

CURRICULUM SUBJECT OVERVIEW – HISTORY



'We are not makers of history. We are made by history.' - Martin Luther King Jr

'Through Faith, Friendship and Fun we Learn and Grow'

We believe that history is a gateway to understanding the past, appreciating the present, and shaping the future. Through learning about significant events, people, and changes over time, we nurture curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking in our pupils. Faith encourages children to reflect on values such as justice, courage, and perseverance in historical contexts. Friendship fosters collaboration, enabling pupils to share ideas, discuss differing perspectives, and develop a deeper understanding of the past. Fun ensures that history comes alive through storytelling, role play, and engaging enquiries, inspiring a lifelong love of learning about the past. Together, these principles help our pupils to grow as informed, thoughtful, and responsible individuals in an ever-changing world.

Spirituality

In History, spirituality is about making meaningful connections between people, events, and the passage of time. We encourage children to reflect on how the lives and experiences of individuals from the past connect to their own lives and the wider world. By exploring themes such as courage, sacrifice, and perseverance, pupils develop an appreciation for the unseen influences that shape societies and values. Through moments of stillness and reflection, children are invited to consider how history makes them feel, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of the human experience. This approach allows pupils to see history not just as a series of facts, but as a rich tapestry of connections that continue to impact the present and future.

Intent	Implementation	Impact
At Defford School, we want history to stimulate the children’s interest and understanding about the lives of people who lived in the past. We teach children a sense of chronology, and through this they develop a sense of identity, and a cultural understanding based on their historical heritage. We aim to ensure they learn to value their own and other people’s cultures in modern multicultural Britain and, by considering how people lived in the past, they are better able to make their own life choices today. We teach children to understand how events in the past have influenced our lives today; we also teach them to investigate these past events and, by doing so, develop the skills of enquiry, analysis, interpretation and problem-solving. Our history curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and independence to continue their future history learning in Year 7 and beyond. Through our history curriculum, our aims are: ● to engage interest in the past and stimulate children’s curiosity into finding out more; ● to develop knowledge and understanding of how people lived in other times and how those times were different from today; ● to enable children to know about significant events in British history, and to appreciate how things have changed over time; ● to develop a sense of chronology; to encourage thinking about cause and effect, and how the past influences the present to experience a range of representations of the past; ● to develop the ability to communicate historical knowledge in a variety of forms; ● to understand how Britain is part of a wider European culture, and to study aspects of European history; ● to have some knowledge and understanding of historical development in the wider world; ● to help children understand society and their place within it, so that they develop a sense of their citizenship and cultural heritage; ● to develop in children the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation and presentation.	In EYFS, children study past and present through the Understanding of the World area of learning. Children develop an understanding and knowledge of some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class. They understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling. Children access these objectives through provision which is centred around the children and their enquiry, with much emphasis placed upon stories and discussions. It is important to recognise that early years education is the building blocks to children accessing the Key Stage 1 learning. At Defford, in KS1 and 2, we follow the National Curriculum and use a scheme of work, Collins Connected, to guide teachers with their planning and assessment. Learning is facilitated through pupils pursuing a key question led enquiry approach, which encourages them to take increasing responsibility for their learning, think independently and achieve challenging outcomes. All topics will begin with an overarching question which the children will work towards answering. This is done in a variety of ways such as discussions, debates and role play. All lessons begin with a key question being posed to the children to focus the lesson on a particular part of history. This will ensure that we are embedding the knowledge in the children’s minds by allowing them to think for themselves, rather than feeding them information. In every History lesson, it is made explicit to pupils that they are being taught History. Specifically named historical knowledge, skills and understanding are also referred to throughout the enquiries: Chronological Understanding, Perspective, Change and Continuity, Similarities/ Differences, Significance of events and people, Empathy, Causation and Historical Sources. It is expected that the pupils will become familiar with these terms as they progress through the school. In addition to this, staff understand that the pupils will progress through transferable learning skills to develop as Historians. For example, pupils in Year 1 will be expected to observe, recognise and identify. Year 2 will speculate, summarise and classify. A Historian in Year 6 will empathise, justify and hypothesise in their lessons. These are the specific skills that the teachers will assess. A love of history is encouraged throughout school using external trips, visitors and celebrations of significant events. This allows children to develop their skills beyond the classroom. Children will use a range of sources throughout a series of lessons to allow them to make a reasonable judgement and create their own opinion. Children who have shown their understanding at a deep level within the unit, will have opportunities to apply these skills in activities that challenge them to think more deeply. History is enriched using ICT. Children are regularly given opportunities to research and present their findings. We use a rolling programme of planning as we have mixed age classes. When planning each enquiry, teaching staff ensure that the outcome for each year group is pedagogically appropriate, taking all the above into consideration.	Our history curriculum does far more than teach dates and names; it equips children with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate a complex world. By engaging with diverse sources, pupils learn to distinguish between fact and opinion, understand the concept of bias, and appreciate that the past is often a matter of interpretation. This "disciplinary literacy" fosters a healthy scepticism and an analytical mindset that transfers across all subjects. Furthermore, our well-sequenced curriculum helps children build a coherent mental map of the past, allowing them to understand their place within the broader human story. This builds a sense of identity and belonging while fostering empathy for people from different times and cultures. When children explore the struggles and achievements of those who came before them, they develop a more nuanced perspective on contemporary societal issues. Ultimately, our ambitious history education transforms passive learners into active, informed citizens. It sparks lifelong curiosity, ensuring that our children don’t just memorize history, but learn to think like historians—questioning, connecting, and making sense of the world around them through the lens of time

