

Glossary

concepts abstract ideas that help us to organise our thoughts.

Foundation Stage Curriculum everything children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned, from age three to the end of the reception year (QCA, 2000).

holistic taken as a whole, including or involving all areas of learning/avoiding the constraints of subject boundaries.

patterns the way in which physical and human features occur or are arranged (*seasonal weather patterns; layout of things in the classroom*).

principle an important, underlying assumption or belief that shapes the way we act.

processes a series of actions or events that cause changes in a place or environment, (*digging up part of the garden for a vegetable patch; flooding after heavy rain*).

strategy a carefully devised plan of action to achieve a goal.

sustainability a process which recognises the need to meet the demands of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Bruntland Commission, 1987).

teaching making provision for, and structuring, a range of high quality learning experiences; supporting children in their learning by establishing positive relationships and intervening to scaffold learning when appropriate.

Further GA support

- Additional copies of this Position Statement can be purchased in packs of 25 (price £5.95, plus p&p).
- An A1 poster Making sense of the world: Geography in the Foundation Stage is also available. This will make a bright and lively display in all early years settings, and on the reverse are 8 A4 photocopy masters with guidance for early years practitioners on using different resources in the Foundation Stage.
- Also available in packs of 25 (£5.95 plus p&p) is a Position Statement for primary geography, entitled Finding time for things that matter: geography in primary schools.

Forthcoming next year is cross-curricular support for early years practitioners - watch the GA website for more details.



Photographs © Barry Crayford, Kent Messenger Group, courtesy Paula Owens; © Shaun Flannery Photography UK taken with kind permission of staff and families at Denby Street Nursery School and Family Centre, Sheffield.

References

Bruntland Commission (1987) *Our Common Future: report of the UN Commission on Environment and Development*

DfEE (2000) *The National Curriculum for Geography KS1-3* London: HMSO

QCA/DfEE (2000) *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* London: QCA



160 Solly Street, Sheffield S1 4BF
Telephone 0114 296 0088 Fax 0114 296 7176 E-mail ga@geography.org.uk
www.geography.org.uk
www.geographyshop.org.uk



Early Years

Making connections: *geography in the foundation stage*

A position statement from the Geographical Association

The Geographical Association has developed a strategy for the Foundation Stage. The strategy is embedded in the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and its over-riding intention is to develop in young children a keen interest in, and desire to learn about, the world in which we live. Directly or indirectly, young children experience the world every day. The early years are an ideal time to build on children's images of places, near and far, and to lay the foundations for their understanding of the world. In turn, this will contribute to their development as global citizens.



Geographical
Association



The strategy

Young children develop a sense of their place in the world when:

- they are inspired to think about their own place in the world – their values, their rights, and their responsibilities to other people and the environment (DfEE 2000, page 14) – and are given opportunities to actively participate
- practitioners draw out their wealth of knowledge, understanding and feelings about people and places
- they are supported and encouraged to construct their own meanings about people and places
- they are encouraged to identify with other people and places in positive ways
- practitioners recognise that children’s sense of identity is rooted in the places where they live and play
- their home areas, families and communities are valued
- they actively experience a range of high quality, stimulating environments

The strategy draws on the principles that underpin early years education: young children learn best through self-initiated and supported play, and when they feel valued, secure and are able to build positive relationships with peers and other adults. The strategy recognises and values the specialised skills of parents and practitioners, which allow them to intervene sensitively and appropriately, as partners in children’s learning. It advocates a holistic approach to learning and teaching; at the same time, the strategy recognises that early years practitioners will want to ensure that they lay the foundations for subject-specific objectives and assessment in year 1.

<p>In the application of the strategy, practitioners will be promoting the following key concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of place <i>I can say what the garden is like</i> • Similarly and difference (making connections) <i>I know how Handa’s life is like mine</i> • Location and spatial patterns (where things are and how they are grouped) <i>I have to go past the post office on the way home</i> • Change and continuity (how places are changing) 	<p><i>I know the playground looks different when the leaves fall off the trees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause and effect (processes and their impact) <i>I saw my sandcastle washed away when it rained</i> • Roles, responsibility and participation (awareness, concern, decision and action) <i>I helped plant the willow shelter</i> • Appreciation (diversity of peoples, places and environment) <i>I like hearing stories about other people and places</i>
---	---

