

## **Geography Survey Visits**

### **Generic grade descriptors and supplementary subject-specific guidance for inspectors on making judgements during visits to schools**

Subject feedback letters, following survey visits, normally contain separate judgements on:

- the achievement of pupils in the subject
- the quality of teaching in the subject
- the quality of the curriculum in the subject
- the quality of leadership and management of the subject
- the overall effectiveness of the subject.

In coming to these judgements, inspectors will use the relevant criteria and grade descriptors from the 2012 Section 5 evaluation schedule as they can be applied to individual subjects. Key elements of these descriptors are set out in the left-hand columns in the following pages though inspectors may refer to the whole section 5 evaluation schedule where appropriate. Alongside them (for achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership and management) are supplementary, subject-specific descriptors which provide additional guidance for geography. These descriptors should be applied in a way which is appropriate to the age of pupils involved. Except where otherwise indicated, descriptors are intended to be used on a 'best fit' basis.

It is important to note that this guidance is intended only to inform the judgements made by specialist inspectors carrying out subject survey visits. It is not for use on Section 5 whole-school inspections.

## Grade descriptors:<sup>1</sup> achievement of pupils in geography

	Generic	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p><b>Outstanding</b></p> <p>Almost all pupils, including, where applicable, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are making rapid and sustained progress in the subject over time given their starting points. They learn exceptionally well and as a result acquire knowledge quickly and in depth, including in the sixth form and areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of almost all groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils with many above average. In exceptional circumstances, where standards of attainment of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gap is closing dramatically over a period of time.</p>	<p>Pupils have a very good knowledge of where places are and what they are like. They also have a very good understanding of the ways in which places are interdependent and interconnected and how human and physical environments are interrelated. Pupils have an extensive base of core geographical knowledge and vocabulary. They are able to carry out increasingly complex geographical enquiry, apply questioning skills and use effective analytical and presentational techniques in a wide range of environments, scales and contexts. They reach clear conclusions and are able to develop reasoned argument to explain their findings. Pupils show exceptional independence; they are able to think for themselves and take the initiative in, for example, asking questions, carrying out their own investigations and working constructively with others. They show significant levels of originality, imagination or creativity in their understanding and skills within the subject. Fieldwork and other geographical skills and techniques are highly developed and frequently utilised. Pupils develop a sense of passion and commitment to the subject and exhibit a real sense of curiosity in finding out about the world around them and the people who live there. They are able to express well balanced opinions, rooted in very good knowledge and understanding about current and contemporary issues in society and the environment.</p>
2	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>Pupils are making better progress than all pupils nationally in the subject given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils acquire knowledge quickly and are secure in their understanding of the subject. They develop and apply a range of skills well, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills that will ensure they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the large majority of groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally over a sustained period.</p>	<p>Most pupils have a good knowledge of where places are and what they are like. They also have a good understanding of the ways in which places are interdependent and interconnected and how human and physical environments are interrelated. Pupils have a good basis of core geographical knowledge and vocabulary. They are able to use data and information sources to search and select, organise and investigate and refine and present information well. Pupils explore hypotheses which enable them to show good geographical understanding. They are able to reach conclusions and develop generally well reasoned arguments to explain their findings. Pupils are able to work independently when given the opportunity, taking the initiative in their work and when working with others. They demonstrate some originality, imagination or creativity in their subject work. Most pupils acquire and use a range of fieldwork and other geographical skills and techniques. The majority of pupils enjoy the subject and can explain its value. Most are interested in the world around them and in contemporary issues in society and the environment and realise that geography helps us to understand them.</p>
3	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p> <p>Pupils are progressing at least as well in the subject as all pupils nationally given their starting points. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are also making progress in line with similar groups of pupils nationally. Pupils generally learn well in the subject, with no major weaknesses. They acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills, including those in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that will ensure they are prepared adequately for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The standards of attainment of the majority of groups of pupils are likely to be in line with national averages for all pupils. Where standards of groups of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, the gaps are closing overall. In exceptional circumstances, where attainment is low overall, it is improving over a sustained period.</p>	<p>Some pupils may have a good knowledge of where places are and what they are like, others are less clear. They also have some understanding of the ways in which places are interdependent and interconnected and how physical and human environments are interrelated. Pupils have satisfactory core geographical knowledge and vocabulary. They are able to use data and information sources to search and select, investigate and present some findings. Pupils are generally dependent on their teachers but can occasionally work independently and take the initiative in developing their work. Occasionally pupils show creative or original responses in their subject work. Most pupils acquire and use some basic fieldwork and other geographical skills but only at a basic level appropriate for their age. Pupils are able to reach conclusions and are able to provide some reasons to explain their judgements. They are generally interested in the subject and the world around them.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

