

# Geography Fieldwork

## 1. What does it mean?

Fieldwork is any out-of-class activity, in the school ground or outside the school gates. It may take place in the local area or further afield, during a lesson, a day trip, or as part of a residential experience.

‘Fieldwork or out of classroom experiences offer you the opportunity, through a structured pathway, to help pupils to become observant, to develop the skills of recording, analysis and deduction and, it is hoped, to develop enquiring minds.’ Richardson, P. (2010), *Fieldwork and Outdoor Learning* [Chapter 10], in Scoffham, S. (ed.) *Primary Geography Handbook*, Geographical Association

Fieldwork is statutory and required as part of the new geography curriculum.

*The NC for geography aims to ensure that all pupils:*

- *Collect, analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through experiences of fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes.*

*In KS 1 pupils should begin to use geographical skills, including first-hand observation, to enhance their locational awareness and be taught to:*

- *Use simple fieldwork and observational skills to study the geography of their school and the key human and physical features of its surrounding environment.*

*In KS2 Pupils should be taught to:*

- *use fieldwork to observe, measure and record the human and physical features in the local area using a range of methods, including sketch maps, plans and graphs, and digital technologies.*

*In KS3 Pupils should be taught to:*

- *use fieldwork to collect, analyse and draw conclusions from geographical data, using multiple sources of increasingly complex information.*

Some excellent advice on the nature of fieldwork and the benefits it offers children can be found at:

<http://www.geography.org.uk/gtip/thinkpieces/fieldworkprimary/>

## 2. What does best practice in primary schools look like?

Ofsted (2011) comments on the value of geography fieldwork and provides examples of good practice at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/our-expert-knowledge/geography>.

The 2011 Ofsted Report ‘highlights how good and regular fieldwork motivated pupils and enhanced their learning in geography, although just over half the primary and secondary schools visited did not use it enough’. The report recommended that opportunities for fieldwork should be maximised to ‘enhance learning and improve motivation’. In addition Ofsted also commented that ‘when pupils showed that they had a good range of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills, this was frequently because of the opportunities they experienced to use their skills in real contexts, such as the school building, grounds and immediate locality. Pupils whose learning was outstanding were very familiar with their own locality and were able to make connections between their lives and those of people living in contrasting localities’. ‘Geographical skills were particularly well developed when the schools had a very comprehensive

fieldwork programme and when a variety of maps, aerial photographs and other geographical resources was used frequently.’

### 3. How do we develop effective practice?

Activities which constitute fieldwork are varied but should include enquiry and sensory activities which engage the children’s curiosity and enthusiasm.

Examples of primary fieldwork activities may be found:

- in Scoffham, S. (ed) 2010 *Primary Geography Handbook*, GA: see Chapter 10 by Paula Richardson on ‘Fieldwork and Outdoor Learning’. This is an excellent starting point to explore the possibilities that well planned fieldwork offers. The chapter suggests a number of activities and shows how fieldwork brings ‘a real and practical dimension to children’s geographical experience.’
- on the Geography Association website:  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/geographysubjectleaders/fieldwork/>  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers/resources/littlecommon>  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers/resources/bradleystoke>  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers/resources/southborough>  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers/resources/austrey>  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/younggeographers/resources/stpeters>
- on the Geographical Association’s Primary Geography Quality Mark website. This contains some excellent illustrations of how geography may be creatively developed in a primary school and how fieldwork can be a vital and engaging part of this.  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/primaryqualitymark/>
- in the journal *Primary Geography*:
  - Most editions of PG contain examples of fieldwork and outdoor learning;
  - The Spring 2006 edition has a specific focus on outdoor learning;
  - The Autumn 2014 edition will focus on fieldwork & outdoor learning.
- on the RGS website where there are examples of how to organise fieldwork safely.  
<http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Schools/Fieldwork+and+local+learning/Fieldwork+and+local+learning.htm>
- On the Learning Outside the Classroom site where there are practical and inspiring ideas for taking children outdoors and how this can change lives.  
<http://www.lotc.org.uk/>

Some ways in which you can develop fieldwork are given below.

- The school grounds allow children to explore their immediate environment e.g. constructing map trails around the school, locating the weather station, building small worlds and dens in the grounds. See Sharon Witt’s *A World of our Own* presentation at the GA conference 2012.  
<http://www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/annualconference/manchester2012/>

- Using journey sticks to record what children see on their travels. See: <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Teachers-TV-Journey-sticks-6048401/>
- Exploring the local area around the school. Children develop an understanding about what is there and why. See Chapter 13 in Scoffham, S. (ed.) (2010) *Primary Geography Handbook*, GA. and the GA superschemes indicated below. The children's favourite walk can be recorded in a number of innovative ways. See: <http://www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/myplaceyourplaceourplace/mywalksandmessymaps/>
- By undertaking visits to, for example, museums, farms, and contrasting localities/ environments children develop an awareness that not all places are the same and all have specific characteristics. See: Chapter 14 in Scoffham, S. (ed.) (2010) *Primary Geography Handbook*, GA.
- Forest School. This approach offers a wealth of experiences to instigate and enhance fieldwork and outdoor education – see the Esh Winning Forest School case study. <http://www.forestschools.com/>.  
Helen Martin offers a perspective on becoming a forest school in a series of articles in *Primary Geography*: Autumn 2009, Spring 2010, Summer 2010, Autumn 2010.
- The Field Studies Council offers tailor made courses in specific locations <http://www.field-studies-council.org/>
- Applying for the Primary Geography Quality Mark encourages effective planning of high quality geographical experiences throughout the school. See <http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/primaryqualitymark/>
- Local primary geography Champions can offer further specific advice <http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/champions/>
- Advice on risk assessment is readily available. The DfE site is a good place to start: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/assess-risk>.  
LA's and schools will also specify local regulations and offer guidance.  
Children should be encouraged to be part of the risk assessment process e.g. <http://www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/younggeographersgogreen/learningtotakerisks/#top>
- For ideas on using maps, photographs, diagrams and sketches. See Chapters 8 & 9 in Scoffham, S. (ed.) (2010) *Primary Geography Handbook*, GA. See also the Summer edition 2011 of *Primary Geography*. Animating maps can be achieved using e.g. [www.tripgeo.com](http://www.tripgeo.com)
- A highly effective fieldwork experience can be offered by engaging in an exchange with another school in a contrasting but nearby locality. Swapping classes would enable the children to explore first hand a different location with the added advantage of a base to work from.

