

## Geography Curriculum Rationale

At the heart of the Geography Curriculum across the key stages is to help students to make sense of the world around them. Geography helps student to understand the human and physical forces and process which shape and change our world, it helps students to understand about people, places and the environment, how they are connected and their interactions. This is vital for students to understand in the ever more connected and changing world we are living in. The study of geography allows students to tackle the big challenges that face our world: climate change, migration and development. The aim of the Geography Curriculum is to help students understand the world they are living in, to equip students with the skills they will need to be able to do this and inspire in them a love of learning about the world.

An overview of the curriculum offered across the key stages is provided below.

### KS3

At KS3 we broadly follow the KS3 National Curriculum. The aim of the KS3 curriculum is to start to develop students as geographers, most students will have not studied geography to a great detail at KS2 so the first topic students will cover is 'An Introduction to Geography' to help students understand what the subject is. From then on, we cover a balance of human and physical topics with the aim of giving students a broad understanding of the world they are living in. There are topics we teach that are also taught at GCSE, this is helpful to develop students' understandings in these areas to support them in the future. However, we are passionate that KS3 is not just to be used to prepare students for GCSE specification and we use this as an opportunity to explore a variety of geographical topics that help them understand the world. We also ensure that over the course of the KS3 curriculum students are given the opportunities to study a variety of places around the world. At KS3 we use enquiry-based learning to engage students in learning about the world, each of our SOW is based around one or two overriding enquiry questions, such as 'Is all of Africa poor?' or 'What are the future challenges to Antarctica?' Overarching this is the aim of engaging students in understanding and wanting to find out more about and develop a love of learning about the world they live in.

### KS4

At KS4 we follow the AQA specification. This specification was chosen for a variety of reasons. Having analysed the new specifications offered by the exam boards after the GCSE reform the department felt that this specification offered the best coverage of content of geography and would be most engaging for students. The format of paper 3 in which the fieldwork is assessed seemed to be the most thought through and the decision making pre-released material in the paper on a geographical issue to be engaging for students alongside developing this skill. We previously taught the old AQA A specification, and whilst

there are large differences between the specification as a department, we had previous experience with the exam board. Two other schools in the trust-Cambourne and Swavesey also teach the AQA specification.

In terms of delivery of the specification we alternate between delivering physical and human topics, this ensures that there is not negative impact upon either the human or physical paper content having been studied the longest time away from the exam. It is also good for student engagement with students sometimes having a preference for human or physical geography, mixing up the topics ensures students don't becoming disengaged. For the optional topics in the UK Geography unit we choose to study Coasts and Rivers and not Glaciation. Firstly, this is because we cover these topics and KS3 so students can build upon their knowledge here, we don't study glaciation in detail at KS3 so students do not have knowledge to build upon. Secondly due to the location of our students in Cambridge most students will have been to coastal and river environments, but not all will have visited glacial environments, this makes choosing coasts and rivers preferable as students will have experience of these environments. Glaciation can also be a challenging topic for students as unlike coasts and rivers they can't see it in action first-hand which can make it a more difficult concept to grasp. For the Resource Management topic we choose to study Energy ahead of Water and Food. This was because it is the resource that is most relevant to students in terms of the challenges and questions around energy in the UK and it's links to climate change and as such felt it would be the most engaging, useful and impactful topic for students to study.

For the fieldwork element of the course we run a two-day residential trip to Sheringham to undertake the two fieldwork sessions that need to be run to meet the specification demands ahead of being assessed on this in Paper 3. We choose Sheringham as a base as it allows us to cover our two enquiry questions in one field trip, one day students go to River Glaven to investigate their Physical Enquiry Question: How does the cross sectional area and discharge of River Glaven change with distance from source? On the other day students go into Sheringham Town to investigate their Human Enquiry Question: Do tourists have a negative environmental impact on the beach in Sheringham? We have chosen to run this trip in March of Y11 for the students as this is relatively close to the exam period for students and as such will be fresher in their minds.

## KS5

At KS5 we follow the AQA specification. Once again key to this decision was having analysed the new specifications offered by the exam boards after the A Level reform the department felt that this specification offered the best coverage of content of geography and would be most engaging for students. There is also the benefit that it is the same exam board as GCSE and whilst the specifications are not designed directly to follow it builds well on the GCSE, this is also helpful as two of the schools in our trust and a level catchment area also study the AQA GCSE specification.

At A Level we have chosen the optional topics of Coastal Systems and Hazards on Paper 1. This is for several reasons; it builds on the students studies at GCSE with all of the feeder schools in our trust having studied these topics at GCSE, they are the topics that students find most interesting out of the optional topics and because this is where the departments strengths are in terms of knowledge

and understanding and previous teaching at A Level. For Paper 2 we chose the optional topic of Population and the environment again for the reasons that it was a topic that students showed a preference for in terms of what they would be most interested in studying, alongside the fact that as a department we felt that this was an important area of geography to cover.

For their NEA we take students on a residential trip to Studland. Here we offer them the opportunity to run investigations either looking at the Place topic with the opportunity to go to Boscombe and Corfe or Coastal Systems with the opportunity to go to Studland Bay and Swanage. Students are then guided in their NEA write up in lessons.

In year 12 we also run a day trip to Mill Road in Cambridge on the place topic. We also undertake a 'virtual fieldtrip' to Studland in Y12 and conduct fieldwork around the school site for the Water and Carbon cycle to give the students as much fieldwork opportunities as possible and develop their geographical investigation skills ahead of Y13.

Note to self: Add curriculum overview table by year and term. Perhaps as Excel?! Include assessment points