<b>4</b>	<p><b>Inadequate</b></p> <p>Achievement in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pupils' learning and progress, or the learning and progress of particular groups, is consistently below those of all pupils nationally given their starting point.</li> <li>■ Learning and progress in any key stage, including the sixth form, lead to underachievement.</li> <li>■ The learning, quality of work and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs show that this group is underachieving.</li> <li>■ Pupils' communication skills, including in reading and writing and proficiency in mathematics overall, or those of particular groups, are not sufficient for the next stage of education or training.</li> <li>■ Attainment is consistently low showing little, fragile or inconsistent improvement, or is in decline.</li> <li>■ There are wide gaps in attainment and in learning and progress between different groups of pupils and of all pupils nationally that are showing little sign of closing or are widening.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils' knowledge of places is weak and confused. They also have a very weak understanding of the ways in which places are interdependent and interconnected and how physical and human environments are interrelated. Pupils have weak core geographical knowledge and vocabulary. Pupils are not independent learners and rely heavily on the teacher to provide answers. The range of geographical skills and techniques to support their presentations is inadequate and often used inappropriately. They rarely demonstrate creativity or originality in their subject work. Most pupils do not make adequate progress in their acquisition and application of fieldwork and other geographical skills. Pupils express a lack of enjoyment in the subject or find it does not challenge or stimulate their interest.</p>
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### Grade descriptors:<sup>2</sup> the quality of teaching in geography<sup>3</sup>

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Supplementary subject-specific</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Outstanding</b></p> <p>Much of the teaching in the subject is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result, almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. All teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. Drawing on excellent subject knowledge, teachers plan astutely and set challenging tasks based on systematic, accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding. They use well judged and often imaginative teaching strategies that, together with sharply focused and timely support and intervention, match individual needs accurately. Consequently, pupils learn exceptionally well. Teaching promotes pupils' high levels of resilience, confidence and independence when they tackle challenging activities. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with notable impact on the quality of learning. Time is used very well and every opportunity is taken to successfully develop crucial skills, including being able to use their literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes very well to pupils' learning. Marking and constructive feedback from teachers and pupils are frequent and of a consistently high quality, leading to high levels of engagement and interest.</p>	<p>Teachers communicate enthusiasm and passion about geography to pupils. They have high expectations and a high level of confidence and expertise both in terms of their specialist and up-to-date knowledge and their understanding of effective learning in the subject. As a result, they use a wide range of innovative and imaginative teaching strategies very effectively to stimulate pupils' active participation in their learning and secure outstanding progress across all aspects of the subject. Very good use is made of the outside environment and fieldwork to support learning. Lessons are carefully structured and a range of innovative resources is used regularly and very effectively, with very good use made of multi-media to explore a wide range of geographical issues at a range of scales. The effective use of a wide range of types of maps is commonplace. Very effective use is made of ICT and Geographical Information Systems (where relevant) to promote learning and enable pupils to use data and information sources to search and select, organise and investigate and refine and present information skilfully and independently.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>As a result of teaching that is mainly good, with examples of outstanding teaching, most pupils and groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are achieving well in the subject over time. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Teachers use their well developed subject knowledge and their accurate assessment of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding to plan effectively and set challenging</p>	<p>Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of geography which they communicate effectively to pupils. They have a confident level of specialist expertise which they use well in planning and teaching the subject. As a result, they use an appropriate range of teaching strategies to promote good learning across all aspects of the subject. Good use is made of the outside environment and fieldwork to support learning. A range of multi-media resources is available to support learning. Frequent use is made of maps to a variety of scales, which supports learning well. Good</p>

<sup>2</sup> Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

<sup>3</sup> These grade descriptors describe the quality of teaching in the subject taking account of evidence over time. While they include some characteristics of individual lessons, they are not designed to be used to judge individual lessons.

