

Science Curriculum – Year 3 and 4

Year 3 programme of study

Plants

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

identify and describe the functions of different parts of flowering plants: roots, stem/trunk, leaves and flowers

explore the requirements of plants for life and growth (air, light, water, nutrients from soil, and room to grow) and how they vary from plant to plant

investigate the way in which water is transported within plants

explore the part that flowers play in the life cycle of flowering plants, including pollination, seed formation and seed dispersal.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should be introduced to the relationship between structure and function: the idea that every part has a job to do. They should explore questions that focus on the role of the roots and stem in nutrition and support, leaves for nutrition and flowers for reproduction.

Note: Pupils can be introduced to the idea that plants can make their own food, but at this stage they do not need to understand how this happens.

Pupils might work scientifically by: comparing the effect of different factors on plant growth, for example, the amount of light, the amount of fertiliser; discovering how seeds are formed by observing the different stages of plant life cycles over a period of time; looking for patterns in the structure of fruits that relate to how the seeds are dispersed.

They might observe how water is transported in plants, for example, by putting cut, white carnations into coloured water and observing how water travels up the stem to the flowers.

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Animals, including humans

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

identify that animals, including humans, need the right types and amount of nutrition, and that they cannot make their own food; they get nutrition from what they eat

identify that humans and some other animals have skeletons and muscles for support, protection and movement.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should continue to learn about the importance of nutrition and should be introduced to the main body parts associated with the skeleton and muscles, finding out how different parts of the body have special functions.

Pupils might work scientifically by: identifying and grouping animals with and without skeletons and observing and comparing their movement; exploring ideas about what would happen if humans did not have skeletons. They might compare and contrast the diets of different animals (including their pets) and decide ways of grouping them according to what they eat. They might research different food groups and how they keep us healthy and design meals based on what they find out.

Rocks

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

compare and group together different kinds of rocks on the basis of their appearance and simple physical properties

describe in simple terms how fossils are formed when things that have lived are trapped within rock

recognise that soils are made from rocks and organic matter.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Linked with work in geography, pupils should explore different kinds of rocks and soils, including those in the local environment.

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Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils might work scientifically by: observing rocks, including those used in buildings and gravestones, and exploring how and why they might have changed over time; using a hand lens or microscope to help them to identify and classify rocks according to whether they have grains or crystals, and whether they have fossils in them. Pupils might research and discuss the different kinds of living things whose fossils are found in sedimentary rock and explore how fossils are formed. Pupils could explore different soils and identify similarities and differences between them and investigate what happens when rocks are rubbed together or what changes occur when they are in water. They can raise and answer questions about the way soils are formed.

Light

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

recognise that they need light in order to see things and that dark is the absence of light

notice that light is reflected from surfaces

recognise that light from the sun can be dangerous and that there are ways to protect their eyes

recognise that shadows are formed when the light from a light source is blocked by an opaque object

find patterns in the way that the size of shadows change.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should explore what happens when light reflects off a mirror or other reflective surfaces, including playing mirror games to help them to answer questions about how light behaves. They should think about why it is important to protect their eyes from bright lights. They should look for, and measure, shadows, and find out how they are formed and what might cause the shadows to change.

Note: Pupils should be warned that it is not safe to look directly at the Sun, even when wearing dark glasses.

Pupils might work scientifically by: looking for patterns in what happens to shadows when the light source moves or the distance between the light source and the object changes.

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Forces and magnets

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

compare how things move on different surfaces

notice that some forces need contact between two objects, but magnetic forces can act at a distance

observe how magnets attract or repel each other and attract some materials and not others

compare and group together a variety of everyday materials on the basis of whether they are attracted to a magnet, and identify some magnetic materials

describe magnets as having two poles

predict whether two magnets will attract or repel each other, depending on which poles are facing.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should observe that magnetic forces can act without direct contact, unlike most forces, where direct contact is necessary (for example, opening a door, pushing a swing). They should explore the behaviour and everyday uses of different magnets (for example, bar, ring, button and horseshoe).

Pupils might work scientifically by: comparing how different things move and grouping them; raising questions and carrying out tests to find out how far things move on different surfaces and gathering and recording data to find answers their questions; exploring the strengths of different magnets and finding a fair way to compare them; sorting materials into those that are magnetic and those that are not; looking for patterns in the way that magnets behave in relation to each other and what might affect this, for example, the strength of the magnet or which pole faces another; identifying how these properties make magnets useful in everyday items and suggesting creative uses for different magnets.

