

## Whole school curriculum principles

1. The core, foundation knowledge in each discipline				
2. Opportunities for reading and development of Tier 2/3 vocabulary, writing styles and text types				
3 The numerical concepts used within each discipline.	4 The practical and cognitive skills inherent to each discipline.	5 The key timelines, theories and figures within each discipline	6 Exposure to and consideration of diverse perspectives	7 Knowledge of how each discipline has impact on the modern and future world.

8. learning to be responsible for ourselves and our future	9. learning to be responsible for our community	10. Learning to consider our global and environmental responsibilities
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## Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)

Key Stage 3 has been designed so that all of our units offer challenge, pace, relevance and celebration of the world we live in. We have ensured that all of the topics are linked to the student's world in some way, so that they can relate and explain WHY they are learning about these things. We are also keen to select issues that are relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and move beyond the traditional topic titles, hence the 'China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' unit and the 'Biome Destruction' unit that challenge media-fuelled stereotypes of plastic being the biggest environmental issue. Each year students will study human, physical and themed geography units.

The units are designed in pairs or triads. Each Year 7 unit has a paired one in Year 8, then in Year 9. The teacher planning the Year 7 unit will see it develop by also planning the Year 8 unit at the same time. This ensures that the skills (for example cartographic skills, data manipulation and graph creation) developed in the earlier unit are furthered and developed in the later unit. The units were also ordered to reflect a more challenging content from the new style of topics. The end goal is for Year 9 students to be showing more independence and investigative skills as they develop from students into Geographers.

This curriculum is exceptionally challenging. The issues that students will have to analyse are highly complex and will require students to think a lot more about how the world functions and its balances and patterns. We have also decided to broach some complex issues such as climate change, glaciation and world divisions; these will stretch all students to think more deeply from various perspectives. The course will be heavily scaffolded in lessons so that all students can access material and enjoy it via the use of writing frames, sentence starters (as part of a regular teacher's toolkit). Units are also planned so that they follow a pattern of 'physical – human – thematic issues', which fosters better engagement in the subject. There are a series of themes that are essential for learning Geography. These will feature in lessons as a series of characters (for example Mitigation Molly, Causal Chris) – these are logged in books each time they are seen and teachers will often chair a discussion around these so that students can see the inter-relations between topics; this prevents topics being studied in isolation from one another and really ties together the Geography of their learning.

We have designed the Key Stage 3 curriculum in line with the National Curriculum, which is itself designed by experts to reflect the increased challenge at Key Stage 3. All topics and skills that the National Curriculum promotes are in our Key Stage 3 programme of study and as such the challenge is here – there is little deviation from the National Curriculum, just our own interpretation of it, such as in the topic 'and I think to myself what a wonderful world', where many themes of the National Curriculum are explored in one unit.

# Geography

## Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11)

The GCSE specification was selected after an exceptionally lengthy staff consultation. The team began by brainstorming what we wanted from the specification and selected the syllabus that was the most engaging, relevant, contemporary and challenging. The specifications were all very similar in terms of content and topics; the reason we selected OCR B was because the specification was phrased in a series of detailed enquiry questions. These enquiry questions are a really appropriate way to engage students and help the teacher to demonstrate the relevance of the topic under study. Unit 3 (a decision-making exam) allows students to analyse, interpret and create solutions to real world issues, proving that they can think synoptically to understand and investigate geographically – this provides the higher-level thinking skills that we sought.

The course requires students to indulge in two days' worth of fieldwork, which offers the option for them to follow a true enquiry project. The fieldwork is then applied to exam questions with a different focus, so that students are not simply explaining their own fieldwork. The topics in the OCR specification are varied, relevant and all focus on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The provision of UK to foreign case studies was balanced and students are investigating modern aspects of the UK's economy, foreign policy and entertainment provision (as established at Key Stage 3). Unit 7 is particularly relevant to their role as UK citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The specification provides many opportunities for extended reading and there are several gripping extension documentaries with pertinent links to help extend a student's knowledge. The interest and sequencing of the course at Key Stage 4 enables those who historically have struggled with momentum manage to the end of the course with a retained interest in the subject.

The GCSE course offers 2 compulsory field trips to two varying destinations – a human environment and a physical environment. We use the River Holford so that students can study the source to mouth of the river in a full day. The city of Bristol is a safe and interesting location to study urban issues that enlighten students as to what is on their doorstep. Both field trips are designed to fully embrace the enquiry approach to investigations and students can self-select a third topic for investigation and then develop resources prior to the trip to pursue on the day. This is a better route to geographical enquiry and also allows a higher level of thought.

The Geography department has a 'develop your skills' section on Firefly, in which all staff feed in extra information to allow students to develop their Geography. The library now contains a developing selection of extra reading materials that are the perfect inspiration for those wishing to read around the subject and extend their knowledge and understanding of geographical issues.

Extension tasks are strongly embedded into all lessons and Schemes of Learning – during holiday breaks, students are encouraged to develop their understanding of the world around them by watching select topical TV programmes, such as Race across the World.

## Key Stage 5 (Years 12-13)

OCR was selected as our preferred A-Level syllabus as it provides continuity from the GCSE course and also consistency in approach. All specifications were analysed and this one was selected for having the most challenge and relevance to the lives of the students in Portishead. We were impressed by some of the topics on offer, as there were a mix of 'old favourites' such as coasts and tectonics, but also newer ones too, such as human rights and global migration. The students also have to think as Geographers to succeed in this specification. This has provided staff with the chance to train students to think as well as learn. We have afforded a lot of time to looking at issues that move beyond the course content to help hone interpretation and analytical skills. The OCR examination board is keen that the specification trains Geographers for the future and we could not agree more that it does this (instead of teaching students bits about the world). Some lessons start by analysing data sets and questioning the data and presentation methods. Whilst some of these are topic linked, many are not, so that we can spark student's knowledge of wider world issues, such as Brexit, Deaths on Everest, UFO sightings in the USA and Indian religious ceremonies at Ghats.

Students also have a lot of flexibility in this course; there is the chance to pursue a self-selected and designed NEA project that is completed from start to finish by the students, which provides both challenge and pride.

At the start of the course, students are issued a yellow booklet that acts as a course handbook. It contains all the further reading that they will need to complete during the course. They are asked to work their way through the booklet, logging their extra work as appropriate. There are regular assessments (four per topic) and each student is asked to plan for these using one of the Gordan revision techniques.

In recent years students have four compulsory one-day trips. In these, we analyse urban rebranding, carbon cycles, coastal processes and inequality in cities. There are occasional talks at the university that students and guest speakers visit the school to present to students too. We have several Sixth Form Geography ambassadors managed by a Geography teacher and students also support Geography students in the lower school in their 'Study Plus' lessons. Students are able to subscribe to the *Geography Review* magazine to develop up-to-date case study material on a variety of topics.

The Geography department also offers an extended 4-week expedition to an EDC/LIDC, in conjunction with the World Challenge organisation. Students run the expedition from start to finish, with minimal staff input. This is really the highest-level learning that a student can experience as mistake-making and coaching are at the heart of the package. Destinations have included Peru, India and Java/Bali in previous years.