	<p>tasks. They use effective teaching strategies that, together with appropriately targeted support and intervention, match most pupils' individual needs so that pupils learn well. Teaching generally promotes pupils' resilience, confidence and independence when tackling challenging activities. Teachers regularly listen astutely to, carefully observe and skilfully question groups of pupils and individuals during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. Teaching consistently deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding and teaches them a range of skills including literacy and numeracy skills. Appropriate and regular homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately and discuss assessments with them so that pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.</p>	<p>use is made of ICT and Geographical Information Systems (where relevant) to promote learning and enable pupils to use data and information sources to search and select, organise and investigate and refine and present information well.</p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p> <p>Teaching results in most pupils, and groups of pupils, currently in the school making progress in the subject broadly in line with that made by pupils nationally with similar starting points. There is likely to be some good teaching and there are no endemic inadequacies across year groups or for particular groups of pupils. Teachers' expectations enable most pupils to work hard and achieve satisfactorily and encourage them to make progress. Due attention is often given to the careful assessment of pupils' learning but this is not always conducted rigorously enough and may result in some unnecessary repetition of work for pupils and tasks being planned and set that do not fully challenge. Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons, picking up any general misconceptions and adjust their plans accordingly to support learning. These adaptations are usually successful but occasionally are not timely or relevant and this slows learning for some pupils. Teaching strategies ensure that the individual needs of pupils are usually met. Teachers carefully deploy any available additional support and set appropriate homework and these contribute reasonably well to the quality of learning for pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are informed about the progress they are making and how to improve further through marking and dialogue with adults that is usually timely and encouraging. This approach ensures that most pupils want to work hard and improve.</p>	<p>Teachers understand how to maintain most pupils' interest in geography. They have a sound level of subject expertise which they use in their planning and teaching. As a result, they use a range of resources and teaching strategies to promote a satisfactory level of learning across most aspects of the subject. Fieldwork tasks are not sufficiently challenging for all pupils but meet basic requirements. Resources, including maps, are used adequately. Multi-media resources are available to support learning but are not always used to their full potential. Satisfactory use is made of ICT and Geographical Information Systems (where relevant) to promote learning but opportunities for pupils to use data and information sources to search and select, organise and investigate and refine and present information are limited.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Inadequate</b></p> <p>Teaching in the subject is likely to be inadequate where any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ As a result of weak teaching, pupils or groups of pupils currently in the school are making inadequate progress.</li> <li>■ Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations and teaching over time fails to excite, enthuse, engage or motivate particular groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.</li> <li>■ Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or use mathematics as well as they should, as appropriate, in the subject.</li> <li>■ Learning activities are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of pupils so that they make inadequate progress.</li> </ul>	<p>Teachers are not able to engage pupils' interest in geography. Their subject expertise may itself be limited or insecure and, as a result, they do not provide the resources or teaching strategies to promote effective geographical learning. A narrow range of teaching and learning styles predominates. There is considerable variation in the frequency and quality of fieldwork experiences between classes. Low level tasks are set which are inappropriate to the pupils' ages and/or abilities. As a result, most pupils do not make adequate progress in their acquisition and application of geographical learning and fieldwork skills.</p>

