Navigation: Geocaching

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt where players use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver to hide and seek containers (caches) hidden anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and pencil. Geocachers who find the cache enter the date they found it and sign the logbook with their established code name. Larger containers can also contain items for trading, usually trinkets of little value, whilst some geocaches contain GeoCoins or TravelBugs that are registered and can be tracked across the world. The cache's co-ordinates are posted on listing sites for other geocachers to use; they are almost always in areas of historical, geographical or scenic interest.

Geocaching is an exciting activity that encourages children to explore the natural environment, using technology as a 'hook'. It develops the children's physical skills, ICT skills, thinking skills and social skills. Additional learning is gained when the children hide their own cache, encouraging them to research sites, plot co-ordinates, write descriptions and upload clues on a website.

You can take part in geocaching using any handheld GPS device, including downloadable apps for smartphones or car sat-nav devices. In addition, you should carry a topographical map (e.g. an Ordnance Survey map) of the area where the cache is located.

There are a number of websites where geocaches are listed. These include worldwide, national and regional listings. A good place to start is www.geocaching.com. This offers general guidance on geocaching as well as free basic membership.

Geocaching is underpinned by clear legal and ethical guidelines concerning both the contents and location of caches. Respect for the environment and for other people (geocachers, landowners and users) is at the heart of geocaching.

Caches are rated so you can select a challenge according to the children's age, ability and experience as well as the time you have available. It's a good idea for first timers to start with an easy (1/1) rated cache. You could also introduce the children to geocaching through an intra-school activity (using the school's intranet to post co-ordinates and clues of a locally-hidden cache), or through inter-school links (with other primary or secondary schools), before using a national or international website.

Encourage the children to introduce their families to geocaching too!

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