

History Best Practice Guide

Spring 2022

The following guide is based upon: The OFSTED Research review series: History (July 2021), the 2014 national Curriculum and our own Katherine Semar History progression document.

The National Curriculum for 2014 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

In common with many subjects, OFSTED's history research review sets out two key strands of historical knowledge – substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. **Substantive knowledge** refers to the 'content' that is to be learned – knowledge about the past. **Disciplinary knowledge** considers how historians investigate the past, and how they construct historical claims, arguments and accounts.

A combination of our well thought out history progression and the skilful application of an enquiry-led approach to history teaching will support the mastery of both strands.

Enquiry-led approach

Katherine Semar introduced an enquiry-led approach to history teaching and learning in 2020. The enquiry-led approach challenges us to explicitly train our children to work as historians *and* to understand that they are working as historians by examining and exploring evidence to answer specific enquiries. Using this methodology, we invite children to reach, support and discuss answers to key historical questions. As an example, instead of telling children about the many ways that poor children suffered in Victorian Britain, we might instead challenge them to answer

the question – Were the Victorians cruel to children? An enquiry which can also incorporate evidence of the many changes that were made at the time to improve the lot of children. The enquiry-led model should challenge children to employ a range of historical skills including observation, comparison, and assessing historical accounts and their motives.

A key part of our enquiry-led approach to teaching history is our history skills progression, set out in the table below:

	EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Geographical Enquiry	Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise • Describe • Observe • Select • Categorise • Classify • Sequence • Connect and make links • Compare and contrast • Recall • Reason/speculate 			Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise • Synthesise • Construct informed responses • Interpret and explain • Demonstrate understanding • As well as build upon previously learned enquiry skills 		Children should have opportunity to (as appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach informed conclusions • Empathise • Make reasoned judgements • Reflect • Justify • Apply • Evaluate • Critique • Hypothesise • As well as build upon previously learned enquiry skills 	

Our history progression is designed to ensure that, as our children work as historians, their level of challenge increases on their journey through our school. The planning of history teaching in the school should reflect this skills progression.

OFSTED specifically recognise the value of enquiry-led history teaching; indeed they argue that enquiries form the very bedrock of acquiring **disciplinary knowledge –**

‘This knowledge of historical enquiry frames what pupils learn about the past, supporting them to consider the status of historical claims. It enables them to place their historical knowledge in a broad context. It helps to insulate pupils from the potential harm of a narrow or distorted view of the past by exploring how historical narratives are constructed. It introduces pupils to the subtle and sophisticated disciplinary conventions that bind and govern historical claims and accounts.’

Taking all of this into account, wherever practical, history units should begin with an overarching enquiry supported by a sequence of lessons, each exploring at least one more enquiry. As an example, a KS2 unit on The Vikings might seek to answer the overall enquiry *What did the Vikings want and how did Alfred help to stop them getting it?*

As a means of exploring this, it might also answer the following questions:

- What was the ‘terror’ that appeared in Britain on June 8th 793?
- Who were the Vikings and why did they come here?
- Why was the design of their longships so important to the Vikings?
- Why is Alfred the only king or queen of England to have ‘the Great’ after their name?
- Why were the Vikings such formidable enemies

Vocabulary

Mastering relevant vocabulary is a key part of learning to be a geographer. Katherine Semar has an agreed vocabulary progression to support the children's primary school- journey. History teaching should seek to revisit and embed this vocabulary so that children are able to confidently to use it appropriately.

Revisiting previous learning

Our history progression is specifically designed to build upon the history learning from previous years. This will involve both substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. OFSTED is explicit in its requirement that content is revisited in subsequent year groups to support the introduction of new, more complex knowledge, 'emphasising how it is interconnected to facilitate the building of strong schema and allowing the children to retain more information.'

Timelines

Timelines are an essential ingredient of revisiting taught history. Our children should have a clear understanding of where individual taught history units 'fit' onto the general historical timeline. Each unit should begin by establishing where the taught era 'fits' and what came before and after that era.

Planning and designing a history enquiry in Katherine Semar

The planning of a history enquiry unit in Katherine Semar should consider the following:

- Previous substantive and disciplinary knowledge
- The Katherine Semar history progression
- The skills progression within the history progression
- The history vocabulary progression
- An overall enquiry for the topic
- A series of enquiries to support the topic
- Where possible, a 'trip' designed to support and embed learning.