Geography Curriculum

Bowerham Primary and Nursery School and Baby Unit

Intent

At Bowerham Primary and Nursery School and Baby Unit, geography plays a central role in helping our children understand the world they live in, beginning with their immediate surroundings and extending far beyond Lancaster. We want our pupils to develop a strong sense of place — knowing where they are in the world, how their local area has been shaped, and how it connects to national and global systems. From their earliest experiences in Nursery and the Baby Unit, children are encouraged to explore, observe and talk about their environment. As they move through school, this early curiosity develops into secure knowledge of physical processes, human activity and global interdependence.

Our geography curriculum is carefully sequenced so that knowledge builds progressively from EYFS to Year 6. Core ideas such as the water cycle, climate, settlement and human–environment interaction are revisited and deepened over time. Lancaster and Morecambe Bay are threaded throughout the curriculum, ensuring that pupils repeatedly return to their local context while expanding their understanding to include Europe, North and South America and global environmental systems. By the end of Year 6, pupils should not only know key geographical content, but also be able to interpret maps confidently, analyse patterns, evaluate evidence and consider sustainable futures.

Implementation

Geography at Bowerham is taught through structured, knowledge-rich units that build logically year on year. In the Early Years and Nursery, children explore their immediate environment, learn positional language and begin to notice seasonal change and differences between places.

In Key Stage 1, pupils develop secure knowledge of the United Kingdom, continents and oceans, alongside early fieldwork experiences in the local area. They compare Lancaster with a contrasting non-European location and begin to understand climate and the water cycle.

In Key Stage 2, the curriculum deepens and becomes increasingly analytical. Lower Key Stage 2 focuses on regional geography, rivers and physical processes, including study of the North West and Italy. Pupils develop confidence using 8-point compass directions, grid references and Ordnance Survey maps. They explore land-use change in Lancaster and coastal processes at Morecambe Bay, linking physical geography to economic activity. In Upper Key Stage 2, learning expands to global systems, including climate zones, biomes, the Alps and the Americas. Year 6 brings together this knowledge through study of development, trade, climate change and an independent geographical enquiry rooted in the local area. GIS and digital mapping are used progressively, and retrieval practice is embedded to strengthen long-term understanding.

Impact

By the time pupils leave Bowerham in Year 6, they demonstrate secure geographical knowledge and the ability to apply it thoughtfully. They can explain key processes such as river formation, mountain building and climate variation, and understand how these influence settlement, trade and development. They recognise how climate change may affect coastal areas such as Morecambe Bay and can discuss possible responses using geographical reasoning.

Pupils also leave with strong disciplinary skills. They confidently use 6-figure grid references, interpret a range of maps and data sources, and present findings clearly. Through increasingly independent fieldwork, they learn to collect, analyse and evaluate information in a structured way. Most importantly, our pupils understand how Bowerham, Lancaster and Morecambe Bay sit within wider national and global contexts. They are prepared for secondary geography with both the knowledge and the confidence to engage critically with environmental and sustainability issues, and with a strong awareness of their role as informed global citizens.

🌱 Geography in the Early Years – Overview

In EYFS at Bowerham, geography is delivered through the *Understanding the World* area of learning. It is not taught as a discrete subject but is embedded in daily exploration, talk, outdoor learning and play-based enquiry. Our aim is to build strong geographical foundations: awareness of place, early mapping, environmental observation and language development. Geography in EYFS focuses on helping children:

- Develop a secure sense of place
- Notice similarities and differences between environments
- Understand seasonal and weather changes
- Explore their local environment
- Begin to understand that the world is larger than their immediate surroundings

This forms the foundation for all later geographical learning.

🍼 Baby Unit & Nursery Provision

In the Baby Unit and Nursery, geography begins through sensory exploration and secure attachment to place. Children experience:

- Outdoor exploration of natural materials
- Noticing weather changes (rain, wind, sunshine)
- Exploring different surfaces (grass, pavement, sand)
- Talking about journeys to school
- Using simple positional language (in, under, next to)

Adults model language such as:

- "It's windy today."
- "The ground is wet."
- "We walked up the hill."
- "The trees are moving."

This early talk develops environmental awareness and spatial vocabulary.

🌳 Reception – Detailed Coverage

In Reception, geographical learning becomes more explicit and structured, while remaining play-based and enquiry-led.