#### 4. Which resources may be most helpful?

### **Web sites**

Geographical Association	<a href="http://www.geography.org.uk/">http://www.geography.org.uk/</a>
Royal Geographical Society	<a href="http://www.rgs.org/HomePage.htm">http://www.rgs.org/HomePage.htm</a>
Learning Outside the Classroom	<a href="http://www.lotc.org.uk/">http://www.lotc.org.uk/</a>
Field Studies Council	<a href="http://www.field-studies-council.org/">http://www.field-studies-council.org/</a>
Forest Schools	<a href="http://www.forestschoools.com/">http://www.forestschoools.com/</a>
Times Educational Supplement	<a href="http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resources/primary-42198/ks2-geography-42885/local-study-42963/fieldwork-42965/">http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resources/primary-42198/ks2-geography-42885/local-study-42963/fieldwork-42965/</a>
Health and Safety Executive	<a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm">http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm</a>
Risk assessment	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departamental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/assess-risk">http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departamental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/assess-risk</a>

### **Useful reading**

- Louv, R. (2005) *Last Child in the woods*. Algonquin Books
- May, S & Richardson, P. (2005) *Managing Safe and successful fieldwork*. GA
- May, S & Richardson, P. (2006) *Fieldwork File; For the Primary Years*. GA
- McClure, L. (2008) *Primary Project Box* Curriculum partnership (available through the GA)
- Ofsted (2011) *Geography: making a world of difference*. [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/geography](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/geography)
- Owens, P. (2007) 'Why fieldwork matters to every child', *Primary Geographer*, 63, pp 12-14
- Scoffham, S. (2010) *Primary Geography Handbook*. GA

Further reading can be found [here](#).

A number of the **Geographical Associations Super Schemes** specifically offer help with fieldwork studies, including:

- Unit 6: Investigating our local area: our street
- Unit 8: Improving the environment: access for all
- Unit 14: Investigating rivers
- Unit 19: Where we go, what we do
- Unit 21: Improving the view from our window
- Unit 26: Investigating the local area: our town

The **Primary Toolkit Series Geography Plus**, available from the GA, has two items with a special focus on local fieldwork:

- Neighbourhood Watch by Sharon Witt and Emma Morley
- The UK: investigating who we are by Stephen Scoffham and Terry Whyte

## APPENDIX 1 - Possible hyperlink addition

### Fieldwork: Extended Reference List

- Bilton, H. (2005). *Learning outdoors: Improving the quality of young children's play outdoors*. London: David Fulton.
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- Bridgewater College, (1993). Bridgewater College Forest School. Retrieved on 23 June 2012 from <http://www.bridgewater.ac.uk/files/brochures/bridgewater-college-forestschool-brochure.pdf>
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- Groundwork North East, (2012). Forest Schools Project successfully rolled out. <http://www.northeast.groundwork.org.uk/newsevents/news/2012/forest-schools-project-success.aspx>
- Jackson, S. (2012). *Developing Forest Schools Centres of Excellence in the North East: Access to Nature evaluation report*. Newcastle: Groundwork Northeast.
- Learning Through Landscapes, 'The Value of Outdoor Play' [www.ltl.org.uk/school\\_and\\_settings/](http://www.ltl.org.uk/school_and_settings/)
- Kenny, R. (2010). *Forest School and the early years foundation stage: An exploratory case study*. Department of Education: Bath Spa University. <http://bathspa.academia.edu/RowenaKenny/Papers/677644/>
- Knight, S. (2009). *Forest Schools and outdoor learning in the early years*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Massey, S. (2003). *The benefits of forest schools for children in their early years*. Worcester: Worcestershire County Council.
- Maynard, T. (2007). Forest Schools in Great Britain: An initial exploration. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*,
- Murray, R. (2004). *Forest School Evaluation Project: A Study in Wales*. [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ForestSchoolWalesReport.pdf/\\$FILE/ForestSchoolWalesReport.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ForestSchoolWalesReport.pdf/$FILE/ForestSchoolWalesReport.pdf)
- Murray, R. & O'Brien, L. (2006) A marvelous opportunity for children to learn: A participatory evaluation of Forest School in England and Wales. [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf/\\$FILE/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf/$FILE/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf)
- Murray, R. & O'Brien, L. (2007) Forest School and its impacts on young children: Case studies in Britain. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 6(4), 249-265. from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15314635>
- Smith, P. (2012). Outdoor education and its educational objectives. *Geographical Association*, 72(3), 209-216. <http://www.jstor/stable/4057162> and <http://www.forestschoools.com/what-are-forest-schools.php>
- Wilson, R. A. (1995). Nature and young children: A natural connection. *Young Children*, 50(6), 4-11.
- Worcestershire County Council. (2007). *A taste of Forest School – a continuum*. Worcester: Worcestershire County Council.