

# History

## A conversation with Bobbie Young

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**As your students leave you at the end of Year 6 what would you want them to know, to understand, and be able to do in history? What would make an excellent history curriculum and an excellent young historian?**

We have a vision of what our Year 6 historians should look like. By the time they reach upper KS2, if they have been with us at Harris from Early Years, we want our pupils to really be able to understand and explain key events in modern history, especially ones that have shaped modern society, particularly in Britain, and the idea of how events in the past have shaped and made the present. We want them to have a sense of who we are, and why we are the way we are as a nation. When we thought through how to build up to that, we realised we also want our historians

to be able to analyse history and use their disciplinary skills. So, we want our Year 6 historians to be able to look at a piece of evidence, for example, and analyse it, asking, 'Is it reliable? What can I learn from it, if it is unreliable? Is this an interpretation or is it primary evidence?' For example, for a text about Alfred the Great, we want our pupils to ask, 'Who is the person who wrote this text? What did they want us to feel? Did they want to hammer home that he was so great and the things that he did were fantastic, and where is the factual evidence behind that? What are the words that are making us question the reliability of this evidence?' Alongside knowing a lot of facts about history, we wanted them to be able to question history and question different perspectives of history, and begin to build their own understanding of events.

**If that's your end point, how does your curriculum get those children to that end point? How is it constructed, and what's the process you go through to get there?**

As a federation, we have Early Years consultants who said, 'Okay, by the time children leave Reception, they are going to be able to talk about their family history.' They're going to know that the past and the present are very different, and we said, 'Okay, that's great.' So what I really enjoyed, having come from a Year 6 background, is working on Year 1 history, and literally the very first unit we do is called 'Am I Making History?' The first lesson, and the very first slide, is entitled, 'Time moves forward, it doesn't move back.' We had to start at the very beginning, to build that understanding of the passage of time. It always moves forward. We can look back and we can learn about the past, but we can never go back into the past.

When it comes to history in the Early Years, we work thematically. The early learning goals are mapped out in nursery and Reception, as are our subject-specific goals. In autumn of nursery, children will begin to make sense of their own life story. Then in schools, our subject leads speak to the Early Years leads and ask, 'So how do our children at our school learn this objective and that objective? What is the context of it?' Then we can make sure that that transition is happening from Early Years into Year 1. The Year 1 units of work have been planned so they build on those ELGs; we talk about people who are significant to us. We've got our parents and our grandparents, but then we have our great grandparents, which

leads on to our ancestors. That's that progression up as well. Year 1 builds on the Early Years. We ensured that the very first unit in Year 1 – as well as explaining the linear nature of time – only considers the recent past within living memory, and we literally think about history in terms of the present and their personal history, and then parents and grandparents. We begin to build up this idea of great grandparents because, actually, parents and grandparents is what they learned in Early Years, so we want to make sure we're progressing. By doing that, we really wanted to build up the concept of the past and the recent past, and you can ask people about the latter. We build up the concept of what is important in history, the idea of significance, and we start off with what is important to you, because, as we know, that's how the concept of significance works for children. If something is important to you as a child, then that's what is important. It doesn't matter what anyone else says.

So, we think about family history; we've had children in Year 1 bringing in artefacts from their family history. We've had children bringing in their family bible and children bringing in their grandparents' medals from the war, and old black and white pictures. As we work through Year 1, we have this really strong idea of time within living memory. For the next unit, we will go a little bit further, and we start to think about just beyond living memory. The unit is called 'How Have Toys and Games Changed?' One of the key questions is, 'What are the toys that my grandparents played with?' What is the same? What is different? How was the way of life in the past different? We bring in old pictures and other artefacts. We've got old pictures of 1950s toy shops. And who knew that Game Boys would be historical artefacts! Even from Year 1, we want them to question history, and we start looking at the gender specificity of toys in the past. They learn about the early 20th century, and they learn about Victorian toys. We have our peg dolls, and we have a lesson where we might make peg dolls or spinners. Then in the last few lessons about toys and games, we begin to have a look at the gender-specific adverts of the past – how is this the same, and how is this different now – and begin to question why toys are designed for different genders. We've always had toys, but how have they changed? We build up those concepts of history, at a level which really enthuses them; they've talked about themselves, they've talked about their parents and grandparents, and it means there are lots of home links. You might think that Year 1 is quite early, but you only have to be a parent

