

Messy Geography activities

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Activity 1

What is your idea of messy geography?

Take the class for a walk round school. Where are the natural messes? Where are weeds surviving, uncleared? Do we want it to be truly pristine around the pond and wild area? What is valued about messy nature?

Activity 2

Find out about a recent major natural event, perhaps a flood or earthquake. What occurred? How has this happened? Why have people reacted and responded to it the way they have? How are they coping and dealing with this natural mess?

Activity 3

Take photographs of, or go out with your pupils and look along, one or more streets near you. How uniform are the buildings? Is there variety in the types of building and use? Have people decorated or extended their homes to create their 'look' and for their needs? Are some well cared for while others are less well looked after or distinctly unkempt? If there was consistency and uniformity how would you feel about this area?

Activity 4

How do the pupils you teach use their spaces? Do they adapt them to their own interests, even if they are adult spaces? Where are their favourite sites? What sorts of places do they most value and which mess them about?

Activity 5

How many toilets are there in your school? Who are they for? Where does the waste from them go? Can you identify the manhole covers and note the route from the school grounds? Does the school have maps of the site that can help you? If something were to go wrong who would resolve matters?

Are there sites locally where natural and human rubbish gathers, or even where rubbish is dumped? Who cleans it up and how often? If it were not cleaned up what would happen and what would you and other people think about it?

Activity 6

What do your pupils know and understand about climate change? How have they heard about it? Do they accept and believe it? What effect do they think it is going to have? Use material from the Oxfam and other websites to examine the issues and viewpoints involved.

Activity 7

Consider how changes are made to the environment in your local area. Have there been any recent developments? What process does a developer or new shop or business owner have to go through to gain planning permission? Where there have been changes, at whatever scale, what have been the views expressed? What do people think about it now? Have they changed their minds?

Activity 8

Consider with your pupils ways to develop greater environmental care in your school, whether you are already involved with the eco-school movement (www.eco-schools.org.uk) or not. What actions are already in place? What could you do to increase environmental care? How will pupils and adults respond to this? How can you persuade them to be more affirmative in their actions?

Do you have class gardening activities or a school gardening club? If so, how does it work and what might be done to enhance it? If not, what would be involved in starting such activities? How would colleagues respond? How would the pupils react? What can you do to initiate gardening and growing food?

Activity 9

Involve the class in planning a fieldwork activity in the school grounds or the local area. What is the topic to study? What do you want to find out? Among the various possibilities which are the most useful to help geographical learning? How will it be carried out? Who does what? How will the information gathered be scrutinised and analysed in class? What are the key findings and how will these be communicated and to whom?

Activity 10

To what extent is your geography curriculum pre-constructed? For instance, do you use a pre-planned unit of work where the weekly focus, questions and tasks are set out and followed? Perhaps, for your next geography topic, you might set out the focus, the ideas and skills that you might use and the resources you have to hand or can access on the web. Could you involve the pupils from the start of the topic in raising, agreeing and prioritising the questions to investigate and in developing the approach to doing so? There may be times when you need to explain that you do not have the resources available, but you might jointly look at how you could overcome or bypass these obstacles. You might act as a critical friend, raising questions about what is really being found out, what conclusions can properly be drawn and what limitations there are to what is understood from their studies.