Sense of Place – My School & Local Area	Children learn: • The name of their school (Bowerham Primary and Nursery School and Baby Unit) • That they live in Lancaster • That Lancaster is a town/city • That there are different parts of the school (classroom, playground, field, forest area) Children explore: • The school grounds • Local walks around Bowerham • Nearby green spaces • Seasonal changes in the local environment Activities include: • Drawing simple maps of the classroom • Creating model maps with blocks • Following simple routes Talking about landmarks (gates, trees, buildings) **Progression link to Year 1:** Understanding that places can be mapped and described.
Seasonal Change & Weather	Children observe and describe: • Daily weather (sunny, rainy, windy, cold) • Seasonal changes across the year • How trees, plants and clothing change with seasons Children record weather through: • Weather charts • Daily weather helper role • Drawing seasonal pictures • Comparing autumn leaves to spring growth Vocabulary developed: • Season

	• Weather • Autumn, winter, spring, summer • Hot, cold • Rain, wind, frost **Progression link to Year 1:** Understanding UK seasonal patterns.
Similarities & Differences Between Places	Children begin to understand that: • Some places are hot • Some places are cold • Some places have beaches • Some places have snow This may be explored through: • Storybooks set in different countries • Images of deserts, jungles and polar regions • Discussions about family heritage • Comparing Lancaster to other places Children begin using simple comparative language: • "This place is hotter." • "This place has more sand." • "It is different because…" **Progression link to Year 2:** Formal comparison between Lancaster and Nairobi.
Early Mapping & Spatial Awareness	Children develop: • Positional language (next to, behind, in front of) • Route-following skills • Understanding of symbols in simple maps • Awareness that maps represent real places Activities include: • Treasure hunts using simple picture maps • Drawing playground maps • Building block towns and mapping them • Using Bee-Bots for directional movement This builds early spatial reasoning. **Progression link to Year 1 & 3:** Compass directions and grid references.
Human & Physical Features (Early Recognition)	Children begin identifying: • Natural features (trees, grass, hills) • Built features (houses, shops, roads) • Differences between natural and built environments This is not formally labelled as "human and physical geography" yet, but foundations are laid through talk and exploration. **Progression link to Year 1 physical & human features.**

🧠 **Disciplinary Thinking in EYFS**	🗺️ **Skills Progression in EYFS**	📍 **Lancaster & Morecambe Bay in EYFS**	🌟 **End of EYFS Geographical Outcomes**
Although not formalised, children begin to: • Observe carefully • Ask questions about their environment • Compare places • Describe change over time (seasons) • Represent places through drawing and model-making These are the earliest forms of geographical enquiry.	By the end of Reception, children typically: • Use simple positional language accurately • Draw simple maps with recognisable features • Describe seasonal changes • Recognise differences between environments • Talk about their local area with confidence • Show curiosity about other places They are ready to: • Name continents (Year 1) • Identify physical and human features • Use simple compass directions	Children develop early awareness of: • Living in Lancaster • Visiting the beach (Morecambe Bay) • Seeing boats or water • Seasonal coastal change This ensures strong local identity before formal study begins.	By the end of Reception at Bowerham, children: • Know they live in Lancaster • Recognise seasonal change • Use basic spatial language • Identify simple environmental features • Understand that different places exist beyond their own • Show curiosity about the wider world They enter Year 1 ready to build secure locational knowledge and formal geographical vocabulary.

