Geography Intent

Within our Geography Curriculum we have identified 6 substantive themes we will weave in and out of our curriculum and 6 disciplinary concepts.
A helpful way to think about these are:

- **Substantive themes = *what geography is about***
- **Disciplinary concepts = *how geography works as a subject***

Substantive themes (the content and big ideas)
These are the **core ideas pupils learn about the world**.
They organise *knowledge*:

- Place
- Space
- Physical processes
- Human processes
- Interdependence
- Sustainability

They answer questions like:

- *What is this place like?*
- *Why do rivers flood?*
- *How are countries connected?*

So when teaching, you might say:
"Today we are learning about **interdependence** through trade."

Disciplinary concepts (the thinking and ways of working of a geographer)
These are the **ways of thinking, investigating, and making sense of the world** in geography.
They organise *practice and thinking*:

- Asking geographical questions
- Using and interpreting maps
- Analysing data
- Fieldwork and observation
- Explaining patterns and processes
- Evaluating evidence
- Understanding scale and perspective

They answer questions like:

- *How do we know this?*
- *What evidence supports this pattern?*
- *How can we represent this geographically?*

So in teaching, you might say:
"We are using **map skills** to investigate where volcanoes are found."

The key difference (in one sentence)

- **Substantive = the geography pupils learn**
- **Disciplinary = how pupils *do* geography**

KS1:

Unit	Place	Space / locational knowledge	Physical processes / features	Human features / processes	Human–environment interaction	Interdependence / diversity
Where in the World are we? Including continents and oceans	✓ UK countries and capitals; world regions	✓ Continents, oceans, globe, world map, global location				✓ Awareness of the wider world and global identity
What are the weather and seasons like here and around the world?	✓ Comparing here with other parts of the world	✓ Equator, North Pole, South Pole, hot/cold areas	✓ Seasons, weather patterns, temperature		✓ How weather affects people and daily life	✓ Similarities and differences between places and climates
What is a map and how do we use it?	✓ Representing familiar places	✓ Maps, keys, symbols, aerial view, compass directions			✓ Using maps to understand and navigate environment	
What do homes and life look like around the world?	✓ Contrasting places and communities	✓ Global spread of places studied	✓ Links between climate/environment and homes	✓ Human settlement and shelter	✓ How environment influences homes and ways of living	✓ Diversity of homes, lifestyles and identities around the world
How is where we live different to other places in the world?	✓ Local area and contrasting non-European locality	✓ Comparing locations and settlement patterns		✓ Town, village, city, shops, factories, services	✓ How people shape places and live differently in them	✓ Differences and similarities between communities
What are the physical features of our landscapes? Coasts, rivers, hills and forests	✓ Recognising landscapes in different places		✓ Coast, cliff, beach, river, hill, mountain, forest, vegetation		✓ How physical landscapes affect living things and human experience of place	

Year 3

Unit	Place	Physical processes	Human processes	Interdependence	Human–environment interaction	Sustainability
Rivers	✓ Indus, Severn	✓ Water cycle, flooding	✓ Farming, fishing	✓ Rivers + livelihoods	✓ Rivers shaping land & use	✓ Pollution issues
Mountains	✓ UK, Andes, Snowdonia	✓ Formation, weather links	✓ Settlements		✓ Living on mountains	
Settlements & cities	✓ Cardiff, London		✓ Land use, transport	✓ Movement & connections	✓ Settlement patterns	
Agriculture	✓ Wales, UK regions		✓ Farming types	✓ Food systems	✓ Farming shaping land	✓ Food choices, sourcing
Volcanoes	✓ Mt Etna	✓ Eruptions, tectonics	✓ Settlements near volcanoes		✓ Living with hazards	
Climate & biomes	✓ Europe	✓ Climate zones	✓ Ways of life	✓ Climate links	✓ Climate affecting people	

Year 4

Unit	Place	Physical processes	Human processes	Interdependence	Human–environment interaction	Sustainability
Rhine & Mediterranean	✓ Europe, river systems	✓ River change	✓ Trade, transport	✓ Trade routes	✓ Human modification (canals)	
Population	✓ UK cities		✓ Migration, identity	✓ Movement of people	✓ Population distribution	
Coasts	✓ UK coastline	✓ Erosion, deposition	✓ Coastal use		✓ Coast–human interaction	
Tourism	✓ UK, Alps, Spain	✓ Climate links	✓ Tourism industry	✓ Global travel	✓ Impact on places	✓ Sustainable tourism
Earthquakes	✓ Global regions	✓ Tectonics	✓ Settlement responses		✓ Living with hazards	
Deserts	✓ Sahara, Patagonia	✓ Desert formation	✓ Adaptation		✓ Living in extremes	

