

PROGRESS  
IN

SECOND EDITION

# GEOGRAPHY

DAVID GARDNER

KEY STAGE 3

CURRICULUM  
HANDBOOK



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Gardner is the lead author and series editor of the GA award-winning *Progress in Geography: Key Stage 3* and *Progress in Geography Skills: Key Stage 3* for Hachette Learning. He is also the author of numerous other successful geography textbooks and teacher guides.

David taught geography in comprehensive schools in Leicester and Scarborough for 28 years before becoming a Curriculum Advisor and National Lead for Geography at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). He has worked with teachers all over the world on curriculum and assessment development. During his time at QCA, David developed the national curriculum for geography (2007), the GCSE and A-level geography subject criteria and accredited the resultant specifications as part of the new secondary curriculum review (2007). Since 2011, he has worked in teacher education as a PGCE geography lecturer and has worked with Schools Direct, Teach First, Goldsmiths, University of London Institute of Education and the Open University.

David is also the author of *Planning your coherent 11–16 geography curriculum: a design toolkit*, published by the Geographical Association (GA). This book supports teachers in planning a coherent and sequenced secondary geography curriculum, with progression and assessment at its heart. David is an active member of the Geographical Association. He was chair of the GA's Education Group from 2011 to 2016 and became chair of the GA's Assessment and Examinations Special Interest Group in 2021. He has led a wide range of professional development for secondary teachers focusing on curriculum design and assessment. David is now a freelance education consultant, author and a consultant to the GA.





# PUT PROGRESSION AT THE HEART OF YOUR CURRICULUM

This forward-thinking course has been designed to fascinate and develop young geographers to progress towards a holistic understanding of the world and how it works. The course brings to life the Geography National Curriculum for Key Stage 3, as well as providing a solid foundation for GCSE geography. On the textbook flap and page 1, pupils are provided with the vision statement and curriculum intent. Many activities across different units refer pupils back to these.

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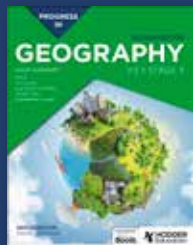
- **Assess and demonstrate pupil progress.**

Ideal for formative assessment, lesson activities create a stepped approach to enquiry learning, guiding pupils through the geographical data as they answer each lesson's enquiry question. End-of-unit review lessons create a reflection point, facilitating medium-term summative assessment and giving a broader view of pupils' progress.

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Put progression at the heart of your curriculum with this hugely popular KS3 course from David Gardner, a leading authority in the Geography community.

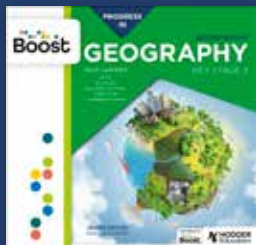
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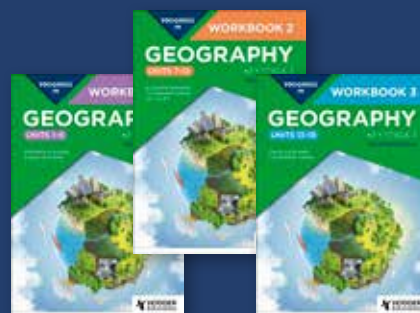
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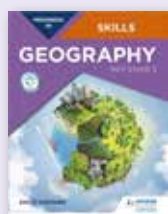
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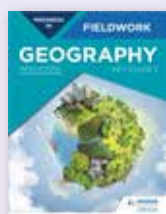


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# INTRODUCTION

This handbook highlights the curriculum intent and implementation for *Progress in Geography*, as well as the potential impact on pupils' progress, of using the course in the classroom. David Gardner explains how the series has been designed to support KS3 pupils, aiding progression and encouraging pupils to work, think and know like a geographer. This handbook explains how *Progress in Geography* has been written to achieve the characteristic features of a high-quality curriculum, evidenced from the geography education community and Ofsted and how it relates to:

- ideas about progression in geography and curriculum design
- the Geography National Curriculum
- Ofsted expectations for a quality curriculum
- GCSE qualifications for geography.

The curriculum research conducted by Ofsted in the Education Inspection Framework (2017) defined curriculum as:

“A framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage (intent); for translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (implementation), and for evaluating what knowledge and understanding pupils have gained against expectations (impact/achievement).”