or someone who works with children to know they're always going to question things; we harness that curiosity and get them to question what they're seeing about the past. We focus on the concept of representation in the curriculum. We put children and their lived experiences centrally within the curriculum, without having any contrived links or false allegiances and alliances with anything. We're saying, 'You belong here, this is your history.' We celebrate everybody's place in history.

When we have units that focus in on perhaps a concept like *significance*, we look at locally and nationally significant people, such as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson who was born in Whitechapel, and studied and worked in London. She was the first female doctor. To keep in the medical field, we have Mary Seacole, another British pioneer in medicine, and then we go into Lilian Bader, who was a pioneer in women's rights. She was a black woman in the Navy or Air Force in World War II, and then Princess Sophia Duleep Singh. So, when we do choose people and we look at people, we make sure it's people who have pioneered, who have gone through obstacles or challenges and are people who can just teach us about everyday experiences in history.

We planned out our curriculum and ensured our knowledge was progressive and linked with our community. Our academies are based in South London. We are extremely proud of the diversity that our school communities represent, so we show this and in Year 6, our final unit is 'How Has London Changed Over Time?' We have a unit focused upon the theme of conflict, protest and politics. They learn about suffragettes, they learn about Wat Tyler, they learn about the Black Power movement in Brixton, looking at Olive Morris. This is where I live, and this is how the place I have lived has developed through time. Then we also have, in spring, a unit about the British Empire; we wanted to make sure our children knew the facts, rather than the propaganda which surrounds the empire. It wasn't all flag waving. We explore the idea of trade in Year 6. We have Year 6s telling us about cash crops, and they say, 'It's just all about the sugar cane, Miss. The British went to India, and that became the corn basket of the empire. They might have built trains and things, but actually, they were removing the Indians' cultural identity, so it wasn't right.' It's important that they can question and understand that history wasn't all great, and also that they can gain a sense of the experience of everyday people in history.

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While we get through our national curriculum content of, say, ancient Greece, the civilisation, the legacy that it left for the world, we also learn about the everyday experience of ancient Greeks, including women, including enslaved people. One of the key inquiries in Year 2 is about explorers, and we use it as a thematic unit where we learn about different explorers throughout time and then compare them. All our units have an overarching key question; for example, when we learn about prehistory, we will ask, 'What was life like in the Stone Age?' Then the next term it's, 'How did bronze change Britain?' We have this overarching question, and then each lesson is a question in itself. The first question in the Bronze Age unit is, 'What is bronze?' It's probably the best place to start. A key question, which was given to us by a secondary consultant, is, 'Who is Diego?' That's the name of the lesson. If you search the internet for 'Diego explorer' it will give you *Dora the Explorer!* Diego was, in fact, Francis Drake's manservant and interpreter. Drake would have been lost without him, literally! The lesson beforehand, the pupils learn about Francis Drake and his achievements. And, equally interesting, is that it was a certain Pedro Alonso Nino who actually sailed the ship and navigated the route, because Francis Drake was the boss of the operation. There were always people like Diego, who are the cogs in the machine, whose lives we want to know about, whose lives we deserve to know about. It's hard to pick people as we move into KS2 units because the people who we might want to learn more about, their names are not recorded, so we just have to fall back on to images. In ancient Rome, we have a unit about how society was built as a layered hierarchy. We had the aristocrats, the plebeians and then, basically, enslaved people. For the aristocrats we could study Julius Caesar or quite a few other people, but the names of the middle classes are lost to history, as are the enslaved people's names, so we often use the artefacts and the images of people to make sure that kind of agency is brought to life for our children.

