

A Guide to being a Historian at HSA School

Intent: What is it like to be a historian at HSA school?

SKILLS

At HSA School we develop our children's skills of Historical enquiry in line with the National Curriculum programmes of study. Children learn to ask questions and use evidence. They are taught to think critically and understand the past and its lasting impact on the present.

CURIOSITY

At HSA School we enable our children to be curious, use inquiry to explore the past. We help children become active learners – using curiosity as a driver to encourage children to ask questions, investigate ideas, and seek deeper understanding.

We encourage pupils to explore why events happened, not just what happened and look for clues and evidence like real historians. Children make connections between people, places, and times. They learn critical thinking skills in the context of history which enable them to become discriminating users of information.

ENJOYMENT

We want our children to feel excited to find out answers for themselves. Curiosity builds enjoyment in learning by making it meaningful and memorable.

PURPOSE

We aim for children to develop a broad understanding of their personal history as well as local, national and global stories. Every lesson of history has a purpose – to help children make sense of the past, understand the present, and influence the future.

How to be a historian

Children are taught topics in units which enable them to learn from engaging experiences, high quality texts and teacher modelling. There is a focus on chronology which allows learners to build a mental timeline that they can refer to as they develop their learning. This is supported by the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Units are organised around an enquiry-based question (e.g. Where does humanity come from? or How hard was it to invade and settle in Britain?) and children are encouraged to follow the “enquiry cycle” i.e. Question, Investigate, Interpret, Evaluate and Conclude, Communicate.

Children receive high quality feedback during the learning process through verbal input from adults, conferencing and written marking.

We aim for all children to have developed curious, critical, and informed understanding of the past by the time they leave school.

All children, including those with additional needs and vulnerabilities, are planned for so that all children achieve their potential. Scaffolds, wordlists and other adaptive tools are available to all. High quality teaching in history is our first response to challenges, and a wide range of further support is available to help children with SEND and EAL.

History everywhere

At HSA we work hard to promote high standards of history across the curriculum. We work to do this in a number of ways:

Enquiry and Questioning Environment

Every classroom becomes a space where history is visible by displaying timelines, maps, and key historical information. Using historical vocabulary consistently in lessons and displays supports children to know and use key vocabulary and terminology.

Around the school we showcase and draw attention to history across the curriculum. This may take the form of class displays of current work and learning, cross-year group work on a particular theme to show progression through the school, or other displays sharing exciting information to engage children in history.

Cross-curricular opportunities

It is expected that children will apply the skills taught in History across the curriculum, especially those of critical thinking and questioning. Children will produce pieces of writing that evidence new skills and understanding in writing. They also learn new ways of applying skills with everyday activities: discussions about traditions, celebrations, and current events with historical roots.

Enrichment Opportunities

Within school we capitalise on exciting events and trips to inspire to love learning about History. Where possible, links are also made to other topics being studied currently to help learning stick and give meaning to their cultural understanding. Opportunities are taken for pupils to learn from their local area. Trips are organised to places such as Natural History Museum London, Hatfield House, Bull Plain, Hertford. We want our children to understand how to use museums for historical enquiry, and how to interact with the exhibits and displays in the museum. During the year, children are encouraged

to understand that they live in a local area filled with evidence of the past, and opportunities to discover more.

We also have themed days in school where children can explore their History topic in more depth. In Year 3 they turn their classroom into a cave decorated with ice-age art. In Year 2 children support their learning about the history of the sea with a pirate themed day of learning.

Meeting our historians where they are

We meet students where they are by assessing prior understanding to guide next steps; adapting teaching to support and challenge all learners; connecting new content to what pupils already know or care about; valuing every voice, and ensuring all children learn about their own history and the world around them.

Implementation: what we do

History is taught in blocks. All children are historians, from our youngest learners.

Each unit follows the basic structure below, with teachers using ongoing AfL, as well as formal, to inform planning to meet the needs of individual classes and children.

