

Key Stage 2 History Rationale

Like all of our curriculum programmes, The KS2 history curriculum is based on the only safe assumption that a teacher can make: that the pupil might go on to study the subject at university, require particular subject knowledge in their future career, or need particular subject knowledge or skills to enable them to be active members of society. As a result, the curriculum has been designed to be fit for that purpose.

The history curriculum at Key Stage 2 seeks to give pupils a solid foundation and broad overview in some of the most important periods, events and themes in British and world history. It is comprehensive but necessarily selective. The curriculum gives pupils a strong grounding in British history, taught chronologically from the first settlements through Roman Britain, the Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, the medieval period and up to the Industrial Revolution and touching on Britain during the two World Wars. While studying these periods the units explore themes of change and continuity, perspective and power. We have carefully selected the five units exploring world history to provide global coverage and introduce a number of themes. The unit on Ancient Greece introduces key ideas around power and its legitimacy, the Shang Dynasty gives insight into the progress and achievements in China at a time when there was much less occurring in Europe. The unit on the Middle East gives pupils an overview of the history of this vitally important region and the reasons for the intractable problems faced today. We chose to include units on the Benin Kingdom to challenge the narrative often prevalent in the teaching of African history – celebrating a highly successful civilisation while introducing the slave trade. Finally the unit on Civil Rights provides a survey of way black people have been treated in the USA, through the Civil Rights movement and Dr King, right the way to the Black Lives Matter.

By bringing pupils up to the present day – in the case of Civil Rights and the Middle East – the curriculum demonstrates the importance of past events in shaping the world of today. Throughout the curriculum connections and comparison are made between events and individuals: the unit on the industrial revolution exploring the Great Reform Act by taking pupils from the Magna Carta (which they have studied years before) through the changing seat of power in England over the subsequent six hundred years.

Throughout the curriculum, pupils are taught the substantive content which defines each period. This knowledge is meticulously planned and regularly revisited and elaborated upon. More abstract concepts, too, are carefully developed across the key stage, so that pupils gain an increasingly sophisticated understanding of, for example, kingship or empire. However, it is not only substantive knowledge that is taught. The disciplinary skills of history, such as source analysis, interpretation, perspective, continuity and change are all explicitly taught and practised.

The curriculum is deliberately ambitious. It challenges pupils to make connections across time and place and sets up pupils for, we hope, a life-long love and understanding of an important subject, while providing a foundation of understanding that will make them curious, active citizens of this country and the world.