Thinking

Oracy is central to geography teaching. Purposeful talk enables children to process geographical knowledge, make connections, explain patterns and rehearse increasingly sophisticated geographical thinking.

Pupils regularly:

- rehearse and apply geographical vocabulary;
- describe locations, places and environments;
- compare places and identify similarities and differences;
- explain physical and human processes;
- describe and explain geographical patterns;
- interpret maps, photographs, observations and data;
- use evidence to support conclusions;
- ask and answer geographical questions;
- discuss human-environment relationships and sustainability;
- listen and respond to alternative viewpoints; and
- orally rehearse explanations before writing.

Talk is not an addition to geographical learning: it is one of the principal ways pupils process, retrieve, connect and communicate geographical knowledge.

In KS1, structured approaches including Talk Partners, Agree–Build–Challenge, consensus activities, sentence stems and purposeful questioning ensure all pupils participate.

Oracy runs through all three modes of learning. Children talk during purposeful play and exploration, engage in sustained dialogue with adults, rehearse ideas collaboratively and increasingly construct independent geographical explanations.

As pupils progress, their geographical talk develops from naming, locating, observing and describing towards comparing, explaining, connecting, interpreting, justifying and evaluating.

Maps and Spatial Understanding

Maps are fundamental to geography and are used throughout the curriculum rather than taught as an isolated skill.

In KS1, pupils begin by understanding that maps represent real places. They use and create simple maps, interpret symbols and keys, use aerial perspectives, locate places on maps and globes and develop directional language.

As pupils progress, maps become increasingly sophisticated tools for geographical thinking. Pupils use maps to identify and analyse distributions, relationships and patterns and to connect geographical phenomena across different scales.

Regular use of maps, atlases, globes, aerial images and other geographical representations enables pupils to build increasingly secure spatial understanding and mental maps of the world.

Fieldwork and Geographical Enquiry

Fieldwork enables pupils to do geography, not simply learn about it.

Beginning with direct observation of familiar environments, pupils learn to ask geographical questions, observe carefully, gather information, record findings and use evidence to reach conclusions.

In KS1, this includes purposeful exploration of the school and local environment, weather observation, simple mapping and identification of physical and human features.

As pupils progress, fieldwork becomes increasingly systematic and independent. Pupils gather, represent, analyse and interpret geographical information and use evidence to answer increasingly complex questions about places and environments.

Fieldwork also reinforces the importance of local geography, enabling pupils to understand that geographical processes and questions can be investigated directly in the places around them.

Knowledge and Sequencing

Teachers understand what pupils have learned previously and where learning is heading next. Planning identifies the precise knowledge pupils need to secure rather than treating a geographical topic or place as an end in itself.

Earlier knowledge of places, processes and vocabulary is deliberately reused to make later learning accessible.

For example, early KS1 knowledge of weather and seasons develops into understanding climate and biomes and ultimately complex climate systems and climate change. Early understanding of homes and settlements develops into study of population, migration and urbanisation. Initial awareness that people and environments affect one another develops into increasingly complex consideration of resource use, deforestation, climate change and sustainability.

This cumulative sequencing enables pupils to build increasingly connected geographical schemas.

Physical and Human Geography

Pupils develop increasingly sophisticated understanding of both physical and human geography and, importantly, the relationships between them.

Physical geography progresses from recognising weather, seasons and landscape features towards explaining rivers, mountains, coasts, volcanoes and other physical processes and ultimately understanding interconnected Earth systems, oceans, ecosystems and climate.

Human geography progresses from homes, jobs and settlements towards agriculture, tourism and population and ultimately migration, urbanisation, trade and economic systems.

Across both, pupils increasingly recognise that people shape environments and environments shape people's lives.

Interdependence and Sustainability

As pupils' knowledge of the world expands, they increasingly understand that places do not exist in isolation.

Early recognition that places and people are connected develops into understanding food systems, tourism and trade and ultimately complex global systems involving migration, resources and climate.

Similarly, early awareness of caring for environments develops into increasingly sophisticated understanding of human impact, resource use and sustainability.

By UKS2, pupils consider complex geographical issues including climate change, deforestation, energy and sustainable development. They use their growing knowledge to consider consequences, responses and possible futures.

This supports pupils in becoming informed Global Citizens while ensuring that complex issues are approached through secure geographical knowledge rather than through disconnected opinion.

Inclusion and Equity

Every pupil is entitled to the full ambition of the geography curriculum.

We do not respond to disadvantage or SEND by narrowing geographical entitlement. Instead, teachers provide appropriate scaffolding to enable pupils to access the same ambitious core knowledge.

Explicit vocabulary instruction, maps, globes, photographs, diagrams, physical models, structured talk, choral response, repetition, retrieval and consistent routines reduce unnecessary cognitive demands while maintaining intellectual ambition.

Representation is equally important. Pupils encounter a diverse range of places and communities and are taught to avoid simplistic assumptions or stereotypes.

Our curriculum provides both windows into places, communities and environments beyond pupils' own experience and mirrors through which their own locality, lives and experiences can be recognised.

Assessment

Assessment establishes what pupils know, remember and understand and how successfully they can use that knowledge to think and work geographically.

Assessment is embedded within teaching through questioning, pupil talk, retrieval, map work, observation, fieldwork and written outcomes. Teachers identify misconceptions and adapt teaching accordingly.

End-of-unit assessment establishes whether pupils have secured core substantive knowledge and can apply relevant disciplinary knowledge.

We assess whether pupils can increasingly:

- locate
- observe
- describe
- compare
- interpret
- identify patterns
- explain processes
- use evidence
- make connections
- evaluate

Assessment informs responsive teaching and identifies knowledge requiring further retrieval, clarification or reinforcement.

Impact

The impact of our geography curriculum is seen in **what pupils know, remember, locate, connect, explain,** investigate and question over time.

Pupils develop increasingly rich and coherent mental models of the world rather than accumulating disconnected facts about different places.

As pupils progress through CELT, they increasingly:

- know and remember a broad and ambitious body of geographical knowledge;
- develop secure locational knowledge and increasingly detailed mental maps of the world;
- understand place at different scales, from their own Cornish locality to the UK and wider world;
- use maps, globes and geographical representations confidently and purposefully;
- understand increasingly complex physical and human processes;
- recognise and explain patterns and relationships between people, places and environments;
- understand that places are interconnected and interdependent;
- recognise the reciprocal relationship between people and environments;

- use increasingly precise geographical vocabulary in speech and writing;
- talk purposefully about geography, describing, explaining, questioning, justifying and evaluating;
- undertake geographical enquiry and fieldwork, gathering and interpreting evidence to answer questions;
- understand increasingly complex issues of sustainability and human impact;
- make meaningful connections between geography, history and religion;
- understand diverse places, communities and ways of life without relying on stereotypes; and
- approach the world with curiosity, asking increasingly thoughtful questions about where things are, why they are there, how places are connected and how they are changing.

The impact is also evident in pupils' growing geographical voice. As knowledge, vocabulary and confidence develop, pupils move beyond simply naming and describing places towards explaining patterns and processes, identifying connections, interpreting evidence, evaluating geographical issues and considering possible responses and futures.

By the end of primary school, pupils have developed a broad, connected and rigorous geographical schema which prepares them for increasingly complex geographical study at secondary school and enables them to make sense of the world around them.

Ultimately, geography at CELT does more than teach children where places are. It gives them the knowledge to understand the world, the language to describe and explain it, the disciplinary tools to investigate it and the sense of connection and responsibility needed to consider their place within its future.