In order to save our primary teachers time and to provide them with specialist knowledge, we produce subject-by-subject lesson materials, and we have a motto, which is, 'Adapt, not adopt.' So, they adapt them for their classroom settings, for their children, and our teachers have some ownership. Their job is to bring the materials alive for the children. The historical disciplinary skills we teach the children are like the lens through which we see history. What is quite nice about archaeology is your understanding of archaeology is purely through your evidence.

We interpret the evidence and that's how we know about prehistoric Britain. So that's the kind of mindset we have when we're creating the lesson materials. Take the Great Fire of London. Our key question is, 'How did the Great Fire of London change London?' Rather than just saying, 'The fire was big, and everyone had to evacuate,' we looked at the fire through contemporary paintings. They're still primary sources because they were made right after the fire. No one has time to paint while you're evacuating. 'Let's look at these paintings. What can we see and what does it tell us?' We have that as a standard approach to analysing evidence and artefacts. So even from Year 2, we're learning the term 'primary source'. 'What can we see? What can it tell us?' Then we begin to question every kind of artefact or evidence that we encounter.

In Year 5, for instance, when we learn about King Offa of Mercia, who was an Anglo-Saxon king, there's actually quite a lot of evidence and it's really varied. He built earthworks. 'What can we see and what does it tell us?' Basically, he built this massive ditch in the ground and created this massive bank to defend his territory from Wales. If you're building this massive bank and this massive ditch, what does it tell you? You've got a point to make, first of all. So, he was trying to assert his status, 'This is my land, I am ruling this.' Then we deduce more about him. He obviously wanted to be well known, just from the sheer size of the dyke. We pursue the idea of a kingdom being created and sold to other neighbouring tribes. We look at the coins. 'Well, he's made the effort to ensure that his image is spread around the kingdom he's in. Offa's creating a promotional campaign about himself, he's building up the sense of being in charge of this kingdom, in a time when the Anglo-Saxons have just invaded and they're settling down, with lots of fighting between tribes. That's really important, to have people know you're the one in charge and you're going to take over their tribe if they attack you.' We then begin to look at the reliability of the evidence, with the same kind of questioning: 'Well, what does it tell us, and can I trust it, or is there perhaps another side of the story?'

We have been considering using historical fiction as a source in Year 6. We are asking ourselves, 'What can we learn from this historical fiction, but also, why can I not trust it completely?' It's been written based on the evidence, but it's been dramatised, and just because it's written in a book, it isn't 100% reliable. It does provide insights into the daily

lives of people. And historical fiction for primary-aged children tends to be written from the perspective of children who lived at that time. Historical fiction gives you vivid, engaging accounts of the daily life of the time, based on good evidence sources, but distanced, so we can also question our evidence when we use it.

### **How do you go about selecting the texts that the children will read?**

In Year 2, when we study the Great Fire of London, we learn about what happened to everyday people. We look at the people who were prosecuted after the Great Fire for stealing. There was a huge crime spree – mainly looting – during the Great Fire of London. So, we look at the court extracts which we accessed from the National Archives, and which they transcribe for us. We are sent the transcription. But the children are in Year 2, so ‘executed’ is not a word I want to introduce until Years 5 or 6. We use the word ‘punishment’ instead, because it’s KS1 appropriate. It communicates the idea that everyone was punished, and we simplify the transcriptions so that the core of that text and evidence was still there. We do have the picture of the source on the cover of the transcriptions. I want the children to see that in the 1600s they had fancy writing in posh English and to explain that it’s not the same as English is today, but shows how language develops over time too. Then the class teachers and the children question the accessible version of that text.

Colleagues have a dialogue about what we include and don’t include. For instance, we had a whole unit on the impact of the plough upon Britain, but in the end we included only one lesson on the topic. And yet the plough transformed Britain. Once you had bronze, you could plough more, but once you had iron, it was so strong and durable that once we had iron, the population of Britain just exploded. Britons were healthier because they could farm more, they had more food and could eat more seasonal food. And when they had to fight for more resources, with a bigger population they were more successful and so the population kept growing. Some of our Year 3 teachers have gone away and they’ve learned about those ‘50 Objects That Made the Modern Economy’ on the BBC. The first one was the plough, which ‘kick-started civilisation and ultimately made our modern economy possible’. We’ve had children telling us that they talked about the plough on BBC Two the previous evening.