Year 5

Unit	Place	Physical processes	Human processes	Interdependence	Human–environment interaction	Sustainability
California (water)	✓ North America	✓ Water cycle revisit	✓ Farming, water use	✓ Resource distribution	✓ Human impact on water	✓ Water scarcity
Oceans	✓ Global oceans	✓ Currents, climate	✓ Trade routes	✓ Global systems	✓ Human impact on oceans	✓ Climate change links
Migration	✓ UK case studies		✓ Migration patterns	✓ Global movement	✓ Changing places	
North & South America	✓ Americas	✓ Climate patterns	✓ Urbanisation	✓ Global links	✓ Megacity challenges	
Amazon	✓ South America	✓ Ecosystems	✓ Deforestation	✓ Global importance	✓ Human impact	✓ Conservation
Interconnected Amazon	✓ Global links	✓ Carbon cycle	✓ Trade, industry	✓ Globalisation	✓ Agriculture impact	✓ Environmental futures

Year 6

Unit	Place	Physical processes	Human processes	Interdependence	Human–environment interaction	Sustainability
Energy & climate change	✓ Global	✓ Greenhouse effect	✓ Energy use	✓ Global systems	✓ Human impact on climate	✓ Climate action
Ethiopia	✓ Africa	✓ Climate, landscape	✓ Development	✓ Global influences	✓ Environment & people	✓ Sustainable futures
Changing Birmingham	✓ UK city		✓ Urban change	✓ Economic links	✓ Human shaping city	✓ Future planning
Jamaica	✓ Caribbean	✓ Climate, biomes	✓ Tourism	✓ Global tourism	✓ Environmental impact	✓ Sustainable tourism
Local area enquiry	✓ Local place	✓ Local processes	✓ Local use	✓ Local connections	✓ Fieldwork interaction	✓ Local decision-making

Progression of themes

Place

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Locate UK, continents, oceans	Study regions (UK, Europe) through case studies	Study complex global regions (Amazon, Ethiopia, Jamaica)
Describe simple features (home, town, environment)	Compare places (e.g. cities, rivers, regions)	Explain how place is shaped by physical + human factors
Recognise similarities and differences	Link place to processes (settlement, climate)	Evaluate how places change over time

Space (location & patterns)

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Use maps, globes, compass directions	Identify patterns (settlement, climate, population)	Analyse patterns (migration, urbanisation, resources)
Recognise simple distributions (hot/cold areas)	Describe where things are and begin to explain why	Explain why patterns exist and how they change
Use simple mapping	Use maps more analytically	Use maps/data to interpret and evaluate patterns

Physical Processes

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Weather and seasons	Rivers, mountains, volcanoes, coasts	Climate systems, oceans, ecosystems, tectonics
Identify physical features	Explain processes and their effects	Understand interconnected Earth systems
Recognise impact on daily life	Link processes (e.g. weather + mountains)	Evaluate long-term environmental change

Human Processes

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Homes, jobs, settlements	Farming, tourism, population, settlements	Migration, urbanisation, trade, economic systems
Recognise how people use places	Describe how humans organise places	Explain causes and consequences of human activity
Simple understanding of services	Compare human activity across places	Evaluate impact and inequalities

Human–Environment Interaction

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Environment affects how people live	People and environment affect each other (e.g. rivers, coasts)	Complex interactions (climate change, deforestation)
Homes and lifestyles linked to environment	Understand mutual impact (people ↔ environment)	Evaluate consequences of human actions
Weather affects daily life	Explore how humans adapt environments	Consider solutions and responses

Interdependence (connections)

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Simple connections between places	Trade, tourism, food systems	Global systems (trade, migration, climate)
Recognise that places are linked	Understand how places depend on each other	Explain global interdependence
Early idea of movement (people, goods)	Explore connections between regions	Evaluate global responsibility and impact

Sustainability

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Care for environment	Resource use (farming, tourism)	Climate change, energy, global sustainability
Recognise environments should be protected	Begin to understand impact of choices	Evaluate sustainable vs unsustainable actions
Simple awareness of environment	Explore human impact on environment	Consider future implications and solutions

Change over time

KS1	Lower KS2 (Y3–4)	Upper KS2 (Y5–6)
Seasonal and daily change	Landscape change (rivers, coasts)	Long-term change (climate, cities)
Recognise differences between places	Population and land use change	Urban and environmental change over time
Simple idea of change	Simple idea of change	Simple idea of change

KS1 Theme Coverage

Unit 1: Where in the world are we?

