

Subject Leader Report: History



‘Our Vision is for every child to love learning, be compassionate and achieve now and in the future. Working together with our communities, we will give our children roots to grow and wings to fly.’

Our Aims in History

In History lessons at Portsdown Primary School, we aim to give children the opportunity to learn about the past in Britain and the wider world. History is a valued part of our curriculum as it helps us understand our identities. Through our enquiry-led history lessons, children will learn about real people and real events that have shaped our societies. History at Portsdown will help children develop and appreciation for the complexity of people’s lives, the process of change and diversities among social groups. History learning at Portsdown will have a central theme of chronology so that children are well placed to identify and discuss similarities and differences that societies have experienced and make valid comparisons to their own lived experiences. We aim to teach children gather evidence, form conclusions and promote their views; all skills which are essential in later life.

Substantive and disciplinary knowledge

In history, substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge refer to two different but interconnected types of understanding that students develop when studying the past.

Substantive Knowledge:

This is the factual content or information about the past. It includes the who, what, when, where, and why of historical events, people, and places.

Examples: Knowledge of specific events like the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the causes of World War I, or the lives of historical figures like Cleopatra or Napoleon.

It's essentially the raw material of history — the facts and details about the past that are studied.

Disciplinary Knowledge:

This refers to the methods and skills historians use to study and understand the past.

It involves knowing how to analyse sources, interpret evidence, and ask historical questions. It also includes understanding how history is constructed and how historians evaluate and compare different perspectives.

In short:

Substantive knowledge is about the content or facts of history.

Disciplinary knowledge is about how to study, interpret, and think critically about those facts.

Planning and Teaching

At Portsdown, we follow the National Curriculum to ensure that children are able to learn more, remember more and know more about a broad range of peoples throughout history. Our history units are centred around a key enquiry which children will unpick throughout a half-term. Teachers are supported to plan lessons with a vocabulary progression – once children are able to use the correct historical vocabulary, they are able to better articulate their responses and delve deeper into their learning.

How do we plan for your subject?

The key themes & topics that children learn about are:

EYFS: Chronology through understanding past and present; celebrations

Y1: The sea side; Mary Anning and Galileo

Y2: Great Fire of London; Portchester castle (local and national event)

Y3: Life in the British Stone Age; Ancient Egyptian beliefs

Y4: Technology through time (Britain post 1066); The Anglo-Saxons; The Roman legacy

Y5: The Vikings – raiders or traders?; The achievements of the Ancient Greeks

Y6: The Mary Rose (local study); Changing lives through WWII; Ancient Islamic Civilisation

All year groups also learn about and celebrate Black History Month in October.

Assessment

Teachers monitor each child's progress using formative assessments and respond with support, adjusting their teaching accordingly to meet the needs of individual children. Assessment is based upon questioning and discussions with children in addition to work recorded in History books. End of unit summative assessments are carried out by teachers and recorded centrally.

Monitoring the Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning within History is monitored by the subject leader. This is completed through pupil interviews throughout the year. Planning is also monitored to check it follows the long term plan as outlined at the start of the year to ensure full curriculum coverage.

Wider Enrichment Opportunities

History has been supported through whole-school events such as the Black History Month celebration and the D-Day celebrations. These special events allow for children to develop their chronological knowledge whilst engaging with the subject in non-traditional, cross-curricular ways. Children have benefited from visits to historical places this year and in KS2, some classes created PE dance performances linked to their history themes.

Targets for 2025-26

- **Monitor Teaching Quality:** Continue to observe history lessons and provide constructive feedback to improve teaching practices. Have more opportunities to work with teachers during the planning phase to ensure high quality and accessible learning for all. Lesson observations were undertaken with the history coordinator and the curriculum leader and the history coordinator supported year groups and individual teachers where requested.
- **Develop clear assessment criteria:** Develop and implement a simple and consistent system for assessing historical skills and knowledge. Ensure short 5-minute retrieval of previous units are being included at the start of every history lesson across the school.
- **Developing oracy within history lessons:** Embed oracy opportunities across the history curriculum by developing and sharing a set of key discussion-based activities for each KS. Monitor the impact through pupil voice and lessons observations.

Targets for 2026-27

Recall & Retrieval: Embed regular low-stakes retrieval routines across KS1 and KS2 to strengthen long-term memory and retention of historical facts.

Vital Vocabulary: Explicitly teach topic-specific Tier 2/3 vocabulary and create frequent opportunities for pupils to use it in talk and writing.

Chronology: Develop a consistent, whole-school approach to timelines and temporal language so pupils understand historical sequences and time periods.

EYFS Provision: Secure foundational historical learning (Past and Present) in Nursery and Reception through stories, artifacts, and continuous provision.

Enquiry-Driven Outcomes: Ensure all unit planning and final pupil tasks directly address and answer an overarching historical enquiry question.

Cross-Curricular Knowledge Organisers: Ensure Knowledge Organisers are consistently embedded and actively utilized across all foundation subjects to support whole-school retrieval and vocabulary learning.