We put prehistoric Britain in Year 3 because, from lower KS2, we work chronologically. In KS1, we build that notion of the passage of time. In Year 2, we go back to time beyond living memory, and we look at the wonderful stories of the Tudors and the Great Fire of London, and then we look at our explorers across time. Then in Year 3 we teach prehistoric Britain; you've got to think about what is age-appropriate, and the idea that it was so far away in the past. We go into some depth because we've dedicated a half-term per prehistoric time period and then another half-term afterwards. We have four half-terms on prehistoric Britain where we look at the changes and the continuity. We learn about the interglacial periods, which come between the two ice ages when some people entered Britain. Neanderthals were in Britain, and they were living in caves and then came another ice age. We like to stay true to the evidence. We look at Neanderthal skulls, but we make sure that the artist reconstructions are there as well, and say, 'Okay, this is the evidence, and this is how we interpret it as historians.' It means our children's chronology is deep set. Then we jump into ancient Egypt because that was happening concurrently. So, in Year 3, we begin with prehistoric Britain, and then in summer of Year 3, we go to ancient Egypt. Literally, the first thing we do is say, 'What do we remember about Britain? When did these periods happen?' Then we put it on the timeline, and then say, 'Here is ancient Egypt.' At the end of learning about ancient Egypt, Year 3s say, 'I cannot believe they were building pyramids and we're meant to be proud of Stonehenge.' And we explain that life was different in different parts of the world. We still have Stonehenge, we should take pride in it, it's our history.

Then in Year 4, we look at the ancient civilisations, ancient Greece and ancient Rome. All these are happening concurrently and they're building those connections, building that idea of civilisation. Ancient Greece is there on the timeline, and then we learn about ancient Rome and the interesting thing is that ancient Rome nicked most of their ideas from ancient Greece. When they learn about mythology, they're struck by the relationship between Greece and Rome. They are building those connections, and, to quote the history curriculum, 'they're noting the trends, contrasts and comparisons between time periods,' and that is one of the advantages of teaching them in this chronological order. Traditionally, the ancient civilisations form the Year 6 unit, because you



do governance and democracy, and all the political things with ancient Greece in Year 6, but covering them in Year 3 has its advantages. When we look at the Anglo-Saxons, one of the reasons why the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain was they saw the power vacuum left by the Romans, and actually, the Romans knew they were coming. They'd spread their army so thin across the empire that they could see these Germanic tribes invading. So, we have a lesson asking, 'Why did the Anglo-Saxons come to Britain?' They saw this power vacuum, they saw the resources. The Romans were spread so thin. These other things were happening in the empire, so they invaded.

The substantive concepts of history are usually displayed as word lists, like 'monarchy', 'status', etc., but what we've done, as a federation, is created this Venn diagram with overarching themes. So one of the overarching themes is the idea of power and another is the idea of movement, and obviously, they overlap, especially when it comes to invasion. Instead of these words being taught in linear lists, we've put them into this Venn diagram and said, 'Okay, so where does culture overlap with power?' We make sure that they build progressively through these different contexts. As we get into Year 5, we learn about governance. We ask, 'What can we remember about Roman governance? It was really regimented, we had the consuls, etc., etc. Well, the Anglo-Saxons came, and it was completely tribal. We had the Heptarchy; seven main kingdoms of Britain, fighting against each other, until they unified against the Vikings.' Then when we move on from the Anglo-Saxons, we go into the medieval period for a post-1066 idea of governance. We had a king, and they were in charge, and we had our church as well. When we move into Year 6, we revisit these concepts; we've set up the idea of democracy in our ancient civilisation unit in Year 4, and it pops up when we look at conflict, politics and power in the British Empire unit, or in the Victorians unit, or in our unit where we look at London across time. Our children can say, 'This is what it was like thousands of years ago, and this is how we've got to this place.' At first, as we planned this curriculum, we questioned whether a chronological approach was right, but it quite naturally helps their thought processes of understanding how history works.