*Progress in Geography* was designed in 2017 with this definition in mind. We have enhanced this in the second edition, highlighting more clearly the vision for progress and signposting the disciplinary elements of the course, notably the concepts and enquiry.

There are a wide range of opportunities in each unit for pupils to gain an understanding of the interconnections between concepts. These concepts can be found on the vision statement flap. They sit within the three progression strands for the course:

- world knowledge of locations, places and geographical features
- geographical understanding
- application of geographical skills and enquiry.

This handbook uses the three key aspects identified by Ofsted — intent, implementation and impact — to explain the approach to curriculum design that has been developed for *Progress in Geography*. As the title of the course highlights, progression is at the heart of the course and the first section of this handbook highlights ideas about progression in geography.

This handbook is a response to some of Ofsted's recommendations found in their *Getting our bearings: geography subject report* (2023). Schools should:

“Support subject leaders in gaining a deeper understanding of geography's curriculum concepts and how this helps to shape a school's curriculum.”

“Support non-specialist teachers in how best to explain complex geographical ideas and how to identify and address misconceptions.”

Other organisations (exam boards and subject associations, etc.) should:

“Support subject leaders in developing an understanding of geographical concepts and the role they play in the curriculum.”

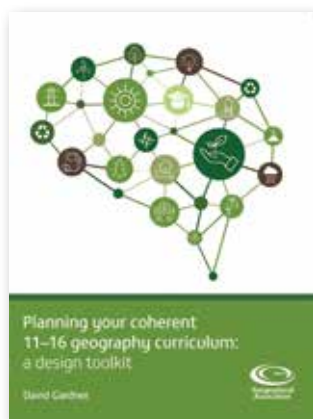
“Consider how to align the content with the aims of the national curriculum.”

## Professional Development by Hodder Education

This handbook is also part of a range of Professional Development (PD) from Hachette Learning to support geography teachers at Key Stage 3. There are two PD

webinars led by David Gardner available on the Hachette Learning website and as part of the digital Boost course.

## Curriculum design

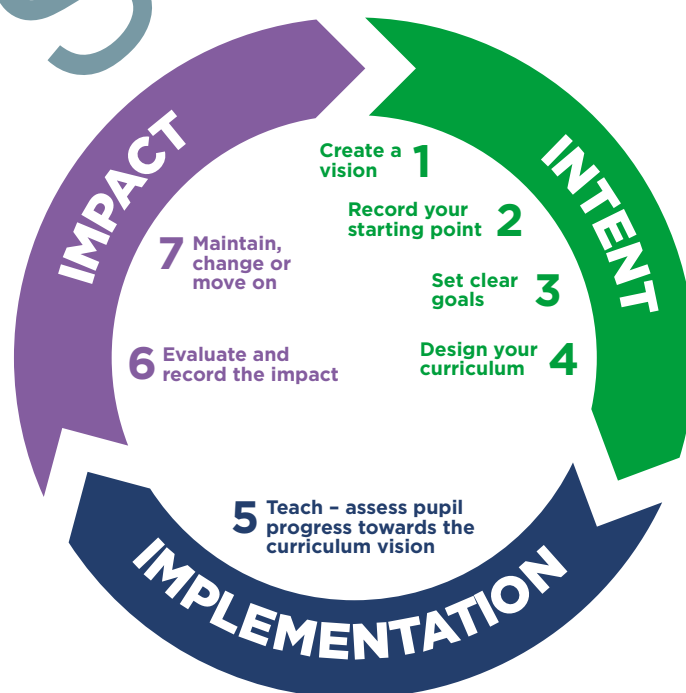


***Planning your coherent 11-16 geography curriculum: a design toolkit (2021)* by David Gardner published by the Geographical Association**

The ideas and approaches to curriculum design presented in *Planning your coherent 11-16 geography curriculum: a design toolkit* have been applied to the development of *Progress in Geography*. The toolkit consists of three distinct but interconnected sections — curriculum design theory, guidance and practice. All three sections provide a wide range of design tools and activities to support geography departments in planning a coherent 11-16 geography curriculum.

The first three chapters of the toolkit provide an overview of the concept of curriculum in an education system controlled by a central government. It explores ideas about curriculum design in geography, as well as the idea of progression and how a curriculum can be designed with progression in mind. The guidance section introduces and explains a seven-step curriculum design process, as shown in Figure 1.