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Year 4 programme of study

Living things and their habitats

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

recognise that living things can be grouped in a variety of ways

explore and use classification keys to help group, identify and name a variety of living things in their local and wider environment

recognise that environments can change and that this can sometimes pose dangers to living things.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should use the local environment throughout the year to raise and answer questions that help them to identify and study plants and animals in their habitat. They should identify how the habitat changes throughout the year. Pupils should explore possible ways of grouping a wide selection of living things that include animals and flowering plants and non-flowering plants. Pupils could begin to put vertebrate animals into groups such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals; and invertebrates into snails and slugs, worms, spiders, and insects.

Note: Plants can be grouped into categories such as flowering plants (including grasses) and non-flowering plants, such as ferns and mosses.

Pupils should explore examples of human impact (both positive and negative) on environments, for example, the positive effects of nature reserves, ecologically planned parks, or garden ponds, and the negative effects of population and development, litter or deforestation.

Pupils might work scientifically by: using and making simple guides or keys to explore and identify local plants and animals; making a guide to local living things; raising and answering questions based on their observations of animals and what they have found out about other animals that they have researched.

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Animals, including humans

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

describe the simple functions of the basic parts of the digestive system in humans

identify the different types of teeth in humans and their simple functions

construct and interpret a variety of food chains, identifying producers, predators and prey.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should be introduced to the main body parts associated with the digestive system, for example, mouth, tongue, teeth, oesophagus, stomach and small and large intestine and explore questions that help them to understand their special functions.

Pupils might work scientifically by: comparing the teeth of carnivores and herbivores, and suggesting reasons for differences; finding out what damages teeth and how to look after them. They might draw and discuss their ideas about the digestive system and compare them with models or images.

States of matter

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

compare and group materials together, according to whether they are solids, liquids or gases

observe that some materials change state when they are heated or cooled, and measure or research the temperature at which this happens in degrees Celsius (°C)

identify the part played by evaporation and condensation in the water cycle and associate the rate of evaporation with temperature.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should explore a variety of everyday materials and develop simple descriptions of the states of matter (solids hold their shape; liquids form a pool not a pile; gases escape from an unsealed container). Pupils should observe water as a solid, a liquid and a gas

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Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

and should note the changes to water when it is heated or cooled.

Note: Teachers should avoid using materials where heating is associated with chemical change, for example, through baking or burning.

Pupils might work scientifically by: grouping and classifying a variety of different materials; exploring the effect of temperature on substances such as chocolate, butter, cream (for example, to make food such as chocolate crispy cakes and ice-cream for a party). They could research the temperature at which materials change state, for example, when iron melts or when oxygen condenses into a liquid. They might observe and record evaporation over a period of time, for example, a puddle in the playground or washing on a line, and investigate the effect of temperature on washing drying or snowmen melting.

Sound

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

identify how sounds are made, associating some of them with something vibrating

recognise that vibrations from sounds travel through a medium to the ear

find patterns between the pitch of a sound and features of the object that produced it

find patterns between the volume of a sound and the strength of the vibrations that produced it

recognise that sounds get fainter as the distance from the sound source increases.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should explore and identify the way sound is made through vibration in a range of different musical instruments from around the world; and find out how the pitch and volume of sounds can be changed in a variety of ways.

Pupils might work scientifically by: finding patterns in the sounds that are made by different objects such as saucepan lids of different sizes or elastic bands of different thicknesses. They might make earmuffs from a variety of different materials to investigate which provides the best insulation against sound. They could make and play their own instruments by using what they have found out about pitch and volume.

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Electricity

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

identify common appliances that run on electricity

construct a simple series electrical circuit, identifying and naming its basic parts, including cells, wires, bulbs, switches and buzzers

identify whether or not a lamp will light in a simple series circuit, based on whether or not the lamp is part of a complete loop with a battery

recognise that a switch opens and closes a circuit and associate this with whether or not a lamp lights in a simple series circuit

recognise some common conductors and insulators, and associate metals with being good conductors.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should construct simple series circuits, trying different components, for example, bulbs, buzzers and motors, and including switches, and use their circuits to create simple devices. Pupils should draw the circuit as a pictorial representation, not necessarily using conventional circuit symbols at this stage; these will be introduced in year 6.

Note: Pupils might use the terms current and voltage, but these should not be introduced or defined formally at this stage. Pupils should be taught about precautions for working safely with electricity.

Pupils might work scientifically by: observing patterns, for example, that bulbs get brighter if more cells are added, that metals tend to be conductors of electricity, and that some materials can and some cannot be used to connect across a gap in a circuit.