Wyedean

School and Sixth Form Centre

Aspire together, achieve together
adfecere pariter, perfecere pariter

Overview

Geography is a fantastic subject for developing a wide range of useful skills whilst studying engaging, important and topical topics. Geography helps students to keep up with the ever-increasing rate of change taking place in the world and to understand the ominous forces of nature that shape it. Geography will challenge students to bring together and make progress in a wide package of skills which will prove invaluable to further studies or employment.

Our curriculum can broadly be subdivided into the following three areas: physical systems, human interactions and environmental issues. Within this we aim to consolidate and extend learning by operating a spiral curriculum revisiting core concepts as students' progress. These include **causality**, for example in explaining how natural processes create distinctive landscapes and landforms and their modification by different factors. We explore **natural hazards** and strategies to **mitigate** and **adapt** to them, how these changes over time, in different places and at different scales. The **interdependence** of people and **globalisation** is explored when considering human activities and principles of **sustainability** are used in evaluation.

In terms of skills our Key Stage 3 curriculum aims to develop student's critical thinking along the lines of Bloom's Taxonomy but also in terms of independent learning and recognising complexity in terms of scale, place and time. In Geography we also aim to enhance student's literacy, numeracy, ICT and investigation skills and we aim to emphasise the relevance of learning to different career paths whenever possible.

Our GCSE course, following the OCR B specification, was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it is enquiry based, structured around topical, important questions. Unlike other exam boards, the content can be delivered within a two-year time frame, allowing students to really develop the depth of their thinking at Key Stage 3, often to A Level standard. There is a considerable emphasis on the application of skills to make geographical conclusions, synthesising and making synoptic links between different sources of information. The relevance of this in vocational contexts is emphasised with every opportunity taken to invite in external speakers.

The OCR A Level specification was chosen as its language and assessment criteria is already familiar to students, maximising their chances of success. The same core principles mentioned above also underpin the course and their examination through the study of new topics enhances the engagement of students. The heavy weighting in the assessment on essay writing skills along with the independent investigation helps prepare students for further studies and work.

Key Stage 3

In Geography you learn about the world in different ways. At a local scale you consider some of the amazing features of our area e.g. caves and rivers. At a global scale you investigate human issues such as how power and wealth is changing and the challenge of managing our environment sustainably. There is also an in depth look at incredible natural forces that shape our planet e.g. volcanoes and earthquakes. You will be challenged to develop new skills.

Key Stage 4

Geography is very popular at Wyedean and students enjoy above average results. This success is built on the interest that students show in the following topics which are part of the OCR A specification (see link below):

The natural world:

- Distinctive Landscapes: how geomorphic processes have created distinctive coastal and river landscapes and the factors affect them.
- Global Hazards: the causes, consequences and responses to weather and tectonic events including hurricanes, droughts and earthquakes.
- Sustaining Ecosystems: the characteristics and interrelationships within these natural systems with a focus on Tropical Rain Forests and Tundra. The impact of humans and the effectiveness of management strategies at different scales.
- Changing Climates: the reliability of evidence and causes of long-term climate change are considered as well as more recent global warming. We also focus on the impacts of climate change on a global scale and within the UK.
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Human Interactions

- UK in the 21st Century: Key issues facing the country are examined for example housing and water shortages and the ageing population. Students study changing economic patterns with a particular focus on Bristol. We also look at the significance of the UK in global conflicts and through its media exports.
- Urban Futures: the causes and consequences of rapid urbanization are considered through a focus on two case studies: Lagos and Bristol. We evaluate attempts to tackle issues.
- Resource Reliance: the challenge of food security is examined through a focus on past, present and small-scale approaches in Tanzania. We also evaluate the sustainability of different food production techniques.
- Development Gap: Zambia is used to illustrate the challenges and opportunities to development faced by Low Income countries.

Fieldwork is an integral part of the course and students are expected to attend two days, one focused on a local river and an urban study in Bristol. In Year 9 those studying Geography are invited to attend a trip to study management issues on a coastline.

At the end of each topic students sit an “End of Topic test” which, along with the mock exams are used to monitor and predict progress.

As you can see students are required to have a broad range of knowledge. We therefore use a range of strategies to systematically revisit and consolidate learning. For example in year 11 a programme of knowledge tests is used to work through the topics. Students are issued a Revision Booklet and there is also an accompanying Revision Guide available through Parent Pay. Regular homework is set.

How can parents help their child?

We would very much encourage parents to discuss with their children what they have been learning about. To facilitate this our revision booklet includes key questions along with answers. These will normally be issued in the lead up to exams but please email us if you would like a copy at any time.

Useful links:

Exam Board website: OCR Geography for enquiring minds

Key Stage 5

Geography is consistently successful and popular at A Level with many students taking related degrees at university. The course builds on existing knowledge, but also allows students to learn about new topics such as disease and how places change and can be shaped. Student learning is supported with Revision Booklets for each topic and there is a dedicated text book for the course. In addition the school library has all past copies of the Geography Review Magazine with up to date case studies and past questions. We use regular End of Topic tests which along with several mock exams during the course inform our predictions and enable us to monitor progress.

20% of the A Level marks are awarded for the completion of an Independent Enquiry where students chose, plan, collect, analyse and evaluate data. Students are supported in developing independent learning skills. We follow the OCR A Level specification and its website includes useful links to the specification and past papers.

Useful links:
Exam Board website: AS and A Level Geography - H081, H481

Extra-Curricular

"Geography is everywhere" so whenever possible opportunities are taken to get out of the classroom. A wide variety of trips are run including fossil hunting in Year 7, investigating rivers in Year 10, cities in Year 11. At A Level we organise a residential trip to a Field Studies Centre to assist you in completing your Independent Enquiry. If there is sufficient demand we have in the past organised trips to Iceland and Bristol University and whenever possible invite outside experts to come in and talk to classes.

Wide spread use is made of ICT and there are often opportunities to join lunch time clubs.