

## Position Statement for Geography Department at St Mary's RC High School

### Context & Background

The Geography department is made up of a full-time Head of Department, 1 full-time colleague (with KS3 History and Computer Science commitments) and 1 part-time colleague (with KS3 English commitments). We are all experienced teachers, having worked at St Mary's for more than 10 years. We work together well as a team drawing on each other's strengths. Geography is taken up by around 50% of the cohort each year and the department consistently achieves positive results compared to FFT20.

### Curriculum

The Geography curriculum at St Mary's is designed to develop curiosity and fascination about the world's human and physical processes and to foster growth of global citizens. The department want to 'create knowledgeable and skilful geographers who understand, respect and appreciate God's wonderful world'.

At KS3 this aim is achieved through a series of distinct topics, flitting between human and physical but gradually weaving a complex web that demonstrates the interdependent nature of our existence on planet Earth while encouraging pupils to revisit what they have previously learnt and apply to new situations.

In each topic pupils are challenged to improve their knowledge of locations, places and geographical features while deepening their understanding of conditions, processes and interactions. As time goes on they apply their knowledge and understanding to different situations for example, with the topic on Russia at the end of Year 7, Asia at the end of Year 8 and on topics on Africa and the Middle East in Year 9. During each topic pupils are challenged to develop a range of relevant skills such as cartographic, graphical, numerical and statistical skills.

At KS4 pupils can study GCSE Geography with AQA. We tackle the topics in the order of the specification for a variety of reasons. For example, pupils are more organised through their course and more prepared for exams including optional elements, there is a dramatic start with Tectonic Hazards to get pupils interested and Living World follows Natural Hazards which is beneficial for understanding as the development of biomes are linked to global atmospheric circulation. This schedule also enables fieldwork to occur when the weather is more favourable, Changing Economic World is studied later in the course, as suggested by AQA and Resource Management is a short and accessible topic to build confidence just before the external exams.

We started to offer BTEC Tech Award in Travel & Tourism in September 2023. A small number of pupils have taken this option. They develop research and communication skills while exploring the aims of different travel and tourism organisations, the features of tourist destinations, how organisations meet customer needs and the influences on global travel and tourism.

At KS3 pupils have 2 lessons a week, while those at KS4 have 5 lessons a fortnight. We try to weave skills and knowledge acquisition together, for example practising grid references to illustrate the pattern of different types of farming across the UK and walking over to the village of Lugwardine to practice map skills. Enquiry learning is a feature of our teaching in many topics (see display in corridor and classrooms) for example Yr 7 Weather Enquiry, Yr 8 Rivers Enquiry and especially when it comes to fieldwork eg: Year 10 - How and why does the beach at Cold Knapp change from west to east? Yr 10 – Do social inequalities exist in Bristol?

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and create a supportive learning environment by using a variety of strategies (scaffolding, modelling, individual and class feedback, teaching assistants) to support everyone to achieve success using a wide range of resources including textbooks, atlases, digital resources, journals, etc and activities including discussion, paired work, decision making exercises, electronic games, card sorts, jigsaws etc.

For students with particular SEND there is support at the beginning of each topic by way of keywords with images and access to Quizlet via the school website so that keywords can be pre-learnt and throughout topics there is structure in place to support learning by way of sentence starters, keywords, clues/hints. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to work with groups of pupils and individuals. At KS4 pupils order from a choice of revision guides to support their learning.

Low stakes assessment at every topic in KS3 takes the form of self and peer assessment using mark schemes and model answers in class, as well as homework and keywords tests. Summative assessment is via standardised tests with mark schemes and model answers to ensure consistent provision and promote individual progress. Development of resources is shared between members of the department and results are centrally accessible via the CRL. Good practice is shared during regular department meetings and often at break and lunch more informally.

After St Mary's geography students go to a variety of local colleges including around a quarter of students who go to Hereford Sixth Form College to take A Levels in Geography, Geology and Environmental Science and others who take BTEC Travel and Tourism at Herefordshire and Ludlow College.

## **Enrichment**

Our fieldtrips at KS3 are inclusive and all pupils attend (with extra one-to-one support where necessary) and benefit from the real-world experiences. At KS4 two days trips are compulsory and all pupils attend with support from PP funding where necessary.

The 5-day residential fieldtrip to Morocco is open to all and is supported by the Sylvia Short Educational Charity as well as PP funding in order to make it as accessible as possible. As a result, around half the cohort take advantage of this amazing educational and cultural opportunity.

Hodder's Wide World Magazine is made available to all GCSE students to order and two-thirds of the cohort take up this opportunity. PP funding is used to make the magazine with exam tips and case study information available to all students.

There are plans to have a KS3 Geography Club run by prefects, but this hasn't taken off yet (see timetable attached).

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### **Documents available in support of the above:**

- i. Department Development Plan (written by A Hughes, June 2023)**
- ii. Department Review Report (written by S Warde, June 2023)**
- iii. Cultural Capital Audit (updated, July 2023)**
- iv. Geography Club schedule**
- v. Wall displays**