The three 'Is' of the Ofsted definition of curriculum form the outer arrows of the circular process to demonstrate their interconnected nature. The process is designed to aid the development of an ambitious and coherently planned curriculum that supports the intent, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. Key elements of this design process are highlighted in this curriculum handbook, offering a practical example of how the process works. The practice section of the GA design toolkit, provides five case studies of how schools have approached the opportunities provided by Ofsted and the 2014 curriculum review. It highlights the role of the teacher in curriculum enactment, identified by Amanda Spielman (2017) as 'the real substance of education.'



**Figure 1** *The seven-step curriculum design process*



# CURRICULUM INTENT

Heather Fearn, senior Curriculum HMI, outlined Ofsted's thinking about curriculum intent in an Ofsted blog, 'Busting the 'intent' myth' (2019):

“ Intent is about what leaders intend pupils to learn. It's as simple as that. Intent is everything up to the point at which teaching happens ... all the curriculum planning ... what do you want pupils to know? ... Does it contain the right knowledge in the right order? Is the curriculum providing pupils with the building blocks of what they need to know and be able to do to succeed in each subject? So, when we're talking about intent, we're talking about how ambitious, coherently planned and sequenced, how broad and balanced and inclusive the curriculum is. That's all in a school's curriculum planning, up until the point that a teacher teaches the curriculum. ”

## Progression at the heart of the *Progress in Geography* curriculum

The title of this course was established early on to make clear that this curriculum has been designed with pupil progression as a core focus. Abolishing level descriptions in the 2014 national curriculum review provided the opportunity for teachers to more easily design a curriculum that focuses on supporting pupils in making progress.

The Framework for the National Curriculum, a report by the Expert Panel for the National Curriculum Review (2011), provided an early indication of the removal of levels:

“ The approach to progression that we are proposing carries implications for assessment, since the purpose of statutory assessment would change from assigning a 'best fit' level to each pupil to tracking which elements of the curriculum they have adequately achieved and those which require more attention. ... **all assessment and other processes should bring people**

**back to the content of the curriculum (and the extent to which it has been taught and learned), instead of focusing on abstracted and arbitrary expressions of the curriculum such as 'levels'. ” (p50)**

*Progress in Geography* has been designed to take full advantage of the abolition of level descriptions to create a curriculum with progression and assessment at its heart. Establishing such a curriculum requires clear thinking about the notion and nature of progression in geography and its implications for curriculum design.

## The significance of progression in designing a geography curriculum

As Richard Daugherty (1996) makes clear, a curriculum should be designed to best support pupils to learn and make progress:

“ The idea of progression is implicit in any discussion of the nature of the learning we hope students will engage in. If we did not hope that our students would, in some sense, progress we would have no foundation on which to construct a curriculum or to embark on the act of teaching. It is ... a daunting prospect to look across the whole of the period of formal geography teaching in schools and colleges and to ask what concept of progression, implicit or explicit, is informing the design of the curriculum. ” (p195)

Progression in geography is best achieved where teachers and pupils have a clear idea of what getting better at geography looks like, as well as a vision of what a curriculum is intending pupils to achieve and be able to know, understand and do at the end of it.

Trevor Bennetts neatly captures the essentials of progression and its implications of curriculum design and teaching as a whole in his article 'The Links between Understanding, Progression and Assessment in the Secondary Geography Curriculum' (2005):



The concept of progression focuses on the advances in students' learning, over a period of time. It is, therefore, a fundamental idea for planning the structure of a curriculum and for the assessment of students' attainments. ” (p157)

Bennetts goes on to explain what he meant by this:

“ Progression permeates ... the whole enterprise of education, and has implications for many key elements in curriculum planning and implementation: the specification of learning targets; the selection of content and activities; the design of learning materials; the interaction between teachers and students; the assessment and reporting of students' learning; and the evaluation and revision of teaching programmes and strategies. While the idea of progression is especially applicable to advances in the quality of students' learning, it can also be applied to the design of courses which are intended to bring about such advances. ” (p157)

In other words, a curriculum should be planned and sequenced so that the content and learning activities will facilitate advances in geographical understanding. The rate of progress expected should be related to the pupils' developing capabilities and their maturity. At the core of such understanding is the dynamic interrelationship between disciplinary and substantive knowledge.

## Progression – substantive and disciplinary knowledge working together

*A Different View: a manifesto from the Geographical Association* (2009) compared geography to a language that provides a way of thinking about the world. It explains that you need vocabulary to speak the language, but that languages also have grammar, rules, concepts and procedures that are used to construct meaning. The grammar of geography is its big ideas and procedures (the disciplinary knowledge), which helps us organise and attach significance and understanding to the vocabulary (the substantive knowledge).