The benefit of being a federation with secondary colleagues is they've also provided advice; for example, when the pupils learn about World

War II in KS3, they're going to learn about all the military aspects. We learn about World War II in Year 6, but we think hard about how we want our children to connect with the subject they're learning. Okay then, so we look at the home front in Britain in Year 6 in preparation for what they will learn in KS3 about World War II. 'How did World War II change Britain?' We begin with a lesson where we learn why the war started, and we go into detail about the Treaty of Versailles in World War I. We look at hyperinflation in Germany. They look at the sources, the pictures of all the money in the wheelbarrows, just to emphasise, 'This is why Nazis rose to power, and this is why we went to war.' Then we think about, 'How did the war affect Britain? What happened in our country while this was happening in Europe?' So, because they've seen concepts of invasion from the Anglo-Saxon times and invasion from the Romans invading Britain, when they learn about Germany invading Poland, it just seems to click. Then we connect to the home front and the experience of children. We also include the experience of global Britons from the colonies of the empire. They've learned about the empire at that point, and we ask, 'How did India, how did Africa, how did all the countries of the British Empire contribute, because it was a world war?' World War II is one of those key subjects that they learn in the KS3 curriculum, and when they arrive there from Year 6 it is easy for them to make connections: 'I know how this affected everyday life in Britain, so now let's learn what happened in Europe and the politics of it all.'

Every outcome has to be disciplinary skills based. In history we always make sure that the outcome is historical skills based. They can be analysing the evidence by ranking the different sources of evidence in terms of significance in a diamond nine. When we teach World War II and they're looking at the factors that led to the world war, they consider the scale of significance, and then evaluate which one they think was the most important and why? Even in Year 1, if they are looking at the idea of significance and what makes an event significant, we have a lot of Year 1s asking, 'What makes something a key life event?' Your birthday party is actually a key life event because it's something you're going to remember. You are not going to remember every time you brush your teeth. That is not a key life event. In that lesson, they sort significance. So is it significant, is it personal? Then the same when they look at personal events and national events in Year 1. 'Is it personal to me, like my mum's

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birthday? Yes, that's only important to me and my mum. Bonfire night. Well, everyone else seems to be celebrating it as well, so that must be for everyone.' That is the lens through which we want our outcomes to be shaped.

Keeping the skills focus historical needs a change of mindset. Take, for instance, John Hawkins, an Elizabethan merchant who built up a connection with the Benin kingdom in Africa, and basically developed the slave trade there. Often you'll find the assessment task set is something like, 'Pretend you're writing for an Elizabethan magazine and you are a sailor on one of John Hawkins' ships...' Well, firstly, there was no such thing as an Elizabethan magazine. Secondly, that is a writing task and while they're looking through the perspective of a Tudor, they're not Tudors – the children live in South London in 2022 and they're in Year 4. I don't think they're going to truly understand those implications through this mode of assessment, so how else could we teach that? What if we had a look at the crops or the resources that are being traded and we think about why would they be needed in Britain, why do we not have them? So why does that make it important, and how that affected society. What are the implications of that and the impact on the Benin kingdom? That kind of focus upon the historical is important.

We teach each history unit in a one-hour lesson a week, for six weeks. At the end of the unit, we have a low-stakes multiple-choice quiz, that tests the core knowledge that has been learned to see if there are any misconceptions that have emerged over the half-term. We have a written outcome that answers the inquiry question, for example, 'What was life like in Stone Age Britain?' They answer that in a mini essay style. It's always an age-appropriate assessment; sometimes in KS1 it's through a group presentation on sugar paper. Then each lesson would have some teaching and an outcome in their books; when they learn about Sophia Duleep Singh in Year 1 they have to learn about who she was. Well, she was a suffragette in the Victorian and Edwardian era, and so the children look at photographs of her – a famous picture of Sophia Duleep Singh is her trying to sell the suffragette magazine on the street, so that's got that knowledge ticked off for that lesson – they look at that different evidence about what she had done, and then they go on a mini protest. So that answered that question: they now know she was a suffragette, she was fighting for women's rights, and they understand the work that she did.

