



Cumberland  
Council

# **What does Geography look like in Early Years?**

**Guidance for subject leaders**

It is important that subject leaders understand what their specialist subject looks like in early years; how key knowledge and skills are taught and what progression through these may look like. There is no requirement for schools to adopt a particular teaching style or method and the school curriculum as a whole needs to be considered, so it meets the needs of your children, families and community. The Early Learning Goals should not be seen as your curriculum as this very narrow, merely a checkpoint for the end of the reception year. The EYFS has seven areas of learning, rather than the individual subjects used within the National Curriculum but this document will highlight the main links between the two. Communication and Language development is key and is a 'golden thread' which runs through and underpins all other areas of learning as does Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The statutory framework is supported by two non-statutory documents which schools can choose to use ('Development Matters' and 'Birth to Five Matters'). The table below shows where learning in early years links to the NC programme of study in Geography. Whilst there are not links in each age range, these statements are basics upon which to build your full curriculum.

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
Birth to Three - Babies and young toddlers will be learning to:	<b>Understanding the world</b> Explore and respond to different natural phenomena in their setting and on trips.	Range 1	
		Range 2	<b>Mathematics</b> Engages with positions and directions, using gestures and words like 'on,' 'in', 'on', 'under', 'up', 'down' as instructions or pointing to where they would like to go.
3 and 4 year olds will be learning to:	<b>Understanding the world</b> Begin to understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things. Know that there are different countries in the world and talk about the differences they have experienced or seen in photos. <b>Mathematics</b> Describe a familiar route. Discuss routes and locations, using words like 'in front of' and 'behind'.	Range 3	<b>Understanding the world</b> Is curious about people and shows interest in stories about people, animals or objects that they are familiar with or which fascinate them.
		Range 4	<b>Mathematics</b> Begins to remember their way around familiar environments e.g. knows where to find their favourite toy. Responds to spatial and positional language when used in conversation, e.g. pointing things out. <b>Understanding the World</b> Notices detailed features of objects in their environment.

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
Children in reception will be learning to:	<p><b>Communication and language</b></p> <p>Learn new vocabulary. Use new vocabulary through the day.</p> <p>Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them. Describe events in some detail.</p> <p>Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities explain how things work and why they might happen.</p> <p>Engage in non-fiction books.</p> <p>Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.</p> <p><b>Understanding the world</b></p> <p>Draw information from a simple map.</p> <p>Recognise some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries.</p> <p>Explore the natural world around them. Describe what they see, hear and feel whilst outside.</p> <p>Recognise some environments that are different to the one in which they live.</p>	Range 5	<p><b>Communication and language</b></p> <p>Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. who, what, when, how.</p> <p>Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Responds to and uses language of position and direction.</p> <p><b>Understanding the world</b></p> <p>Shows interest in different occupations and ways of life. Comments and asks questions about aspects of their familiar world such as the place where they live or the natural world. Begin to understand the effect their behaviour can have on the environment.</p>
		Range 6	<p><b>Communication and language</b></p> <p>Understands questions such as 'who; why; when; where and how'.</p> <p><b>Literacy</b></p> <p>Enjoys an increasing range of print and digital books, both fiction and non-fiction.</p> <p>Knows that information can be retrieved from books, computers and mobile digital devices.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Follows and gives simple directions.</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
			<p><b>Understanding the world</b></p> <p>Enjoys joining in with family customs and routines. Knows about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions. Talks about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another.</p>
<p><b>Early Learning Goal</b></p> <p>People, Culture and Communities</p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;</li> <li>• Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;</li> <li>• Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and - when appropriate - maps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early Learning Goal</b></p> <p>The Natural World</p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.</li> </ul>			

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Characteristics which may support future learning in Geography		
Playing and Exploring	Active Learning	Creating and thinking critically
<p><b>Development Matters</b> Do things independently that they have been previously taught. Bring their own interests and fascinations into early years settings. This helps them to develop their learning. Respond to new experiences that you bring to their attention.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b> Showing curiosity about objects, events and people. Using senses to explore the world around them. Showing particular interests.</p>	<p><b>Development Matters</b> Keep on trying when things are difficult.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b> Showing a deep drive to know more about people and their world. Showing high levels of involvement, energy, fascination.</p>	<p><b>Development Matters</b> Know more, so feel confident about coming up with their own ideas. Make more links between those ideas.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b> Making links and noticing patterns in their experience. Making predictions. Testing their ideas. Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal. Checking how well their activities are going. Flexibly changing strategy as needed. Reviewing how well the approach worked.</p>

## What does Geography look like in Early Years?

Geography links closely with the specific area of learning 'Understanding the World'.