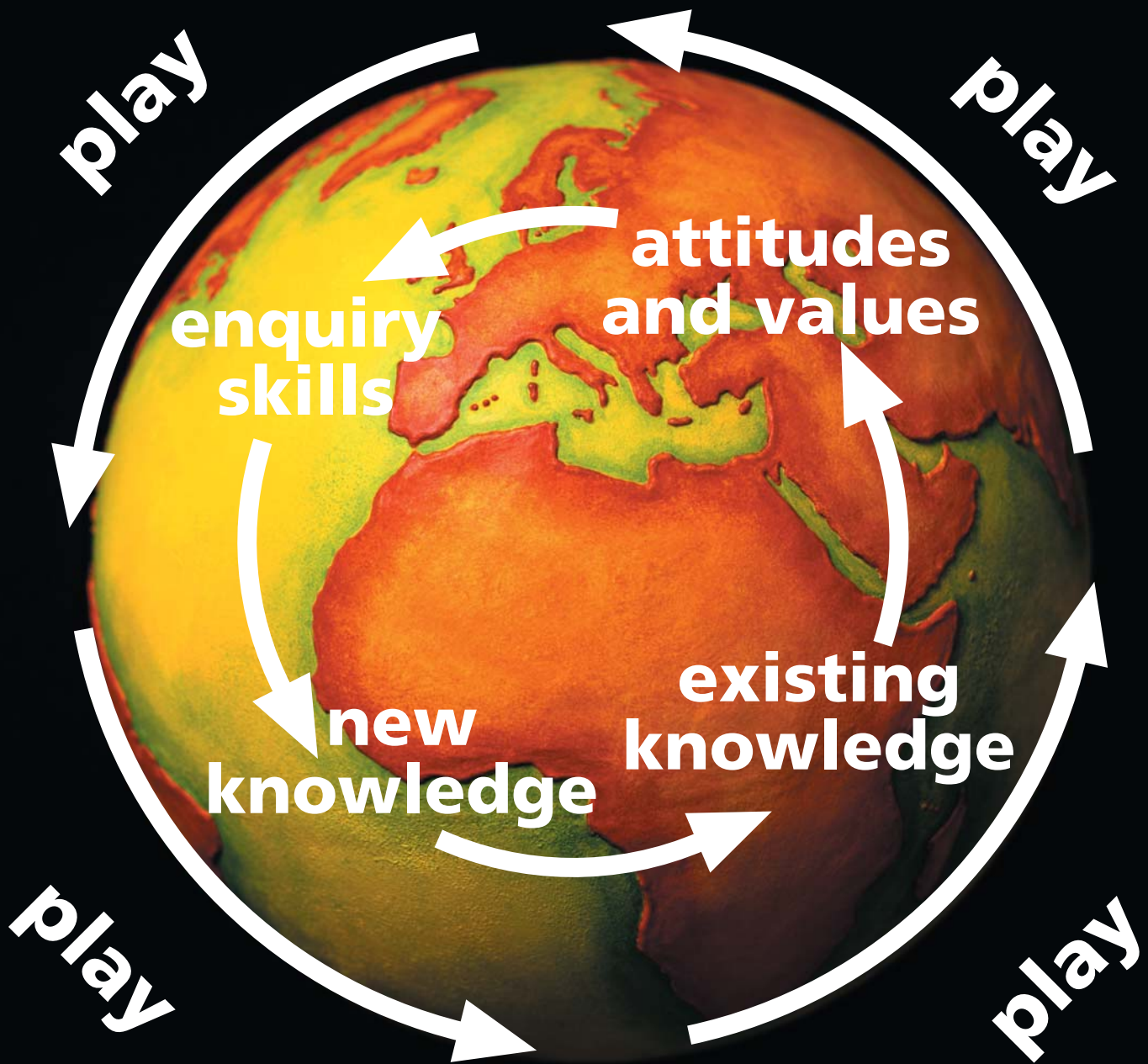
The cycle of learning

Why are attitudes important to new learning? We engage children’s curiosity by drawing on their existing knowledge. Children are eager, willing learners; all we have to do is foster their motivation.

Why are skills next? For children to accommodate new learning, we need to refine and develop their skills. To make sense of their place in the world, they will need to learn to *input* information about the world (asking questions, observing, recording) and *output* information about the world (communicate their new knowledge).

How can we develop their skills? Developing awareness of skills and how to use them (metacognition) can be achieved through teaching, practising, sharing and valuing. For example, a child chooses to make a painting as a means of exploring different colours and shapes of leaves. Encourage the child to talk about the painting of autumn leaves – colours chosen, why, how it was painted.)

Why does this lead to new knowledge? Because new knowledge emerges as a result of motivation and skills



acquisition. It is important to this process for children to recognise new learning, and have their existing/uncertain knowledge challenged in supportive ways.

How do we do this? The practitioner's role is to challenge existing knowledge, and reinforce and extend knowledge as appropriate. At the same time, the knowledge must be applied. For example, as the child 'If you were making a book on autumn, what might you include? What materials might you use?'

The cycle of learning is a continuous process; as new knowledge becomes existing

knowledge the process starts again, fed by developing attitudes and skill acquisition.

Existing knowledge and understanding:

- Affirm and encourage children's existing knowledge to give them the motivation and confidence to learn

Attitudes and values:

- Encourage and support children's natural curiosity about the world around them
- Develop a sense of wonder at the beauty of natural and built environments
- Develop respect for and positive attitudes towards own, and other people's, cultures

- Encourage and develop a sense of responsibility for the environment and their actions within it

Enquiry skills:

- Develop an enquiring mind and the ability to make connections
- Use a multi-sensory approach to investigate the world around us
- Develop varied modes of communication

New and emerging knowledge:

- Learn about places and peoples, near and far
- Experience varied and challenging environments