Responding to pupil’s needs when teaching Geography

***The importance of geography to pupils with learning difficulties***

Learning geography helps pupils develop curiosity in, and an understanding of, themselves, other people and places, and the relationships between them. In particular, studying geography offers pupils with learning difficulties opportunities to:

• become aware of, and understand, their personal position in space

• become aware of, and interested in, themselves and their immediate surroundings

• explore local and then wider environments

• develop an interest in, and knowledge of, places and people beyond their immediate experience

• experience aspects of other countries and cultures, especially where there are comparisons with their own.

In response to these opportunities, pupils can make progress in geography by:

• increasing the breadth and depth of their experience and knowledge

• studying smaller (local scale) to larger areas (regional and national scales)

• extending studying from the familiar to the less familiar, for example, from their own locality to places which are further away

• gaining understanding, for example, from understanding abstract as well as concrete concepts.

***Geographical enquiry***

Geographical enquiry is the process by which pupils find out in geography.

The development of geographical enquiry and skills begins when pupils explore, through the senses, their own physical surroundings. In this way they become aware of the world around them and begin to understand where and how people and places connect with each other. The range and distance of places studied can be extended gradually to include a greater variety of environments

Learning about geographical enquiry across the key stages can help pupils to:

• respond to, answer and ask, questions about the world around them (at first it may be necessary for staff to give pupils examples of questions and ways of answering them)

• collect, explore and sort different objects and artefacts, for example, shells, pebbles, leaves, and use them as evidence

• use symbols, artwork, modelling, drawing and writing to record

• respond in different ways to people, places and environments by expressing their own views about their surroundings

• respond to, use and understand the words and language of geography

• respond to and use a range of resources for exploration and information, for example, photographs, pictures, CD-ROMs, videos, artefacts, stories

• make and use three-dimensional models as well as maps and plans.

***Knowledge and understanding of places***

The development of knowledge and understanding of places begins when pupils explore, through the senses, their own personal surroundings. By experiencing and reflecting on their own personal surroundings, pupils begin to develop a sense of place, that is, their relationship to the world around them. Pupils’ understanding of space and place can be enhanced when experiences are extended from the classroom, the school building and its grounds, to include the local area and then to places further away in the United Kingdom or abroad. Using geographical questions as part of enquiry can help pupils develop an understanding of different aspects of geography. To develop knowledge and understanding of places two questions might be: ‘What is (this place) like?’ ‘How is it similar to, or different from (another place)?’

Developing knowledge and understanding of places across the key stages can help pupils to:

• explore, recognise and communicate information and views about places and people

• get to know a number of different places, at home and at school

• recognise links between places, activities, functions and people

• experience a range of contrasting localities and environments, for example, by gaining experience of different clothes, music, food and language

***Knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes***

A first step to understanding patterns in geography is for pupils to recognise that patterns exist in the physical and human world, such as a row of coat hooks in the classroom, and considering why the pattern is as it is, for example, ‘Why are the coat hooks in a row by the door?’ The development of knowledge and understanding of patterns begins by pupils exploring where things are located in their own immediate environment and using directional terms, for example, in front or behind. An understanding of processes in geography might begin when pupils experience change and recognise that a change has taken place, for example, when pupils move from one room to another in the school, or when they note seasonal changes in the school grounds. Questions that may help to develop knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes are: ‘Why is (this place) like it is?’ ‘How is (this place) changing?’

Developing knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes across the key stages can help pupils to:

• explore physical or human features in their immediate and local environment and recognise the patterns that these features make, for example, the road markings outside the school, the pattern of roads on the housing estate

• become aware of, recognise and communicate their understanding of changes in the physical or human environment, for example, that the wind in autumn makes leaves collect in a certain place, the roads are busier in the morning when people are going to work.

***Knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development***

Knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development is concerned with the changing characteristics of physical and human environments and the resultant impact on the quality of places and their environments. It also involves an understanding of how environments can be harmed or improved. This knowledge and understanding begins when pupils become aware of change in their own environment, for example, changes over a period of time in the classroom, school grounds, and the seasons. It progresses to learning about how people affect the environment, for example, how they damage it, and how the environment can be improved or managed now, and in the future. Questions which may help to develop knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development are: ‘What do I, and other people, think about (this place)?’ ‘What do I like about it?’ ‘What do I dislike about it?’ ‘What could I do to make (this place) better?’

Developing knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development across the key stages can help pupils to:

• experience, be aware of, recognise and communicate their understanding of, and feelings about, changes in their environment, for example, levels of noise, classroom displays

• contribute to improving and sustaining the quality of the environment.