	• Begin structured geographical vocabulary		

Unit progression Y1-Y6 linked to National Curriculum			
	Unit 1	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**
Y1	**Our School and Local Area** **Enquiry:** *What is special about our school and local area?* • **Substantive:** local environment, human/physical features • **Disciplinary:** describe, identify • **Skills:** ○ simple maps ○ fieldwork observation ○ basic symbols	**The United Kingdom** **Enquiry:** *Where is Lancaster and where is it in the United Kingdom?* • **Substantive:** UK countries, capitals, seas • **Disciplinary:** locate, name • **Skills:** ○ atlases/globes ○ simple locational language	**Continents, oceans, and hot and cold places** **Enquiry:** *Where in the world is hot and where is cold?* • **Substantive:** seasons, daily weather patterns • **Disciplinary:** observe change over time • **Skills:** ○ record data (charts) ○ simple comparisons
Y2	**Continents and Oceans** **Enquiry:** *Where are places in the world?* • **Substantive:** continents, oceans • **Disciplinary:** locate, identify patterns • **Skills:** ○ world maps ○ atlases	**Rivers (Local Study)** **Enquiry:** *What is a river and why is it important?* • **Substantive:** river features, water cycle • **Disciplinary:** describe processes • **Skills:** ○ fieldwork ○ simple diagrams	**Lancaster vs Nairobi** **Enquiry:** *How is our place different from another?* • **Substantive:** climate, human/physical features • **Disciplinary:** compare, explain • **Skills:** ○ map comparison ○ data collection
Y3	**Lancashire and the Northwest** **Enquiry:** *Where is our region and how is it organised?* • **Substantive:** regions, settlements, land use • **Disciplinary:** identify patterns • **Skills:** ○ 8-point compass ○ 4-figure grid references	**Rivers** **Enquiry:** *How do rivers shape the land?* • **Substantive:** erosion, deposition, river course • **Disciplinary:** explain processes • **Skills:** ○ diagrams ○ map interpretation	**Italy** **Enquiry:** *How is a European country similar or different?* • **Substantive:** Italy (climate, features, settlements) • **Disciplinary:** compare, explain • **Skills:** ○ grid references ○ European mapping
Y4	**Volcanoes and Earthquakes (Italy)** **Enquiry:** *Why do natural hazards happen in some places?* • **Substantive:** tectonic plates, volcanoes, earthquakes • **Disciplinary:** cause and effect • **Skills:** ○ diagram interpretation ○ physical process modelling	**Land Use in Lancaster** **Enquiry:** *How has land use changed over time?* • **Substantive:** land use types, urban change • **Disciplinary:** analyse change • **Skills:** ○ fieldwork surveys ○ data presentation	**Morecambe Bay (Coasts)** **Enquiry:** *How does the coast shape life and trade?* • **Substantive:** erosion, deposition, estuaries • **Disciplinary:** explain interactions • **Skills:** ○ coastal fieldwork ○ mapping patterns
Y5	**Biomes and Climate Zones** **Enquiry:** *Why are different parts of the world different?* • **Substantive:** climate zones, biomes • **Disciplinary:** explain global patterns • **Skills:** ○ latitude/longitude ○ climate graphs	**Alps and the River Rhine** **Enquiry:** *How do mountains shape rivers and human activity?* • **Substantive:** mountains, rivers, climate influence • **Disciplinary:** link physical and human geography • **Skills:** ○ map analysis ○ process explanation	**North & South America** **Enquiry:** *How does location shape patterns across continents?* • **Substantive:** climate, population, physical features • **Disciplinary:** analyse spatial patterns • **Skills:** ○ data interpretation ○ thematic maps
Y6	**The Americas – Development and Trade** **Enquiry:** *How does geography shape development?* • **Substantive:** development, trade, resources • **Disciplinary:** evaluate, justify • **Skills:** ○ data analysis ○ economic mapping	**Climate Change and Coasts** **Enquiry:** *Is Morecambe Bay at risk?* • **Substantive:** climate change, sea level rise, erosion • **Disciplinary:** evaluate solutions • **Skills:** ○ modelling ○ decision-making	**Independent Enquiry (Sustainability)** **Enquiry:** *How sustainable is our local area?* **Substantive:** sustainability, urban planning **Disciplinary:** full enquiry cycle • **Skills:** ○ independent fieldwork ○ GIS ○ report writing

Substantive knowledge progression				
	Unit 1	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**	**What this builds:**
EYFS	**Core Knowledge** • Familiar places (home, school) • Immediate environment • Basic weather and seasonal change			👉 Awareness of **place and environment**
Y1	**Local Area** • Features of school and local area • Human vs physical features (basic)	**United Kingdom** • UK = 4 countries • Capital cities • Surrounding seas	**Weather and Seasons** • 7 continents • 5 oceans • Daily weather patterns • Seasonal change	👉 Knowledge of **local → national geography** 👉 Introduction to **human and physical geography**
Y2	**Continents and Oceans** • UK's countries • UK's surrounding seas • UK's landscapes	**Rivers** • River features (source, mouth, channel) • Basic water cycle • Rivers in local area	**Lancaster vs Nairobi** • Differences in climate • Human and physical features • Life in different places	👉 Knowledge expands to **global scale** 👉 Understanding of **simple processes (rivers, weather)** 👉 Beginning **place comparison**
Y3	**Lancashire and North West** • UK regions • Settlements and land use • Physical features (rivers, hills)	**Rivers** • River processes: erosion, transportation, deposition • River course (upper, middle, lower)	**Italy** • European country study • Physical features (mountains, rivers) • Climate and settlement	👉 Deeper **physical geography processes** 👉 Understanding of **regions and landscapes** 👉 European knowledge
Y4	**Volcanoes and Earthquakes** • Structure of the Earth • Tectonic plates • Volcanoes and earthquakes	**Land Use (Lancaster)** • Types of land use • Urban change over time • Settlement patterns	**Coasts (Morecambe Bay)** • Coastal processes (erosion, deposition) • Estuaries and tides • Coastal landforms	👉 Strong **cause-and-effect understanding** 👉 Links between **physical and human geography** 👉 Knowledge of **change over time**
Y5	**Biomes and Climate Zones** • Climate zones (tropical, temperate, polar) • Biomes (rainforest, desert, tundra) • Latitude and global patterns	**Alps and River Rhine** • Mountain formation (fold mountains) • Climate effects of mountains • River systems and drainage	**North & South America** • Physical features (mountains, rivers, biomes) • Population distribution • Spatial patterns	👉 Understanding of **global systems** 👉 Links between **location, climate and ecosystems** 👉 Recognition of **large-scale patterns**
Y6	**Americas – Development and Trade** • Natural resources • Trade and global connections • Development indicators • Uneven development	**Climate Change and Coasts** • Climate change processes • Sea-level rise • Coastal risk and management	**Sustainability Enquiry** • Sustainability (environmental, social, economic) • Urban planning • Local environmental issues	👉 Understanding of **complex global systems** 👉 Knowledge of **human-environment interaction** 👉 Ability to evaluate **real-world issues**