Engaged and Curious Learners	Pupils are actively questioning, discussing, and investigating. Children show enthusiasm and curiosity about the past. They can talk about what they are learning and why it matters. "I wonder why that happened..." "That reminds me of when..."
Clear Learning Intent and Progression	Lessons have explicit history objectives, not just topic content. Teachers make clear links to prior learning ("Last term we learned about...") There's evidence of progression in historical skills: chronology → enquiry → interpretation → evidence.
Chronological Understanding	Timelines or time references visible in classrooms. Pupils placing events, people, and civilisations in chronological order. Language of time (e.g. before, after, century, long ago) being used confidently.
Enquiry-Based Learning	Lessons built around historical questions ("Why did this happen?" "What was it like?"). Pupils handle sources, artefacts, images, or texts to find answers. Children are encouraged to think like historians, not just recall facts.

Use of Evidence	Pupils use and discuss different sources (pictures, diaries, artefacts, maps). They question reliability and form conclusions based on evidence. Work shows that pupils justify their ideas with examples from sources.
Strong Oracy and Vocabulary	Teachers explicitly teach historical vocabulary (e.g. empire, reign, invasion, trade). Pupils use precise, subject-specific language when talking and writing. Class discussions and reasoning are valued and encouraged.
Inclusion	All children are supported to access the history content. Scaffolds, visuals, timelines, and word banks are used for accessibility.
Cross-Curricular Links	Links to geography, art, literacy, and science where relevant. Writing tasks (diaries, letters, reports) show historical understanding. Use of maps, artefacts, or digital resources to enhance context.
High-Quality Outcomes	Books show sequenced learning and accurate use of vocabulary. Evidence of pupil reflection (What did I learn? What surprised me?).
Enjoyment and Relevance	Children enjoy learning history and can explain why it matters. Lessons include stories, drama, artefacts, and discussion. History feels alive, relevant, and connected to pupils' lives and community.

Children revisit our key themes during their learning throughout the school:

I believe: how faith shaped lives
A child like me: lives shaped by society
People on the move: settlement and migration
Empire: invasion and expansion
Creativity: Art and Invention
Changemakers: people who changed the world and how we see it

Revisiting these themes helps children understand the context of what they are learning. It helps children to understand the importance of what they are learning and how new learning relates to old.

They also develop key disciplinary knowledge:

Methods: How do we know?
Changes, Causes, Consequences: what changed, what didn't, why did it change, what was the impact?
Chronology: what happened when?
Enquiry: What can we find out?
Significance: So what?

In EYFS history is taught explicitly with a strong focus on supporting each child towards a good level of development in history. Children should be able to tell the difference between themselves as very young babies and themselves now. They should be able to comment on objects/photographs from the past and identify similarities and differences. They should be aware of the celebration of festivals and that these happen once a year and have happened in the past. They should be able to understand and use vocabulary associated with time e.g. this morning, yesterday, last week, and the future e.g. tomorrow, next week.

In KS1, children should have a better sense of their own 'historical' timeline and be able to refer to key events on it. They should be able to make comparisons with the past and identify similarities and differences using an example such as toys, school or holidays. They should be able to name a significant individual and explain why they were important.

In KS2, children should be able to place some of the key periods of British history on a timeline and say why they were important. They should be able to link some significant individuals with these particular time periods. They should have an understanding of the importance of ancient civilisations and how they still influence our lives today.

Over their years at HSA, pupils gain not just knowledge of Britain's past, and our place in the world, but an understanding of the challenges of our own time. They do this through studying the past and gaining skills for the future. We believe that our children have excellent experiences of History and, in doing so, learn more about themselves and gain confidence and resilience as learners.

What does the National Curriculum require us to teach?

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.

What do we teach and when?

Year Group	Autumn	Spring	Summer
YR	My past	Words that show change	Our King, our last Queen, our next King
Y1	Life in the kitchen: mine, my parents, my grandparents	Hertford Castle – did it do a castle's job?	How London grew out of fire.

			The Great Fire of London: a big event with a big impact
Y2	History of the sea: Ancient seafarers of modern sea travel Pirates – where did the gold and silver come from? The Spanish Armada	History of Music: Changes in music beyond living memory. Hymns, musical styles, concerts, discos and streaming	History of the sky: The Wright Brothers, Amelia Earhart, Betsy Coleman The RAF The Space Race
Y3	Where does humanity come from and where did it grow?	Stone Age to Iron Age in Ancient Britain	The Romans: the Empire comes to Britain
Y4	Anglo Saxons: faith and farming in Britain	Who's in charge? Vikings and Anglo Saxons – conflict and Kings	Life and death in the Egyptian Empire
Y5	Turning point: The Battle of Britain: turning back the enemy	Local History: Hertford Home Front	The Mayan Empire – contrasts with Anglo Saxon England
Y6	Ancient Greece: Life and Legacy	Thematic study British Empire: expansion under Elizabeth and Victoria	Thematic study. The sun never sets: life around the world in the British Empire

Children are taught vocabulary in context so that new language can be applied to writing. Vocabulary development is a key focus in all curriculum areas.

