

WEATHER AND SEASONS:

What are seasons?

Unit overview

In this unit, the children will learn about weather and seasons. This unit has a focus on the local area as well as looking at the wider perspective of the UK. Simply looking out of the window, collecting data in the playground and thinking about what is happening around them, can be perfect ways to support making sense of a changing world. They will observe, spot seasonal patterns and talk about changes by using weather-related vocabulary.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- develop locational and place knowledge about their locality, and the UK as a whole
- understand basic subject-specific vocabulary relating to physical geography
- begin to use geographical skills, including first-hand observation, to enhance their locational awareness
- identify seasonal and daily weather patterns in the UK
- use simple fieldwork and observational skills in their school, its grounds and surroundings
- use and construct basic symbols in a key.

Cross-curricular links

- **English:** learning poems about the weather and seasons (Weeks 2–3).
- **Maths:** collecting data and representing it in tallies or pictograms (Weeks 1–2); using words to arrange in a weather 'Wordle' online (Week 2).
- **Science:** learning about how the seasons have inspired scientists, writers and painters for millennia (Weeks 3–6); learning about night and day (Weeks 5–6); correcting basic misconceptions about the Earth in space (Week 1).
- **Art:** learning about how artists use the seasons for contrasts in their pictures as well as to simulate a mood in a landscape (Weeks 5–6).
- **Music and drama:** listening to sound effects and weather sounds (Weeks 1, 3, 5, 6).

Background information

Learning about the four UK seasons with their distinct characters and contrasts can introduce the idea of change to Key Stage 1. Such observation in the physical world around them prepares them for Key Stage 2.

Observing change in nearby places and environments allows us to celebrate children's enquiry skills: they should learn to ask 'why?' in geography! Children will see how their lives are governed by traditional patterns: half-terms and end-of-term holiday times often have more to do with when the seasons governed our lives more, such as at harvest time. Not all children will celebrate these festivals or go on holiday, but the historic pattern of these being holiday times is unlikely to change. It's simply better for us to have longer holidays in a warm summer with long days of light than the short, cold Christmas fortnight. After all we can't play out as long! Easter, too, may move but it is a regular part of the school year. Eliciting children's memories of the patterns in the year will enable them to start to build up concepts which we may take for granted. Children's prior knowledge and understanding of the concept of a day, week, month or year will help as well as planning to reinforce this learning in Maths/Science. In general, places in the east and south of the UK tend to be drier, warmer, sunnier and less windy than those further west and north. Also, these favourable weather conditions usually occur more often in the spring and summer than in autumn and winter. But that is by no means the whole story, and these climate descriptions illustrate the all-important regional and seasonal variations. Further details about regional climates can be found on the Met Office (www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/regional-climates).

The Big Finish

The children will create a 'weather wonderland' as a final assembly or presentation, which contains ideas that they have worked on throughout the unit. The presentation/assembly could be filmed and used for assessment purposes. The children's wonderland could consist of group freeze frames and linked music poems for each of the four seasons. Alternatively, they might write a collaborative weather story with story sticks and symbols.

Map work

If examples of extreme weather are in the news over the course of this unit, try to use them to develop the children's locational and place knowledge. World maps can also be used to allow children to link what is happening locally (our weather) to the wider perspective of global climate patterns. Local maps featuring the school should be used with the cardinal points of the compass (N, S, E, W) labelled. Perhaps where the wind is coming from today could be a feature of your conversations. Encourage children to think about the maps they see on the TV, or forecasts they hear on the radio – the regular weather report is useful too. Ask simple questions such as: When we come to school, where is the sun? Where is it at lunchtime/home time? Is it the same all over the world?

Fieldwork

Walking children around the school grounds allows them to see evidence of the current weather and seasons. Look for changing tree colours, old leaves on the ground, puddles, shadows, where the sun is, etc. With contrasting images of these places to show, you will be able to discuss change and possible reasons for this. Try Google™ Street View for local views in very different seasons. You can also use the 'time machine' feature, as in many areas you can see views from as far back as 2007, possibly before the children were born! Ask questions such as: Why can we see last autumn's leaves but not any snow? Do we see any young ducks in the Autumn? Such conversations will link to learning about life cycles in science.

Independent learning area

This area could feature displays, vocabulary, and weather symbol flash cards. Have key word displays of the days of the week and months of the year, laminated and mixed up to sort and order. Also include weather measuring equipment, such as that which you might make in Week 2. Provide a range of children's books featuring the seasons and images of the same scene (Week 1) as well as their own interpretations of these.

Assessment

All children can:

- identify changes in the weather
- identify seasonal weather patterns in the UK
- assist in taking repeated observations and record these using symbols
- understand the different parts of the UK and that the weather may vary and there can be hot and cold areas of the UK on the same day.

Most children can:

- name and describe changes in the weather
- name the seasons and describe the basic UK seasonal weather patterns
- assist in taking repeated observations and record these using symbols
- understand the different parts of the UK and that the weather may vary there.

Some children can:

- name and describe changes in the weather confidently
- name the seasons and describe the basic UK seasonal weather patterns
- take repeated observations accurately and record these using symbols
- understand the different parts of the UK and that the weather may vary there due to the wind.