Disciplinary concept and geographical skills progression		
	Disciplinary concepts	**Lancashire skills**
EYFS	**How pupils think like geographers** • Observe and explore their environment • Talk about what they can see • Notice similarities and differences • Ask simple questions about places **In simple terms:** 👉 *"What can I see?"*	**Core Skills** • Observe immediate environment • Talk about places and features • Use simple positional language (near, far, next to) • Draw simple maps or pictures of places 👉 Foundation: **awareness and exploration**
Y1	**Describing Place** • Describe what a place is like • Identify simple features (human/physical) • Begin to ask questions about places • Use simple comparisons (same/different) **Example thinking:** 👉 *"What is this place like?"*	**Focus: Basic Map Skills & Observation** **Mapping Skills** • Use simple maps (classroom, school) • Use simple symbols • Begin to use keys **Fieldwork Skills** • Observe and record features • Use simple tally charts **Locational Skills** • Use basic directional language (left/right, near/far) 👉 Progression: **recognising and representing place**
Y2	**Comparing Places** • Compare two places (local vs global) • Identify similarities and differences • Begin to explain simple reasons ("because...") • Use evidence from images and maps **Example thinking:** 👉 *"How is this place different and why?"*	**Focus: Using Maps and Beginning Data Skills** **Mapping Skills** • Use atlases and globes • Locate continents and oceans • Use simple grid references (informal) **Fieldwork Skills** • Collect data (tallies, charts) • Use simple surveys **Locational Skills** • Use compass directions (N, S, E, W) 👉 Progression: **locating and comparing places**
Y3	**Explaining Processes and Patterns** • Explain simple physical processes (e.g. rivers) • Identify patterns in maps and landscapes • Use evidence to support explanations • Begin to link cause and effect **Example thinking:** 👉 *"How does this work?"*	**Focus: Developing Map Accuracy & Fieldwork** **Mapping Skills** • Use **4-figure grid references** • Use **8-point compass directions** • Interpret maps and aerial images **Fieldwork Skills** • Collect and record data systematically • Use sketch maps **Data Skills** • Present data in simple graphs 👉 Progression: **accurate mapping and structured observation**
Y4	**Explaining Relationships** • Explain how physical and human geography interact • Analyse how places change over time • Use multiple sources of evidence (maps, photos, data) • Begin to interpret patterns and relationships **Example thinking:** 👉 *"Why does this happen here?"*	**Focus: Data Analysis & Fieldwork Application** **Mapping Skills** • Use maps at different scales • Interpret thematic maps (land use, population) • Begin using **digital maps (GIS introduction)** **Fieldwork Skills** • Conduct surveys (land use, environmental quality) • Record data accurately • Use field sketches and annotations **Data Skills** • Analyse and interpret data • Present findings clearly 👉 Progression: **applying skills in real-world contexts**
Y5	**Analysing Spatial Patterns and Systems** • Analyse global patterns (climate, population, biomes)	**Focus: Global Mapping & Data Interpretation** **Mapping Skills** • Use **latitude and longitude** • Interpret climate and biome maps

	• Explain relationships between location, climate and human activity • Interpret data (graphs, maps, statistics) • Understand interconnected systems (e.g., climate, rivers, trade) **Example thinking:** 👉 *"How are these patterns connected?"*	• Analyse global patterns **Fieldwork Skills** • Select appropriate data collection methods • Use comparative fieldwork **Data Skills** • Interpret graphs (climate graphs, population data) • Identify patterns and relationships 👉 Progression: **analysing global patterns and systems**
Y6	**Evaluating and Decision-Making** • Evaluate geographical evidence from multiple sources • Make reasoned judgements about real-world issues • Weigh up different viewpoints (environmental, economic, social) • Construct and justify geographical arguments • Conduct independent geographical enquiry **Example thinking:** 👉 *"What should we do and why?"*	**Focus: Independent Enquiry & Evaluation** **Mapping Skills** • Use GIS confidently • Create detailed annotated maps • Combine multiple map sources **Fieldwork Skills** • Design and conduct independent enquiries • Select and justify methods • Evaluate reliability of data **Data Skills** • Analyse complex datasets • Present data in multiple formats • Draw conclusions and justify them 👉 Progression: **independent geographical enquiry and evaluation**