How do we know children are learning and developing their skills?

Each lesson begins by revisiting prior learning using the Knowledge Organiser. Differentiated guidance is available for every lesson to ensure that lessons can be accessed by all pupils and opportunities to stretch pupils' learning are available when required. Emphasis is placed on the use of appropriate historical terms (e.g empire, civilisation) and oracy skills are nurtured through regular dialogue between adults and pupils. While teachers assess pupils learning and progress in all lessons, formal

assessment takes place through activities such as quizzes and knowledge catchers at the end of each unit.

Additional needs

For children who experience additional challenge in history, including EAL difficulties and SEND, support takes place in the lesson. Planning shows that scaffolds and resources, as well as adult support, enable children to access the learning with the whole class.

Additional support for complex needs is provided by the SENCo. For a small number of children, planning and teaching will follow advice from external professionals (e.g SALTs, OTs) and requirements of EHCPs.

Outcomes and impact

Our desired impact for our children is that they make progress in their knowledge and understanding , but we will see pupils inspired by their learning, both in the classroom and beyond, to continue to be curious about History into their young adulthood and beyond.

Formative assessment and adaptation are key features of every lesson.

Formal assessments enable teachers to see progress in all aspects of history. Observations of children's learning are regularly carried out, and evidence is collected in learning journals and topic books. Children are expected to make progress against their year group expectations or, for children working towards age related expectations or pre-Key Stage, an appropriate set of expectations.

Where children are not working at the expectations of their year group, the appropriate assessments are used so that teachers can fully understand the child's starting points, gaps and progress. The children have an opportunity to talk about and self-assess their own work.

End Points

We have clear expectations for each end point within school.

By the end of EYFS to KS2, children develop a secure understanding of chronology, recognising how the past influences the present. They move from talking about personal and family history in EYFS to investigating significant events, people, and periods in KS1 and KS2.

By the end of KS2, they can evaluate sources, explain cause and consequence, and form reasoned judgements about the past, showing curiosity and a deepening understanding of history's relevance to today's world.

End point	What will children achieve?
End of Reception (GLD)	<p>Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and those of family members.</p> <p>Children use simple time-related language (yesterday, before, now, long ago).</p> <p>Children show awareness that things change over time.</p> <p>Children recognise that people's lives and traditions differ.</p> <p>Children retell familiar stories about people and events from the past (e.g. birthdays, family holidays, old toys).</p>
End of KS1	<p>Children use chronological understanding to place people and events in order.</p> <p>Children recognise differences between ways of life in the past and today.</p> <p>Children know about significant individuals and events from beyond living memory (e.g. Florence Nightingale, The Great Fire of London).</p> <p>Children use historical vocabulary (past, present, long ago, century).</p> <p>Children ask and answer simple questions about the past using sources and artefacts.</p> <p>Children begin to describe cause and consequence in historical events.</p>
End of KS2	<p>Children place key events, people, and periods in chronological order using timelines.</p> <p>Children explain cause, consequence, and change over time with clear reasoning.</p> <p>Children use a range of sources (artefacts, texts, images) to investigate the past critically.</p> <p>Children understand similarities and differences between historical periods and cultures.</p> <p>Children use historical vocabulary confidently (empire, democracy, invasion, civilisation, trade).</p> <p>Children develop balanced conclusions and judgements about historical evidence and significance.</p>

Aside from progress shown in internal data , we know that we are achieving our aims when children:

- see themselves as historians and take pleasure in sharing their learning
- re-tell stories about famous people and events.
- ask questions about the past and begin to use clues (photos, artefacts, stories).
- use timelines confidently to see how periods fit together.
- present historical findings clearly — through writing, speaking, art, or digital media.
- appreciate how history helps us understand who we are and where we come from.
- show respect, empathy, and pride in shared human stories.