## Grade descriptors: the curriculum in geography<sup>4</sup>

	Generic <sup>5</sup>	Supplementary subject-specific
1	<p><b>Outstanding</b></p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning, has a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and contributes very well to pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The imaginative and stimulating geography curriculum is skilfully designed to match to the full range of pupils' needs and to ensure highly effective continuity and progression in their learning. The key geographical concepts such as place, space, scale, diversity, interdependence and sustainability are clearly embedded in the planning. The curriculum provides consistently high quality opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate key geographical skills of enquiry, graphicacy and geographical communication. Fieldwork is well planned and clearly identified as an integral part of the schemes of work. Pupils experience fieldwork on a regular basis, with activities that offer clear progression rather than repetition and include diverse landscapes and varied locations. The contribution of geography to learning and understanding about current and relevant local, national and global issues is at least good in all major respects, and is exemplary in significant elements. Excellent links are forged with other agencies and the wider, as well as the global, community to provide a wide range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement with the subject.</p>
2	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>The curriculum in the subject provides well organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning for all groups of pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, promotes positive behaviour and, where appropriate, their safety, and provides a broad range of experiences that contribute well to the pupils' achievement and, where appropriate, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p>	<p>The geography curriculum is broad, balanced and well informed by current initiatives in the subject. It is designed to match to a range of pupils' needs and ensure effective continuity and progression in their geographical learning. The key geographical concepts such as place, space, scale, diversity, interdependence and sustainability are clearly identified in the planning. The curriculum provides frequent opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate key geographical skills of enquiry, graphicacy and geographical communication. Opportunities for fieldwork are clearly identified and all classes participate in the experience in a variety of locations; it is well used in building up pupils' understanding of related geographical concepts and is linked well into the teaching programme. Awareness of current and relevant local, national and global issues is planned into the geography curriculum. Good links are forged with other agencies and the wider, and global, community to provide a range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and their engagement with the subject.</p>
3	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p> <p>The curriculum in the subject is generally matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations and provides adequate preparation for the next stage of their lives, whatever their starting points.</p>	<p>The geography curriculum secures the pupils' broad and balanced entitlement in the subject and meets any statutory requirements which apply. It provides for a range of pupils' needs and ensures they make satisfactory progress in their learning. The key geographical concepts such as place, space, scale, diversity, interdependence and sustainability are identifiable within the planning. The curriculum provides sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate aspects of key geographical skills of enquiry, graphicacy and geographical communication. Some opportunities for fieldwork are identified in the planning, although these may not always be adhered to and there may be variation in fieldwork experiences between classes. Fieldwork in exam classes may be formulaic and focused on meeting exam criteria. Learning about current and relevant local, national and global issues is a part of the geography curriculum, but may not be planned for in such a way as to progressively build up pupils' understanding of the key concepts. Some links are forged with other agencies and the wider community, although the range of activity provided to enrich pupils' interest and learning may be quite limited.</p>

<sup>4</sup> The generic grade descriptors are drawn from the leadership and management section of *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of schools and academies, January 2012*

<b>4</b>	<p><b>Inadequate</b></p> <p>The curriculum in the subject fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.</p>	<p>The geography curriculum does not ensure pupils' entitlement to the subject, may not meet statutory requirements and does not secure continuity in their learning. There is little by way of enrichment activity. It is unclear how the key geographical concepts such as place, space, scale, diversity, interdependence and sustainability are to be progressively developed. The curriculum provides insufficient and inconsistent opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate aspects of key geographical skills of enquiry, graphicacy and geographical communication. There is little reference in the planning to fieldwork opportunities, with cohorts of pupils getting no or very limited fieldwork experience over a key stage. Fieldwork is not perceived as being important except for meeting examination requirements. Learning about current and relevant local, national and global issues is fragmented and is not easily identified in the planning.</p>
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**Grade descriptors:<sup>6</sup> quality of leadership and management of geography**

