

Mapping Education in UK Schools

Children at state and independent schools across the UK have begun learning with the most highly detailed Ordnance Survey digital maps under a new 'mapping on demand' agreement. Local studies, field work and controlled assessments are all being supported by the move which widens an existing map-subscription service to include all schools, academies and teacher-training establishments in the country.

The Advisory Unit: Computers in Education, which supplies geographical and ICT products and training services, has joined forces with leading location content platform emapsite to make the mapping available.

Under the agreement, schools pay a small annual subscription that enables The Advisory Unit to source their map orders from emapsite and supply them ready to use on disk in AEGIS, the popular GIS software for UK secondary schools.

Teachers can build their map libraries by choosing up to four digital extracts a year from anywhere in Great Britain.

The datasets comprise very detailed OS MasterMap mapping as well as OS 1:10 000 scale, OS 1:25,000 scale and OS 1:50,000 scale colour raster backdrop mapping. Teachers can choose four maps with the same scale or choose from across the range of scales.

Diana Freeman MBE, Director of The Advisory Unit, said the new agreement with emapsite, which follows on from an initial ground-breaking National MapPilot for Schools (2006-10), would help guarantee continued and improved access to digital maps for many thousands of pupils.

Geography pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are core groups to benefit. The agreement will support the full range of practical map skills including the use of symbols, grid references and contours and the understanding of distance, scale and direction. As pupils prepare for GCSE, the map data will help with decision making based on the location and distribution of land use and the patterns of settlements and communications.

On receipt of the map data, teachers use AEGIS software to create and display interactive on-screen worksheets. Pupils add their own data to the maps for classwork, fieldwork and controlled assessments.

Ms Freeman added that pupils may import all kinds of information including location charts, flowlines, traffic surveys, shaded areas, statistics and census maps, all prime examples of GIS in action. Hurst Community College in Tadley, Hampshire, a mixed comprehensive of around 1,100 pupils, is one of the first schools to make use of the new service.

AEGIS is backed with a range of online teaching resources including tutorial and lesson plans, curriculum planning guidance, Goad town plans, free viewer downloads, helpsheets and telephone and email support.

James Cutler, chief executive of emapsite, which hosts a comprehensive range of mapping and geographic information for professionals, said that the agreement with The Advisory unit means schools can receive the most up-to-date digital mapping for any area they choose. The data ranges from detailed building and land use polygons for large-scale fieldwork down to smaller-scale mapping for wider area context and surrounding transport networks.