*A framework for the school geography curriculum* (2022) by the GA expands on this relationship. This framework is a very helpful starting point for constructing a school geography curriculum, as it outlines the nature of geography as a school subject. The ambition for this framework is to:

“ ...ensure that any curriculum incorporating its principles will have the disciplinary power to help young people make sense of the world geographically and to play their part as citizens. ” (p17)

The GA framework clearly explains the differences and purposes of substantive and disciplinary knowledge.

It explains **substantive knowledge** as:

“ The full range of contextual and specific knowledge of the world around us (often called world knowledge) including locational knowledge; tangible features such as rivers, mountains, cities, countries and landscapes; also more abstract features such as economic systems, community beliefs, everyday practices and imaginative place representations. ” (p4)

It identifies three components of **disciplinary knowledge**:

- geographical key concepts – ‘knowing that’
- geographical practice – ‘knowing how’ (also referred to as procedural knowledge)
- geographical application – ‘knowing how to apply’

Ofsted attempted to demonstrate the relationship between substantive and disciplinary knowledge in their *Research review series: geography* (2021), as shown in Figure 2 on page 10.

Designing a geography curriculum requires careful consideration of the relationship between substantive and disciplinary knowledge. This is helpfully explained in GA's *A framework for the school geography curriculum* (2022):

## Substantive knowledge

(The content that is to be learned)

### Locational knowledge

For example: name and locate locations; positioning systems

### Place knowledge

The connection of location and physical and/or human geography processes with personal experience

### Environmental, physical and human geography

For example: migration; glaciation; climate change

### Geographical skills and fieldwork

For example: using maps and globes; collecting first-hand evidence

## Disciplinary knowledge

Insight into the ways geography experts think  
(it is through disciplinary knowledge that pupils learn the practice of geographers)

**Figure 2** *The relationship between substantive and disciplinary geographical knowledge*

“Using substantive knowledge alongside a growing understanding of geographical concepts and a developing competence in geographical practice and application is what gives learners the capability to think and work like geographers, rather than just accumulating world knowledge. This is because knowledge of the world must be shaped by disciplinary approaches in order to become geographical knowledge ... [a school curriculum] must make sure that learners make progress in their disciplinary understanding and competence as well as in their substantive world knowledge.”

This idea is amplified in Ofsted's *geography subject report* (2023) in the 'Geography in secondary schools' section:

### “Summary of the research review relevant to selecting what to teach

Leaders need to identify both the content (substantive knowledge) to be taught and the knowledge of relationships that enable pupils to understand how ideas are connected (disciplinary knowledge). Pupils' combined appreciation of both substantive and disciplinary knowledge can be described as geographical understanding.”

The aims of the GNC provide the basis for three progression strands or three aspects of pupil achievement:

- contextual world knowledge
- geographical understanding of big ideas or concepts
- geographical skills and enquiry.

The *Progress in Geography* curriculum interweaves substantive and disciplinary knowledge to create a coherent and carefully sequenced curriculum supporting pupil progress to becoming a geographer.

## A national curriculum for geography

Both the 'Purpose of study' and the 'Aims of the national curriculum' provide important starting points for creating a coherent curriculum with progression at its heart. They represent what pupils need to achieve by the end of key stage 3, demonstrating the goal of planning for progression at this stage. Both statements helpfully embed substantive and disciplinary knowledge.

## The purpose of study

The 'Purpose of study' statement highlights the relationship between substantive and disciplinary knowledge in terms of pupil progress in understanding how the world works.

The GNC in England (2013) defines the purpose of study as:

“A high-quality geography education should inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Teaching should equip pupils with knowledge about diverse places, people, resources and natural and human environments, together with a deep understanding of the Earth's key physical and human processes. **As pupils progress, their growing knowledge about the world should help them to deepen their understanding of the interaction between physical and human processes, and of the formation and use of landscapes and environments.** Geographical knowledge, understanding and skills provide the frameworks and approaches that explain how the Earth's features at different scales are shaped, interconnected and change over time.”

- collect, analyse and communicate with a range of data gathered through experiences of fieldwork that deepen their understanding of geographical processes
- interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including maps, diagrams, globes, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps, numerical and quantitative skills and writing at length.”

