Effective teaching in Geography

Effective teaching in geography occurs when …

- Teachers act as geography ‘curriculum makers’ who create lessons relevant to the needs of their children, school and local community;
- There is a focus on developing pupil’s core knowledge of geography and children are encouraged to understand, use and develop geographical vocabulary;
- Teachers’ planning identifies key geographical concepts, such as place, space, human and physical processes, connectedness, diversity, environmental interaction and interdependence;
- Teachers maximise opportunities for fieldwork to enhance geographical learning;
- Geography may be taught in a cross curricular way with discrete subject content identified;
- The sequence of lessons and activities are well planned, and teachers use a good range of resources to ensure progressive learning and acquisition of skills in geography;
- Lessons are engaging and motivating for pupils, including the imaginative use of ICT;
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ learning and, in their planning, ensure that pupils of all abilities, strengths and needs are given appropriate support and challenge;
- Teachers have good geographical knowledge, are enthusiastic, explain things clearly and anticipate pupils’ misconceptions;
- Children are enthusiastic, engaged and eager to share their views about the world.
- Knowledge and understanding of local, national, European and global places is developed through a range of strategies, including frequent and appropriate use of atlases, maps and visual representations of the globe;
- Teachers encourage opportunities for discussion that allow pupils to reflect upon and add depth to their understanding;
- Children learn geographical skills within meaningful contexts and are given opportunities to use these skills in the ‘real world’ via fieldwork experiences in the school buildings, the grounds, the immediate locality and wider afield;
- Children are enabled to recognise their contribution to and responsibilities for their locality, their country and global community;
- Teachers seek support and to build networks e.g. Geographical Association’s Geography Champions in order to identify and share good practice, ideas and expertise.

Effective teaching in Geography is not…

- Solely about learning a list of facts and information about places and physical features; it is about the promotion of enquiry and conceptual knowledge and understanding;
- About dipping into schemes of work so children do not build on previous understanding. Effective geography units are taught as part of well-planned units of work;
- About teaching skills, such as map work in isolation as a unit of work. Geographical skills should be taught progressively within a relevant context;
- About focusing on cultural or exotic aspects of place as this could reinforce stereotyping and present a single story. Effective geography develops children’s knowledge and understanding of local, national, European and global places through the use of a range of strategies and a variety of resources e.g. photographs, maps, globes, artefacts and ICT;
- About repeating the same familiar units of work; it is about responding to the children’s needs and interests as well as offering perspectives on events that happen in the wider world;
- About teaching published schemes of work without adapting them to the local needs of the children, school and community;
- About completing unnecessary worksheets or colouring in. Effective geography is practical, experiential and immerses children in their world.

These statements are based on advice within OFSTED (2011) Learning to make a world of difference report in which there are many case studies of effective practice.