Exploring the Journey of a River with Finn

Learning objective: To understand the physical features of a river's journey from source to mouth and identify key geographical processes.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of the water cycle and river systems to provide detailed answers. Remember to use geographical vocabulary where appropriate.

Finn the dolphin is mapping the journey of a river from the high mountains down to the deep blue sea. As he swims, he notices how the river changes shape and speed depending on the landscape. Use your understanding of rivers to help Finn complete his field notes.

Word bank: Source · Mouth · Tributary · Confluence · Meander · Erosion · Deposition · Estuary

1. Define the term 'source' and 'mouth' of a river. Where are these usually located in the river's course? (2 marks)

2. Explain the difference between a tributary and a confluence. You may draw a small diagram to support your answer. (2 marks)

3. Describe what a 'meander' is and explain how the speed of the water affects the shape of the river bend. (3 marks)

4. Finn finds a spot where the river is depositing lots of sediment. Does this happen where the water is moving fast or slow? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

5. Why do many settlements and towns historically develop near the mouth of a river or along its banks? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a labelled diagram of a river’s journey from the high mountain source to the sea mouth. Include a tributary, a meander, and an estuary in your drawing.

Extension challenge: Research the River Thames. Create a fact file for Finn that lists three major towns or cities it flows through and explain one way humans use the river today compared to how it was used in the past.