

Local area investigations and field sketching

Focus on natural landscape features and habitats

Aim: Pupils are reminded to map and record all life forms that need to use the environment under investigation, not just the human users.

When carrying out local area investigations, making maps, plans and field sketches, it is important to ask the pupils to remember to record the natural features they see, plants and habitats, as well as the man-made structures and land uses. This holistic view will help to embed in them our human responsibility for plants and animals that rely on the habitats around us.

It is useful too, to think about and record the 'character of place' when carrying out local area studies. This is often influenced by the green nature of the spaces, such as 'calm cool woods', 'hot, windy busy streets', 'shaded seating under street trees', etc. By asking the children to think about the influence of plants and trees on how a place **feels** it reinforces the importance of the natural world to our quality of life.

This task also offers an opportunity to discuss potential careers relating to the environment such as Town Planning, Landscape Architecture, Ecology, Tree Surgery and so on.

Extension Activity:

Create a scenario, such as a developer's plan to build housing that threatens a habitat, or a new road that would destroy part of a local park. If possible, use a 'live' local application – find these on your local authority Planning Portal online.

- Pupils respond to the proposal, taking the roles of local residents, local businesses, wildlife communities councillors, etc.
- Who or what will be affected, humans and animals, if the plants or habitat is destroyed?
- How will they be affected in the short, medium and long term, and what is the impact on the sustainability of the environment?
- Write representations to the local council to oppose (or support!) the application. If you are using a real local situation, submit the pupils' responses: this brings an additional exciting real-world element for them.



Field sketching is an important skill, that can be practiced within school grounds as well as on trips out.

- Pupils aim to identify the main trees, plants and other natural features as well as man-made structures in the landscape (within and/or beyond school grounds)
- Some school sites will have good views out, but others will be more introspective, and will need to use a different scale to include surface materials (tarmac, gravel, paving, grass), vertical features, (walls, fences), habitats, (trees, shrubs, grass, weeds). The smaller more introspective sites require exploration in greater detail to see how resourceful plants have to be to get a toehold in even the most inhospitable site.
- Think about the variety of animals and minibeasts that are supported by the plants on your site.
- Look at the ground surfaces. How many of these are water permeable? How is water run off dealt with? What are the implications for flooding (an effect of climate change)?
- Microclimate is important too: record the impact of orientation and prevailing wind on the site.

Activity:

- Draw a field sketch. Annotate the drawings with tree ID, human land uses, habitats supporting animal life, permeability of surface materials and any topography that will influence the microclimate on the site.
- Pupils should be reminded to indicate the north point orientation on their sketch.

Key vocabulary:

Route, scales, distance, direction, key, symbol, permeable

More springboards:

- Science Learning Springboard - Heat Islands

Success Criteria

- ✓ I can collect and record evidence in sketches and field note-books
- ✓ I can make and use maps and plans to support a point of view