

# **LOCAL STUDIES**

# **Local footpaths**



## **How to teach local studies from footpaths**

# Basic resources

## 1. Objectives, equipment

- ▶ The idea is to take your class along a local footpath and use that as a basis for all kinds of local studies.
  - ▶ Footpaths are traffic free, and so you should be able to do this safely.
  - ▶ Almost every area has footpaths. Even cities have footpaths, although you may not spot them unless you have a map to guide you. They may have been transformed into alleys and other such words, but what you want is a longish, traffic -free path. You could also consider using your local shopping centre.
  - ▶ Footpaths are the way people used to move about between places when they mostly went on foot, so the first thing you could do is to put a piece of tracing paper over a local area and trace off the footpaths while the children are watching. Let them see how a kind of informal spider's web of paths appears.
  - ▶ If your local area really doesn't have footpaths, then find a map of an area of villages in a semi-countryside and use that.
  - ▶ You will not be able to get the same information from an OS map as you can if you use satellite imagery such as Google Earth. Explain to children the purpose and usefulness of symbols on maps (such as a dotted line for a footpath) over a satellite image, and visa versa. What is on the image that is not marked on maps (trees, individual houses etc)? What is marked on maps that may not be marked on satellite images (footpaths)?
- ▶ OS local map, Google Maps, Smartphone or video camera or still camera.

- ▶ Where a path crosses a road you may also be able to get a streetview picture from Google Maps. This might be helpful if you want to do an area which is not local.
- ▶ Having got your map and your satellite, the next thing is to walk it on your own, taking photos all the way (see following pages for an example). When you take children, picture-taking may not be as easy. You will then have a resource bank of pictures. Take the pictures at known points and mark those on your map. If possible do a number of pictures at each point to have the equivalent of a panorama.
- ▶ If you have one, use a smartphone or similar to video the route (assuming it takes just a few minutes to walk).
- ▶ During the local study with students, if you have simple video cameras, then students should also walk along taking a route.
- ▶ Do spend time making sure they know why they are going and what they are taking. Taking the backs of other students may not be that useful. What this does is to get students to think about what they are doing and why they are using the equipment, as well as its limitations. If you have several staff, they can move forward in groups separated by a minute or so, with the person with the video camera walking at the front of the group. When viewing the video back in class, students should be critical of how they took it, and make suggestions for improvements.

# Local studies

## Example

### 1. Footpath route

**Objective:** To find out all about a place that we know by using a book and a map.

#### Mapping

##### “Where are we?”

- ▶ This is a lesson that can combine looking at a local area with mapping on many different scales. So we begin with some simple orientation.
  - ▶ Open an atlas of the British Isles showing a full map of the whole country. Ask students where we live, then get them to try to show you where that is on the map.
  - ▶ If the place where you live is not on the map, don't ask them to find it directly, or that might cause some to stumble, whereas we want them to succeed and find looking at maps easy. Instead, think of a nearby place that you know is on the map and ask them to locate that (but see below).
  - ▶ Now you can go over where the place is with respect to other parts of the country. 'We are in southwestern England, northern Wales, southern Scotland etc.'
  - ▶ Once they are comfortable with the general location of where you are, explain that they are now going to look on an online map. Put this on the whiteboard, and usually the starting point will be a globe or a national map. If you have location service switched on you may find it shows a closer area. In this case click the – sign until you get back out to at least the national region. Again, do your orientation by clicking to where your school is in steps. Ensure that students understand that on a small scale map you cannot get all of the places and names on, so
- ▶ Atlas with map of British Isles, connection to online mapping, such as Google Maps.

you need a larger scale map for that. Get them to understand how different scales are useful for different things. Stop at a regional scale (showing other nearby large places and main roads).

- ▶ Now get students to find nearby towns and cities. For example 'Who can tell me of the names of some towns near to us?' Make sure they understand what a town is. One useful rule of thumb would be to get students to think of a town as having at least a street full of shops. See if you can point out where you are and these other places are connected by roads. Does anyone know what their names are? (explain road numbers as well as any that might have names). Why don't they have names in the countryside?
- ▶ Now they are ready for their local study because they can put local into context of regional.

## 2. Plenary session

- ▶ Review the way that maps help us to know where we are, but they are a bird's eye view. We normally see things from the ground, which is what we are going to do with the local footpath study.

## 3. Further work/homework

- ▶ Get students to think about some of the things they might want to see on their footpath route. You may want to help them to see they look at housing types, building materials, natural vegetation, litter, evidence of wildlife, whether signs are well placed and so on.

**On the following 4 pages is an example footpath walk.**



# Local studies



Start your route with a collection of pre-taken photos, like the ones here. Know where you are going to stop each time. Go over the pictures as a plenary session.



Footpaths have all kinds of different signs. There are two different ones here. Can your children design a sign that reflects the locality?



This footpath skirts a playing field. Why does it have gates? Can you do science forces on the various playground features?



Do the students know their trees. What tree is this? How can you tell? There may be several trees en-route.





Everything is of interest, even waste and overgrown areas. This is an example of competition between plants. Which plants are they? How do they live together (e.g. brambles are shade tolerant, nettles are not)



This part passes a cemetery. What are the gravestones made of? Can you record who is buried here. How old were they, what date did they die? Use this as a basis for some simple charts.



Make sure students look down. Nothing on the floor? There certainly is! In this case it is beech nut casings.



In Autumn look for leaves. Can students identify them? This is a chestnut.



# Local studies



Look also for seeds. These are chestnuts (conkers)



Boring path? Certainly not. How is the fence made? How can it be kept from rotting? What is the difference between the fences? How do you make a strong fence etc?



Do a (visual) litter survey and see what people drop. Think of how this could be avoided.





Look UP. Try to find out what the plants are.



Coming out of the path to a small road. Who might use the path and for what? (dog walking, going to school, short cut to shops etc).



This is a part of the footpath with houses on. Talk about the size of the houses. How they are built. Where people might go to work, how they get there and so on.

All of these pictures were taken within 200m of a primary school. If your area is very busy, consider doing the same for a walk through a local park, or some other pedestrian area such as a churchyard.