✓ Locational knowledge (NC requirement: continents, oceans, UK countries/capitals)
✓ Place (UK, world, continents, oceans)
✓ Space (global location, spatial awareness)
✓ Global identity (understanding our place in the world)
✓ Similarity & difference (countries and continents)
✓ Interpretation (using maps and globes)
✓ Evidence (maps, atlases, globes)

Unit 2: What are the weather and seasons like here and around the world?

✓ Identify seasonal and daily weather patterns (NC requirement)
✓ Physical processes (weather, seasons, climate zones)
✓ Place (hot/cold regions, Equator, Poles)
✓ Human–environment interaction (weather affecting daily life)
✓ Change (seasonal cycles)
✓ Cause & consequence (why weather changes)
✓ Similarity & difference (comparing climates)

Unit 3: What is a map and how do we use it?

✓ Use simple maps, symbols and compass directions (NC requirement)
✓ Space (location, direction, representation)
✓ Place (mapping familiar environments)
✓ Navigation (understanding position and direction)
✓ Interpretation (maps, aerial photographs)
✓ Evidence (symbols, keys, representations)

Unit 4: What do homes and life look like around the world?

✓ Study human and physical geography of contrasting places (NC requirement)
✓ Place (global locations and environments)
✓ Human processes (homes, settlements, ways of life)
✓ Human–environment interaction (homes shaped by environment)
✓ Diversity (different ways of living)
✓ Similarity & difference (comparing homes and lifestyles)
✓ Interpretation (images, stories, sources)

Unit 5: How is where we live different to other places in the world?

✓ Study a small area of the UK and a contrasting non-European locality (NC requirement)
✓ Place (local area vs global comparison)
✓ Human processes (settlements, land use, services)
✓ Space (patterns of settlement)
✓ Similarity & difference (local vs global places)
✓ Evidence (maps, observations, photographs)
✓ Interpretation (comparing places)

Unit 6: What are the physical features of our landscapes?

✓ Identify key physical features (NC requirement: coast, river, hill, forest, etc.)
✓ Physical processes (natural features and landscapes)
✓ Place (local and global landscapes)
✓ Human–environment interaction (how landscapes affect use)
✓ Natural world (rivers, coasts, vegetation)
✓ Cause & consequence (how features are formed – simple level)
✓ Evidence (observations, images, texts)

Unit	Substantive Content (Your Themes)	Main Disciplinary Focus	Enquiry Question / Synoptic Outcome
Where in the world are we?	Place (UK, continents, oceans); Space (global location, spatial awareness); Global identity (our place in the world)	Interpretation (maps, globes); Evidence (atlases, maps); Similarity & difference (countries, continents)	Where in the world are we? Pupils locate the UK and continents and describe their position in the world. Outcome: labelled world map or globe explanation
What are the weather and seasons like here and around the world?	Physical processes (weather, seasons, climate); Place (hot/cold regions, Equator, Poles); Human–environment interaction (weather affecting life); Change (seasonal cycles)	Cause & consequence (why weather changes); Similarity & difference (comparing climates); Evidence (observations, data)	What are the weather and seasons like? Pupils describe seasonal patterns and compare climates. Outcome: seasonal diary, weather report or comparison chart
What is a map and how do we use it?	Space (location, direction, representation); Place (local area mapping); Navigation (position and direction)	Interpretation (maps, aerial photographs); Evidence (symbols, keys); Spatial reasoning (direction, position)	What is a map and how do we use it? Pupils use and create simple maps with symbols and directions. Outcome: map of classroom/school with key and compass directions
What do homes and life look like around the world?	Place (global locations); Human processes (homes, settlements); Human–environment interaction (homes shaped by environment); Diversity (different ways of living)	Similarity & difference (homes and lifestyles); Interpretation (images, texts); Evidence (sources about places)	What do homes and life look like around the world? Pupils compare homes and explain how environments shape them. Outcome: comparison poster or presentation
How is where we live different to other places in the world?	Place (local vs non-European locality); Human processes (settlements, land use); Space (settlement patterns); Interdependence (connections between places)	Similarity & difference (local vs global); Evidence (maps, observations); Interpretation (comparing places)	How is where we live different to other places? Pupils compare their locality with another place. Outcome: comparison report, poster or oral explanation
What are the physical features of our landscapes?	Physical processes (landforms: rivers, coasts, hills, forests); Place (local and global landscapes); Human–environment interaction (how landscapes affect use); Natural world (features and systems)	Cause & consequence (how features form – simple level); Evidence (images, observations); Interpretation (describing landscapes)	What are the physical features of our landscapes? Pupils identify and describe key physical features. Outcome: labelled diagram, fieldwork sketch or fact file