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Supplementary subject-specific</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Outstanding</b></p> <p>The pursuit of excellence in all activities relating to the subject is demonstrated by an uncompromising and highly successful drive to strongly improve achievement, or maintain the highest levels of achievement, for all pupils including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, over a sustained period of time. Actions are based on a deep and accurate understanding of performance in the subject. Key leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good.</p>	<p>Leadership in geography is informed by a high level of subject expertise and vision. There is a strong track record of innovation and success. Out of classroom learning is seen as an entitlement within the subject and is highly promoted by the subject leaders. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are well-informed by current best practice in the subject and in education generally. Subject leadership inspires confidence and whole-hearted commitment from pupils and colleagues. There are effective strategies to delegate subject responsibilities where appropriate, to share good practice, to continue to update subject knowledge and to secure high quality professional development in the subject. Geography has a very high profile in the life of the school and is at the cutting edge of initiatives within the school.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>Key leaders and managers consistently communicate high expectations and ambition in the subject. They model good practice and demonstrably work to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and channelling their efforts and skills to good effect. As a result, teaching is improving and is at least satisfactory, with much that is good. Planned actions based on accurate self-evaluation to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. As a result, achievement has improved or consolidated previous good performance.</p>	<p>Leadership is well-informed by current developments in geography. Subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are clearly focused on raising attainment and improving the provision for the subject. There is a shared common purpose amongst those involved in teaching the subject, with good opportunities to share practice and access subject training. Out of classroom learning is seen as an essential component of the subject. The subject reflects wider whole school priorities and has a prominent profile in the school.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Satisfactory</b></p> <p>Key leaders and managers provide a concerted approach to improvement in the subject. Planned actions by leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching so that very little is inadequate. Capacity to secure improvements in the subject is demonstrated by a trend of sustained improvement in achievement although a few significant weaknesses remain.</p>	<p>Leadership is aware of current developments in geography and incorporates these within its practice. Provision for the subject is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. Out of classroom learning is a valued aspect of the subject. There is some sharing of good practice, with modest access to subject-specific professional development although all teachers do not necessarily participate.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Inadequate</b></p> <p>Leadership and management of the subject are likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p>	<p>Geography leadership is not well-informed about current initiatives in the subject. It lacks the authority and drive to make a difference. Key statutory requirements for the subject are not met. Self-evaluation is weak and not</p>

<sup>6</sup> Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Capacity for further improvement is limited because current leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements.</li> <li>■ Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure satisfactory and better teaching for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.</li> <li>■ Despite remedying a few small areas of weakness, perhaps recently, improvements are fragile, too slow or depend on external support.</li> </ul>	<p>informed by good practice in the subject. Opportunities for professional development in the subject are limited and, as a result, some staff lack the confidence and expertise to deliver it effectively. The subject has a low profile in the life of the school.</p>
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## Grade descriptors:<sup>7</sup> the overall effectiveness of geography

<p><b>Outstanding</b> (1)</p>	<p>Practice in the subject consistently reflects the highest aspirations for pupils and expectations of staff. Best practice is spread effectively in a drive for continuous improvement. Teaching in the subject is likely to be outstanding and together with a rich curriculum, which is highly relevant to pupils' needs, it contributes to outstanding learning and achievement or, in exceptional circumstances, achievement that is good and rapidly improving. Thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the subject enables them to thrive. Consequently, pupils and groups of pupils have excellent experiences in the subject, ensuring they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.</p>
<p><b>Good</b> (2)</p>	<p>Effective action is taken in the subject to enable most pupils to reach their potential. Pupils benefit from teaching that is at least good. This promotes very positive attitudes to learning and ensures that achievement in the subject is at least good. Leadership and management of the subject play a significant role in this and are good overall. Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A positive climate for learning exists and pupils and groups of pupils have highly positive experiences in the subject so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.</p>
<p><b>Satisfactory</b> (3)</p>	<p>Achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management of the subject are all likely to be at least satisfactory with some significant good practice. Reasonable steps are taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and groups of pupils have a generally positive experience in the subject and are not disadvantaged as they move to the next stage of their education, training or employment.</p>
<p><b>Inadequate</b> (4)</p>	<p>Overall effectiveness in the subject is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Achievement is inadequate.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching is inadequate.</li> <li>■ The curriculum is inadequate.</li> <li>■ Leadership and management are inadequate.</li> <li>■ There are important weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development resulting in a poor climate for learning in the subject where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Grade descriptors are not to be used as a checklist but should be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach.