Mendlesham Primary School

History

Intent

At Mendlesham Primary School, we believe that History should enable children to make sense of the past by developing a rich understanding of the people, events and changes that have shaped Britain and the wider world. Our priority is for pupils to understand what happened, why it happened, what changed and why it matters, rather than simply memorising isolated facts and dates.

Our curriculum is carefully sequenced from Early Years to Year 6 so that pupils build connected historical knowledge over time. Kapow Primary provides the main progression framework for our History curriculum, supplemented by carefully selected Oak National Academy units and resources where these strengthen curriculum coverage and support the needs of our pupils.

In line with the Kapow progression model, our curriculum develops topic knowledge, chronological awareness, substantive concepts, disciplinary concepts and historical enquiry. These strands work together so that pupils do not simply collect facts about individual topics but gradually develop a more coherent understanding of the past.

Chronology is important because it enables children to understand when events and periods happened and how they relate to one another. Dates are therefore used as tools for understanding chronology rather than as isolated facts to be memorised. Pupils develop a mental timeline of the periods they study and increasingly make connections between them.

Historical vocabulary is central to our curriculum. Key words are explicitly taught, modelled, revisited and used orally as well as in written work. Pupils repeatedly encounter important substantive concepts, including power (monarchy, government and empire), invasion, settlement and migration, civilisation, trade, beliefs, and the achievements and follies of mankind. Through meeting these concepts in different historical contexts, pupils develop increasingly rich understanding of the ideas behind the vocabulary.

Alongside knowledge of the past, pupils develop disciplinary knowledge through the concepts of change and continuity, similarity and difference, cause and consequence, historical significance, sources of evidence and historical interpretations. Historical enquiry enables pupils to ask questions, gather and consider evidence, make connections, draw conclusions and communicate their understanding.

We aim for all pupils to:

- Know and remember the most important people, events, developments and features of the historical periods they study.
- Understand and explain the story of what happened, rather than simply recalling disconnected facts.
- Develop a secure chronological framework and understand how the periods studied relate to one another.

- Use historical vocabulary confidently and understand the concepts represented by that vocabulary.
- Recognise and explain cause and consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, and historical significance.
- Understand that historians use sources of evidence to construct knowledge of the past and that interpretations can differ.
- Ask and answer increasingly thoughtful historical questions.
- Make connections between different periods and use previous learning to help understand new historical contexts.
- Develop curiosity about local, British and world history and recognise the diversity and complexity of people's experiences in the past.

In line with the schools' improvement priorities, History contributes to pupils' sense of belonging and inclusion by ensuring that the curriculum reflects a broad range of voices, communities and experiences. Pupils encounter the histories of women and men, people from different cultures and backgrounds, and groups whose experiences have not always been equally represented in traditional historical narratives. This helps pupils see that history is shaped by many different people and perspectives, while developing respect, curiosity and an understanding of the diverse society in which they live.

Where meaningful, History also reinforces mathematical understanding through chronology, sequencing, timelines, intervals, scale and the interpretation of numerical information. These links support pupils in applying mathematical thinking in context without detracting from the distinct disciplinary aims of History.

- Leave primary school with secure historical knowledge, vocabulary and understanding that prepares them for the next stage of education.

SMSC, British Values and History

History makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through encounters with people and societies from different periods and places, pupils consider beliefs, values, choices, conflict, cooperation, justice and change. They learn to recognise the complexity of people's lives and to understand actions and experiences within their historical context.

The curriculum supports pupils' understanding of British Values by providing meaningful historical contexts through which to explore democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils learn that systems of power and government have developed over time and that different groups have experienced historical change in different ways.

Local history helps pupils understand the relationship between their own community and wider historical developments, while British and world history broadens their cultural knowledge and appreciation of the diverse people, societies and experiences that have shaped the modern world.

Implementation

The History curriculum follows the National Curriculum and is primarily supported by Kapow Primary's progression of knowledge and skills. Selected Oak National Academy units and resources are used where appropriate to complement this progression. Teachers ensure that resources serve the school's intended curriculum rather than following a scheme without consideration of prior learning or pupil need.

Kapow's progression model provides a clear structure through five connected areas: topic knowledge, chronological awareness, substantive concepts, disciplinary concepts and historical enquiry. Teachers use these strands to ensure that pupils build both knowledge of particular periods and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of history as a discipline.

Each unit identifies the core topic knowledge pupils need in order to understand the period, society or event being studied. Teachers prioritise the people, events, developments and stories that help pupils make sense of the topic. Not every piece of topic information is expected to be retained indefinitely; assessment focuses on the most important knowledge and the concepts that support future historical learning.

Chronological awareness is developed through timelines, sequencing, period language and regular reference to previously studied periods. Pupils learn relevant dates where these support understanding, but teaching avoids an unnecessary emphasis on memorising lists of dates. Children are encouraged to understand broad sequence, duration, overlap and the relationship between historical periods.

Vocabulary is explicitly planned and taught. New terms are introduced in meaningful historical contexts, modelled by adults and revisited through discussion, retrieval and subsequent units. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to say historical vocabulary before being expected to use it independently in writing.

Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils progressively develop understanding of Kapow's recurring substantive concepts:

- Power – including monarchy, government and empire.
- Invasion, settlement and migration.
- Civilisation – including social and cultural organisation.
- Trade.
- Beliefs.
- Achievements and follies of mankind.

Pupils also develop disciplinary understanding through:

- Change and continuity.
- Similarities and differences.
- Cause and consequence.
- Historical significance.
- Sources of evidence.
- Historical interpretations.

Historical enquiry is embedded within units. Pupils learn to pose historically valid questions, gather and organise evidence, interpret findings, make connections, draw conclusions and communicate their understanding. The question 'How do we know?' is used to help pupils recognise the relationship between evidence and historical claims.

Oracy has an important role in History. Pupils communicate historical knowledge through discussion, questioning, debate, drama and explanation as well as through written outcomes. Oral rehearsal enables pupils to develop their ideas and use key vocabulary accurately before recording learning.

Retrieval and purposeful revisiting strengthen long-term memory. Pupils regularly recall important prior knowledge and vocabulary and make links to earlier units. Assessment is proportionate and focuses on whether pupils understand and remember the most important curriculum content rather than on the quantity of written work produced.

Teachers actively identify gaps in pupils' historical knowledge and understanding through retrieval, questioning, discussion, pupil voice, review of previous learning and carefully selected assessment activities. Where gaps or misconceptions are identified, teachers respond through re-teaching, modelling, additional explanation, retrieval practice and purposeful revisiting before pupils are expected to apply learning independently. This is particularly important where knowledge from an earlier unit is needed to understand new historical content.

Vocabulary and oracy are treated as essential tools for historical thinking. Pupils are supported to recognise, understand and use key historical vocabulary in discussion, explanation and debate, not simply to copy or define terminology. Teachers model precise language, provide opportunities for oral rehearsal and check that pupils understand the historical concepts represented by the words they use.

Teachers use adaptive teaching to ensure that all pupils can access an ambitious History curriculum. Support may include explicit vocabulary teaching, visual timelines, images and artefacts, oral rehearsal, carefully selected texts, modelling, chunking of information and scaffolded questioning. Adaptations improve access to the same important historical ideas rather than unnecessarily reducing curriculum ambition.

At Mendlesham, this inclusive ambition extends to pupils within the Mulberry SEU. Learning is adapted through approaches such as additional processing time, visual support, structured repetition, smaller learning steps, practical and sensory resources, oral rehearsal and carefully scaffolded questioning. Adaptation is designed to remove barriers to participation and understanding while maintaining access to the same important historical ideas and curriculum entitlement wherever appropriate.

In Early Years, children begin to build foundations for History through Understanding the World. They develop vocabulary associated with the past and present, sequence familiar events, encounter stories and experiences beyond their own lives and begin to recognise change, similarity and difference.

The subject leader monitors curriculum implementation through planning review, pupil voice, work scrutiny, lesson visits and assessment information. Monitoring considers whether pupils can explain what they have learned, use historical vocabulary accurately, make connections with previous learning and demonstrate increasingly secure substantive and disciplinary knowledge.

Impact

The impact of our History curriculum is seen in what pupils know, understand, remember and can explain about the past. Successful learning is not defined by the number of dates pupils can recall or the amount they have written. Instead, pupils develop increasingly rich and connected historical knowledge that enables them to make sense of periods, events, people and ideas.

By the time pupils leave Mendlesham Primary School, they will:

- Have a secure chronological framework of the periods studied and understand how these relate to one another.
- Recall and explain the core stories, people, events, developments and features identified within the curriculum.

- Use a growing range of historical vocabulary accurately and demonstrate understanding of the concepts those words represent.
- Explain causes, consequences, changes, continuities, similarities and differences using relevant historical knowledge.
- Understand historical significance and explain why particular people, events or developments matter.
- Understand that historians construct knowledge using evidence and that different sources and interpretations may lead to different conclusions.
- Make connections between historical periods and use prior knowledge to understand new learning.
- Communicate historical understanding confidently through discussion and appropriately selected written or creative outcomes.
- Approach the past with curiosity and an understanding that people's experiences are diverse and historically situated.

The impact of the curriculum is also evident in pupils' ability to recognise that the past contains diverse experiences and perspectives, to discuss these respectfully and to understand that History belongs to everyone. Pupils, including those with SEND and other identified groups, are supported to participate meaningfully, retain important knowledge and communicate their understanding using increasingly precise historical vocabulary.

Teachers assess pupils through ongoing questioning, discussion, retrieval activities, carefully selected written outcomes and review of pupils' work. Assessment identifies whether pupils have secured the most important knowledge and vocabulary, reveals misconceptions and informs subsequent teaching.

The subject leader evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum through pupil discussions, work scrutiny, lesson visits and assessment information. Particular attention is given to whether pupils remember earlier learning, can explain rather than simply name historical facts, make meaningful connections and use key vocabulary with increasing confidence and precision.

Curriculum Principles at a Glance

We prioritise	What this means in practice
Understanding over date recall	Children develop chronological awareness, but teaching and assessment focus on what happened, why, how things changed and why events matter.
Vocabulary in context	Key terms are explicitly taught, spoken, revisited and applied in meaningful historical contexts.
Connected knowledge	Kapow's recurring substantive concepts and links to prior units help pupils build a coherent picture of the past.
Historical enquiry	Pupils learn how historians ask questions, use evidence and construct accounts through well-understood historical contexts.
Oracy and explanation	Children are expected to talk about History, explain ideas and use vocabulary, not simply produce written work.
Inclusive ambition	Adaptive teaching and scaffolds improve access without removing the important historical knowledge all pupils are entitled to learn.
Remembering what matters	Retrieval and assessment focus on core knowledge and concepts that support future learning.