The Ofsted *geography subject report* (2023) highlights the significance of the aims of the GNC in terms of curriculum planning:

“The national curriculum only gives broad topic headings for what is to be covered, such as 'rivers' or 'economic activity'. It does not specify what should be taught about these topics. Some more guidance on what to cover is given in the aims of the subject's national curriculum. However, school leaders often overlook these, and they only give a very broad sense of what should be achieved.”

## The aims of the curriculum

The GNC also lays out the 'Aims of the national curriculum' for geography, which is to ensure that all pupils:

- “develop **contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places** – both terrestrial and marine – including their defining physical and human characteristics and how these provide a geographical context for understanding the actions of processes
- **understand** the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and how they bring about spatial variation and change over time [**disciplinary knowledge**]
- are competent in the **geographical skills** [**disciplinary knowledge**] needed to:

The *Progress in Geography* curriculum has been designed to bring to life the purpose and aims of the GNC. The GNC aims form the basis of the three interconnected progression strands that have been used throughout this curriculum to provide stepping stones of learning to support pupils towards becoming good geographers.

## Dimensions of progress

The GA has identified five broad dimensions of progress. These dimensions show what it means to advance in geography and they provide essential support for designing a curriculum with progress at its heart. Progression can be identified either from pupils' use of increasingly complex descriptions, explanations and abstraction, or from their ability to make more sophisticated links between people, places and processes, thus demonstrating a growing understanding of key ideas in geography. Table 1 shows the relationship between the aims of the GNC and each of the GA's dimensions of progress.

**Table 1** *The GNC aims and the GA's dimensions of progress*

Geography National Curriculum aims	The GA's five dimensions of progress
Contextual world knowledge of locations, places and geographical features.	Demonstrating greater fluency with world knowledge by drawing on increasing breadth and depth of content and contexts.
Understanding of the conditions, processes and interactions that explain geographical features, distribution patterns, and changes over time and space.	Extending from the familiar and concrete to the unfamiliar and abstract. Making greater sense of the world by organising and connecting information and ideas about people, places, processes and environments. Working with more complex information about the world, including the relevance of people's attitudes, values and beliefs.
Competence in geographical enquiry, and the application of skills in observing, collecting, analysing, evaluating and communicating geographical information.	Increasing the range and accuracy of pupils' investigative skills, and advancing their ability to select and apply these with increasing independence to geographical enquiry.

Progression takes place over a number of timescales:

- across a sequence of lessons
- a year
- a key stage.

Progress in geographical learning is not achieved by just accumulating geographical knowledge. Progression in geography can be seen more as a web of linked ideas. This involves the development of geographical thinking, demonstrating the capability to see geographical relationships and make connections between geographical phenomena. Progression is shown by a pupil evolving greater fluency of understanding in different and more complex situations.

Gardner (2021) summarised the significance of aims and ideas about progression:

“As curriculum developers, therefore, we need to plan for progression that sequentially links units of work to:

- What we want students to know (statements of essential knowledge)
- What we want students to understand (conceptual understanding)
- What we want students to be able to do (geographical skills and enquiry). ”

### The vision statement of *Progress in Geography*

The aims of the GNC provide the basis for the curriculum intent of *Progress in Geography*, which is shared with pupils on page 1: What we are trying to achieve? (see Figure 3, page 14) Opportunities for pupils to progress are shared on the vision statement flap. Both of these pages are provided on pages 14 and 15 of this handbook, for your reference.



The following sections of this handbook explain ideas about the significance of the curriculum intent and vision statement aims and how *Progress in Geography* has created a curriculum with progression of the aims in mind.

## Contextual world knowledge

The key stage 3 curriculum statement in the *National curriculum in England: geography programmes of study* GNC (2013) states that:

“...pupils should consolidate and extend their knowledge of the world’s major countries and their physical and human features.”

It also states that pupils should be taught to:

“... extend their locational knowledge and deepen their spatial awareness of the world’s countries, using maps of the world to focus on Africa, Russia, Asia (including China and India), and the Middle East, focusing on their environmental regions, including polar and hot deserts, key physical and human characteristics, countries and major cities.”

The GNC allocated different continents and regions of the world to different key stages. Gardner (2021) explains:

“...it is important to consider a clear rationale for teaching these specific places, beyond the fact that they are in the list of content for the GNC.”