Year A

Class	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Birch	How do we know so much about where Sappho used to live?		What made the Great Fire of London so devastating?		Why was Charles sent to prison?	
<i>Reason</i>	This investigation guides pupils through key historical concepts like cause and effect by exploring the destruction and reconstruction of Pompeii. Students learn how historians use primary and secondary evidence to piece together the past, focusing on how this event affected the daily lives of ordinary people rather than just its intricate details. Finally, the project demonstrates how other school subjects connect with history while encouraging pupils to relate these ancient events to their own family backgrounds.		This Great Fire of London unit teaches children about the timeline of the historic blaze while showing them how we discover information about the past. Pupils will compare 17th-century London to the present day, evaluating how closely packed wooden buildings and the absence of an organised fire brigade allowed the destruction to spread. Finally, the lessons focus on the safety improvements made in the aftermath of the disaster and introduce students to evaluating the usefulness of different historical sources.		This historical enquiry helps pupils analyze evidence from the First World War to build core concepts like continuity, change, and cause and consequence. Rather than focusing on major battlefield events or troop movements, the curriculum explores the daily lives of families and children 100 years ago. Because wartime information from overseas was strictly censored, the lessons emphasize how local children were primarily aware of immediate, day-to-day changes within their own home-front communities.	
Oak	How did the arrival of the Romans change Britain?		Who were the Anglo-Saxons and how do we know what was important to them?		What did the Vikings want in Britain and how did Alfred help to stop them getting it?	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>This investigation explores the deep, lasting impact of the 400-year Roman occupation on Britain's social and economic development. Pupils begin by analyzing the economic motivations behind the invasion, establishing a foundational understanding of colonization driven by resource exploitation. They then investigate Boudica's rebellion, using her uprising to critically evaluate the differences between historical evidence and folklore. The curriculum highlights the transition from British prehistory to recorded history by introducing primary written sources and analyzing physical ruins like Hadrian's Wall. Finally, students examine Roman urban planning across major British towns and conclude by researching the cultural and political purpose of gladiatorial combat.</i>		<i>This investigation covers the first half of the 600-year Anglo-Saxon period, starting with the fifth-century Roman withdrawal driven by European barbarian aggression. Pupils explore how Anglo-Saxon farming settlements established the foundational rural pattern of modern British hamlets and villages. The curriculum also examines the seventh-century religious transition from paganism to Christianity and evaluates the power dynamics introduced by the growing church alliance with the monarchy. Finally, students analyze priceless artifacts from the iconic Sutton Hoo ship burial and conduct personal research into local Anglo-Saxon place-name legacies.</i>		<i>This investigation helps pupils separate historical fact from myth regarding the Norse tribes collectively known today as the Vikings. Students examine how seasonal raiding parties terrorised northern and eastern England using superior, brilliantly designed longships. However, the curriculum shifts focus to show that most Scandinavian travellers were peaceful settlers attracted by England's fertile land and temperate climate. Pupils debunk popular folklore, such as the myth of horned helmets, before concluding with an evaluation of King Alfred the Great's achievements and lasting legacy.</i>	
Ash	Why did the Ancient Maya change the way they lived?		How did a pile of dragon bones solve an Ancient Chinese mystery?		Why was winning the Battle of Britain in 1940 so important?	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>Investigating the Maya civilisation allows pupils to compare its achievements—like hieroglyphics, complex mathematics, and astronomy—with contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon Britain. By studying sites like Chichen Itza, students analyse primary and secondary sources to understand how historians interpret the past. They explore the mystery of city abandonment, learning that historical shifts often stem from interconnected factors rather than single causes. Crucially, the curriculum highlights that Maya culture did not "disappear" after 1100 AD. Today, eight million people maintain strong cultural and agricultural links to their ancestors, demonstrating that while city-states collapsed, the Maya people and their traditions endure.</i>		<i>The Shang Dynasty marks the start of China's recorded history, revealed through "oracle bones" that detail the lives of royalty and their spiritual beliefs. This curriculum helps pupils understand social hierarchies—from powerful monarchs and China's first female general to the overlooked masses of commoners and slaves. By comparing Shang artefacts with other Bronze Age societies, students learn that archaeology often highlights the elite while obscuring ordinary people. Evaluating how kings governed, alongside exploring unlooted tombs, encourages pupils to reflect on leadership and status while recognising that historical evidence frequently offers a lopsided view of the past.</i>		<i>The Battle of Britain was a critical turning point in WWII, occurring after Nazi Germany occupied Western Europe in 1940. Hitler's invasion plans hinged on gaining air superiority, but the RAF's 12-week victory forced him to abandon the offensive. This success allowed Britain to pivot toward liberating mainland Europe and proved to allies that the Nazi war machine was not invincible. Pupils examine primary sources to judge factors contributing to the victory and explore "what if" scenarios, considering the long-term impact on British history had Hitler secured supremacy in the skies.</i>	

