

HISTORY

Key Concepts

Key stage 1:

Pupils should develop an awareness of the past, using common words and phrases relating to the passing of time. They should know where the people and events they study fit within a chronological framework and identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods. They should use a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms. They should ask and answer questions, choosing and using parts of stories and other sources to show that they know and understand key features of events. They should understand some of the ways in which we find out about the past and identify different ways in which it is represented.

- changes within living memory.
- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally [for example, the Great Fire of London, the first aeroplane flight or events commemorated through festivals or anniversaries]
- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements.
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.

Key Stage 2:

Pupils should continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, establishing clear narratives within and across the periods they study. They should note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms. They should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance. They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.

- changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age
- the Roman Empire and its impact on Britain Examples
- the Roman Empire by AD 42 and the power of its army
- Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots Examples
- the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor
- a local history study
- a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066
- the achievements of the earliest civilisations

National Curriculum Purpose of Study and Aims

A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement.

History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.

Aims

The national curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously
- to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

Specific pedagogical considerations

- Understanding of timeline and perspective of time passing. This is a really important concept for children to develop as they move from their understanding of the past in EYFS (what their past is) to understanding the context of when early civilisations lived. This needs to constant repetition using the visualisation of a timeline. Many schools/classrooms have accessible timelines displayed to help children to develop this concept.
- How does the school identify, teach and develop abstract ideas such as 'empire', 'civilisation' and 'parliament'? Make sure you fully understand where the history topic you are teaching fits within the school's long term plan and within these abstract ideas.
- Develop the use of historical artefacts to look for clues about a particular historical period. These are really important to develop into your practice to develop skills around historical enquiry
- Think about how you can bring in different historical perspectives. Consider getting into role as different historical characters and encouraging the children to ask questions to them about their perspective on events. Children can also take on this role to be able to synthesise their knowledge.
- What local history can be brought into the school's curriculum. How can you start to use first hand experience to find out the cause and effect of what happened? This is useful to explore primary and secondary sources

Further questions for reflection

- How is historical enquiry different from other forms of enquiry? What knowledge do children need to bring to this enquiry?
- How can we help children to understand that history has shaped the world today?
- How do we make sure we represent life in the past from a range of ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds?

What might progression look like? What do look out for and emphasise in your teaching

Pupils make progress in history by developing: their knowledge about the past (this knowledge is often described as 'substantive knowledge'); their knowledge about how historians investigate the past, and how they construct historical claims, arguments and accounts (often described as 'disciplinary knowledge')

'Pupils make progress in history through building their knowledge of the past, and of how historians study the past and construct accounts. Teaching supports pupil progress by embedding frameworks of content and concepts that enable pupils to access future material. Abstract concepts are best learned through meaningful examples and repeated encounters in different contexts. There are a range of important considerations for curriculum designers to ensure a broad curriculum for all pupils.' (Ofsted History Research Review, 2021)

- Use common vocabulary across the school.
- Children will become better at historical enquiry. As children develop their knowledge of the past, look for ways in which children start to link this knowledge together and transfer this knowledge to other situations.
- As the children develop their understanding of abstract ideas such as 'civilisation' and 'parliament' expect children to explain their understanding and make the links themselves. Teachers should have high expectations that children will understand these key concepts as they get older.

Key misconceptions and specific issues to be aware of:

- Children will have difficulty understanding the concept of BC and AD without the use of timeline. This needs a clear visual representation
- Objects being/ looking/ appearing old or new. There can be a confusion that all old objects need to look old but it depends on the conditions they have been kept in.
- Be aware that some children may think that life in the past was just in black and white due to the photographs they look at.
- Children can have preconceived and stereotypical ideas about people in the past. Be careful how you represent the people, places and events in the past. It is important to look from different perspectives and make sure that you are representing all ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds.

Resource links

[Historical Association Primary Teaching Resources](#)

[National Geographic – Kids – useful primary History resources](#)

[British museum](#) – explore the collection online

[BBC history resources](#) – lots of useful resources and videos

Key questions when observing or teaching this subject

How has specific historical vocabulary been developed?

How are pupils developing a sense of time, relativity and perspective?

How are pupils building on their knowledge and understanding of key historical concepts?

Is there an opportunity for pupils to develop their enquiry skills?

How are children supported to challenge the reliability of their imagery of the past?

How are the children developing their understanding of key abstract ideas around history (e.g. civilisation, parliament)?

Further reading

[History National Curriculum](#)

[Ofsted Research Review](#) – published in July 2021 and explores the ideas of knowledge in more depth

[Historical Association](#) – become a member and have access to up to date knowledge and teaching ideas

[Ofsted subject report: history \(2023\)](#)

Percival, J. (2020) *Understanding and Teaching Primary History*. London: SAGE.