Gardner goes on to explain the significance of, and opportunities offered by, investigating these places:

“The continents of Africa and Asia are dynamic regions of diversity and change, and studying these regions at this continental scale can provide students with a foundation of contextual knowledge that can be built on at GCSE, when investigating case studies for the changing economic world, or urban issues.

The Middle East is a highly significant region of the world, both historically and geographically, and is constantly in the news. It is a region of great oil wealth and conflict, a region often mis-represented and misunderstood in the media: all important reasons and opportunities to be part of a coherent geography curriculum.

... Russia is the world’s largest country in terms of area, a fact that has had a major influence on the way the country has evolved. The way ‘we’ see Russia and the way ‘they’ see ‘the West’ may encourage a curriculum plan that introduces key stage 3 students to global politics.” (p89)

## Progressing the concept of place

There is, however, a deeper, more fundamental, opportunity that locational and/or contextual knowledge provides in order to create a coherent and interconnected geography curriculum. The systematic knowledge identified as human and physical geography in the content list of the GNC can be interconnected with this regional or locational knowledge. A curriculum designed in this manner can help to progress a pupil’s understanding of human and physical processes, and how they are interconnected, and the big ideas of geography — particularly the concept of place.

Alex Standish, in *The place of regional geography* (2018) explains that:

“...systematic geography focuses on one geographical phenomenon or ‘layer’ of the Earth’s surface at a time and explores how it varies with respect to other geographical layers. Regional geography examines the totality of geographical phenomena or layers, and how they are related, at a given locale or region.”

This idea is illustrated in Figure 5 on page 16.

Figure 3 The curriculum intent of Progress in Geography from page 1 of the textbook

# What are we trying to achieve?

*Progress in Geography* will help you to develop new ways of thinking about the physical, human and environmental aspects of the world, and how they interconnect. The eighteen units of the *Progress in Geography* Key Stage 3 curriculum, have been carefully sequenced to provide stepping stones of learning towards becoming a good geographer. This journey begins in Unit 1: 'What is a geographer?', and continues through each unit, developing each area of the *Progress in Geography* vision statement (see flap).

*Progress in Geography* provides opportunities for you to progress in three interconnected elements which match the National Curriculum and are key to becoming a good geographer:

## Application of geographical skills and enquiry

### Work like a geographer

Each lesson in *Progress in Geography*, provides opportunities to work like a geographer, conducting geographical enquiries to answer questions, analysing a wide range of data, including maps, to reach your own judgements, decisions, and conclusions. Each unit has an enquiry title question, and overarching learning objectives, which connect the ten lessons of the unit. The final review lesson in each unit supports you to reflect on your new knowledge, understanding and skills for the whole unit, and ultimately answer the enquiry title question. You will also progress your ability to write and speak like a geographer, communicating your ideas using a wide range of geographical terminology, introduced in lessons and highlighted in the glossary. You will progress your ability to think critically, considering different viewpoints, detecting bias, social injustice and inequality to reach informed decisions and conclusions, about the challenges the world faces now and in the future.

The concluding unit – What is the future for our planet? – provides an opportunity for you to reflect on and apply your learning across all the units

## Geographical understanding

### Think like a geographer

The *Progress in Geography* curriculum will help you to build an understanding of the big ideas, or concepts, of geography, and how these are all **interconnected**, to enable you to think like a geographer. These concepts include:

**Place** **Space** **Scale** **The Earth's systems**

**human processes of:** **Economy** **Development**  
**Population** **Sustainability**

Throughout the course you will be provided with opportunities to make sense of our complex world, to understand that the Earth's physical and human features are shaped by interconnected processes and human choices that change over time and space.

## World knowledge of locations, places and geographical features

### Know like a geographer

*Progress in Geography* will develop your locational knowledge of a diverse range of real places, at a variety of scales, from local to global. You will also learn about Russia – the world's largest country by area; the continents of Asia and Africa – which are rapidly changing; and the Middle East – an important world region. These place-based units will enable you to apply the different geographical knowledge, concepts, themes and skills you have learnt in other units, to the context of a place. This will help you to understand the interconnections that exist between places – an essential aspect of being a good geographer. And as you continue your journey, and develop your skills, you will be able to make connections both between lessons and between topics in different units.

of *Progress in Geography*, to investigate climate change, identifying causes, consequences and possible actions for the future.



Figure 4 The vision statement for Progress in Geography from the textbook map-flap



SAMPLE