'Understanding the World provides a powerful, meaningful context for learning across the curriculum. It supports children to make sense of their expanding world and their place within it through nurturing their wonderment, curiosity, agency and exploratory drive. This development requires regular and direct contact with the natural, built and virtual environments around the child and engaging children in collaborative activities which promote inquiry, problem-solving and shared decision making'. Birth to Five Matters

'Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them'. Development Matters

What Geography might look like in Early Years, including in Indoor and Outdoor Provision	
What you might see children doing	What you should see practitioners doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using programmable toys to move along a set route.</li> <li>Showing an interest in places locally and that they have been to and talking about these.</li> <li>Sharing knowledge linked to Geographical interests.</li> <li>Talking about where they live using simple geographical language.</li> <li>Following instructions which include positional language.</li> <li>Drawing simple maps based on real and imaginary places.</li> <li>Exploring maps, atlases and globes.</li> <li>Using IT to find out about other countries and the lives of other children.</li> <li>Sharing books about the world, weather, the environment etc.</li> <li>Role-playing visiting places, they are interested in and would like to explore.</li> <li>Talking about how we can look after our planet.</li> <li>Talking about differences and similarities between themselves and the lives of others.</li> <li>Regularly exploring the local area with interested adults who scaffold their learning.</li> <li>Following routes on a car mat in small world play.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing opportunities for to children to explore and get to know the local area.</li> <li>Talking to children about local landmarks and geographical features.</li> <li>Modelling the use of simple geographical vocabulary.</li> <li>Teaching children how to set programmable toys to follow a route.</li> <li>Teaching simple skills related to geographical enquiry, for example: recording on a tally, drawing a map, writing a set of directions.</li> <li>Asking appropriate questions and providing answers so children develop knowledge of the world around them.</li> <li>Drawing large scale maps with the children.</li> <li>Instigating games which focus on following positional and directional language.</li> <li>Instigating opportunities for role play linked to other places the children are interested in.</li> <li>Stimulating curiosity through providing interesting resources and artefacts.</li> <li>Considering prior learning when planning opportunities.</li> </ul>

What you might see children doing	What you should see practitioners doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing about and representing through art and technology places they have seen.</li> <li>• Building models of buildings and geographical features in the construction area.</li> <li>• Taking part in treasure hunts using simple maps or directional/positional instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering children’s interests.</li> <li>• Promoting curiosity and evoking a sense of awe and wonder in relation to the natural and man-made world.</li> <li>• Sharing knowledge about things we can do to protect our planet.</li> <li>• Encouraging children to say what they think and give their ideas.</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for simple field work skills to be taught and applied.</li> <li>• Providing opportunities to help care for the local environment.</li> </ul>

### The Curriculum – What we want children to learn (Taken from Development Matters)

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.

- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children’s learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider’s web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

## Progression

		Language	Locality	Care	Information	Maps	Mark-making
2-year room		Names objects and well-known places.	Starts to recognise where they live and places they visit regularly.	Engages in simple activities to look after the local area with adult support, such as planting bulbs.	Listens to stories based in different places.	Starts to follow a simple one-part instruction which includes positional language.	May use marks to represent home. e.g. drawing simple representation of own house.
Nursery/ Pre-school							
Reception Class		Uses some geographical vocabulary when talking about places, the world and the environment. Can identify key features and share their knowledge.	Can talk about key places in their local area and simple regular routes such as their journey from home to school.	Expresses views about how to look after our planet and local environment. Contributes to school led projects in the local area/school grounds.	Engages with information books and IT to find information linked to geographical themes they are interested in.	Follows instructions which include positional and directional language and simple maps to find hidden items and locations.	Draws, writes and creates in response to what they see and learn out about.

## Assessment in Early Years

As in the previous version of the EYFS the ELGS are not to be used or envisaged as a curriculum. The EYFS clearly states 'The ELGS are there to support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development and their readiness for Year One'. Observation checkpoints are included in Development Matters to support practitioners when considering whether children are on track or if additional support is needed.

'Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence- Statutory Framework for EYFS 2.2' (See document for more information about assessment, including the three statutory assessments in EY).

### Useful links:

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

**[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)**

Development Matters

**[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)**

Birth to Five Matters

**<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/#:~:text=%20Birth%20to%205%20Matters%3A%20non-statutory%20guidance%20for%20the%20years%20coalition%20composed%20of%20the%20following...%20more%20>**

**Please note:** This document is not to be used as a tick list for assessment or planning purposes. Its aim is to support with understanding the revised Statutory Framework and accompanying non-statutory guidance documents. These documents may also be useful for mixed age teachers, new to EY teachers, senior leaders and governors – Cumberland Council Early Years Team.