One thing that we start building in Years 5 and 6 is this idea of historical argument, but using historians, and their accounts and their interpretations; what you may see is a quote from a historian for the children to consider. It is the first steps into historiography. For example, when they learn about the Anglo-Saxon beliefs, not a lot is known factually or evidentially, because a lot of it is just circumstantial. Basically, because the Anglo-Saxon belief was all very nature based, and the only reason we know about it is because people like the Romans wrote about it, we use an historian's account of the time, and then they explain what that historian means and what evidence it is based upon.

Then in Year 6, we look at global Britons in World War II, and the quotation from David Olusoga, who said, 'The stories of the thousands who came to Britain from the colonies and the occupied nations of Europe during World War II have often been marginalised and forgotten.' We ask the children, 'How is Olusoga right?' In the lesson they've looked at case studies of different soldiers from across the empire and the massive contribution that they made to the war, and then they find out there's not a statue, that they didn't get a medal. Some of them died in poverty and the pupils conclude, 'Well, do you know what, he's right because these things happened and no one celebrates them.' As we refine our curriculum, we teach them how to engage with historians and historical argument in upper KS2.

### **The importance of local history at primary**

While local history for all of our schools is London, at the end of Year 6 we look at London through time and each school looks at the history of its immediate locale. Penge used to have 1000 inhabitants pre-1850. That must have been a few little farms dotted here and there, with a lot of people living in different rooms and there was one pub that was a coach stop on the way to Dover. Then around the early-mid 1800s, around 1840, Penge just exploded locally, and there are some almshouses that were built, which were like charitable houses for widows, and the Victorian architecture in Penge is literally beautiful. Part of their geography learning is a local area walk to answer the question, 'How has our settlement or the town where we live changed historically and geographically over time?' We look at how Penge has changed over the last 150 years. We do a local area walk where we bring together what we

know about geography, walking up Penge High Street towards Crystal Palace, and look at how history has impacted the geography of Penge and Crystal Palace. We walk past the almshouses, up to the station, thinking about how the railway changed this settlement, and then walk up to Crystal Palace and see the Crystal Palace. When we go for our little walk around Penge and say, 'Look, there's the church,' we ask, 'Is the church modern or is it from the recent past, or is it Victorian? It's Victorian. How do I know this? What do our modern buildings look like? What do our buildings from the past look like?' It is like a ghost walk of our local area. We have a guidebook that we can read together and questions we can talk about as a group. That's how we'll build up that understanding of local history at a Year 1 level. And then in Year 6, we look at the specific detail historically: 'In 1840, no one lived in Penge, and then, suddenly, boom, it's gone from 1000 to 18,000. What happened in 150 years? How did the Victorian era affect Penge?'

### **How do you assess your curriculum in school?**

We have our activities and our tasks, and, as we create the lessons, we think about cognitive load and how we can make sure that they're learning three core bits of knowledge. I keep it to three for each lesson. Three bullet points, basically, on the overview, that we give to teachers. This is the core, non-negotiable knowledge. We have all our background and history behind it that we might use, but this is what we want every child to know when they leave this lesson. So our activities are assessed, but also, every lesson starts off with what we call a starter sticker, because we literally put it on a sticker to save glue sticks. We call it, 'Knowing more, remembering more,' if our children are knowing more and remembering more, that is learning, and that is basically their prior knowledge. So every lesson starts off with a 'Knowing more, remembering more' quiz; it's a true and false question, it's multiple choice and then it's a very short written answer. It's really linked into what they need for that lesson. Then every lesson also starts off with a revisit. What do we need to know from our past lessons or maybe other time periods we've learned about for this lesson? That's kind of how we assess, lesson on lesson. That's our AfL, to stop those misconceptions forming in the beginning of the lessons and just to make sure, as we work through the unit of work. It would be technically summative at the end

of the lessons, but lesson six, with the multiple-choice quiz, that's always the opportunity to revise. So, the children should do the multiple-choice quiz and then, as a class teacher, they self-assess it, and that class teacher has monitored throughout the lesson, walked around. The teacher might say, 'Oh, wait a minute, no one has got a clue about question 4. I remember, we digressed a bit in that lesson, so maybe the knowledge got a bit muddled, or maybe a misconception arose, and I hadn't quite realised.' Then in that final lesson, they write their mini essays, but that's also that opportunity then to discuss those misconceptions or those gaps in knowledge that have arisen over the unit, and ensure that the learning is secure by the time we finish the unit. We have a revisit slide at the beginning of every lesson, some of which will cover material taught some time ago. For example, when we learn about mythology in ancient Rome, the revisit slide has a picture of ancient Egyptian tomb paintings and a picture of some Greek statues, like gods and goddess statues, and the question is, 'Where have we seen religions with many gods and goddesses before?' That's that opportunity for that assessment, and if they cannot recall it, we might spend some time reviewing or reteaching the material.

### **Are all the children's outcomes single subject based?**

Yes, but we highlight the connections between subjects that happen quite naturally, and we've made sure that the curricula of different subjects are designed to surface the inter-subject connections. For example, in PSHE the children also learn about women's pioneers in one of their PSHE units, and they learn about women's rights activists in the spring term, so that in the summer, when they learn about Sophia Duleep Singh, they build upon their knowledge. We teach the subjects independently of each other, but with very deliberate connections. That kind of diagonal thinking happens during the curriculum design process. Each subject is taught discretely, with an appreciation and respect for what is a historical disciplinary skill and knowledge, and what is geographical disciplinary skill and knowledge. Then naturally, as it progresses and builds up, those connections between knowledge, and the schema of knowledge, build through time. We ask our children, 'What is an historical skill, what is a geographical skill?' We want our children to be able to articulate that they've learned, the cause and consequence.

### **History: background**

History's etymology derives from the Greek meaning 'request' or 'knowledge reached by survey'. The first European historians are the Greeks Herodotus and Thucydides, living more than 2400 years ago. They were the first ones to take history as the product of people's intentions and acts.

To help us get our bearings, it is worth quoting the purpose of history from the national curriculum programme of study:

'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.

'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.<sup>1</sup>

Once the importance statements have been revisited, it is helpful for subject leaders and co-ordinators to discuss and agree with colleagues the reason why their subject, in this case, history, is important for the pupils in their school. One way of doing this is to draw on a quote, in this case from Marcus Garvey: 'A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.' This kind of prompt allows us to formulate our way of stating the importance of the subject. We might agree or disagree with such a statement and in doing so come to a form of words which expresses our view of the importance of this subject, in this school. This moves us away from the territory of 'we teach this subject because of the SATs or GCSEs'. While the external tests and exams are important, they are not the totality of the subject.

### **Professional communities**

Subject associations are important because at the heart of their work is curriculum thinking, development and resources. The subject association for history is the Historical Association and it should be the case that any member of staff with responsibility for a subject should be a member of the relevant subject association, and this should be paid for by the school. The Schools History Project is another invaluable source of information, support and development for history teachers.

Twitter subject communities are important for the development of subject knowledge because it is here that there are lively debates about

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education. (2013) *National curriculum in England: history programmes of study*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/375UmZk> (Accessed: 9 March 2022).



## History

what to teach, how to teach and the kinds of resources that are helpful. For history, it is worth following the Historical Association's Twitter and the hashtags #historyteacher and #curriculum.

### Links

Historical Association – [www.bit.ly/3gatIQZ](http://www.bit.ly/3gatIQZ)

Schools History Project – [www.schoolshistoryproject.co.uk](http://www.schoolshistoryproject.co.uk)

Gombrich's *A Little History of the World* – [www.bit.ly/3sxn7Fa](http://www.bit.ly/3sxn7Fa)

National archives – [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

BBC archives – [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p059sqrc](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p059sqrc)

BBC Schools Primary History – [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/)

British Library – [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

My Learning – [www.mylearning.org](http://www.mylearning.org)

Historic England – [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)