Year B

Class	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Birch	What does it take to be a great explorer?		How do our favourite toys and games compare with those of children in the 1960s?		Who is the greatest history maker?	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>This educational enquiry guides pupils through the exploits of famous historical figures, spanning from 16th-century Europe to 1960s America. Students examine the unique challenges faced by individuals like Christopher Columbus, Amy Johnson, Neil Armstrong, and Ranulph Fiennes, identifying the distinct personal qualities required for their achievements. Ultimately, pupils apply these insights chronologically and vocabulary-wise to look toward the future, evaluating the traits necessary for the planned colonisation of Mars. The curriculum emphasizes the development of historical vocabulary and chronological understanding through the evaluation of these diverse expeditions. By reflecting on the past, students gain a framework for analysing modern and future exploration efforts.</i>		<i>This investigation utilizes the 1960s—a significant period remaining within living memory—to help pupils explore key historical events and figures both in the United Kingdom and globally. By examining familiar, tangible items like toys and games, young historians can easily grasp the core concepts of continuity and change over time. The curriculum highlights how the invention of the internet revolutionized interactivity, introducing pupils to the contributions of Tim Berners-Lee alongside essential lessons on smart toy online safety</i>		<i>This historical investigation encourages young historians to think critically about what it means to be a "history maker," using the annual commemoration of Guy Fawkes Night as an initial case study. Pupils then evaluate, compare, and contrast the achievements of eight significant individuals spanning different eras and cultures—from Ancient Egypt to the modern day—to judge who had the greatest impact. By weighing relative historical evidence and justifying their choices, students develop a deeper perspective on historical significance while reflecting on how they might create history themselves in the future.</i>	
Oak	How did the lives of ancient Britons change during the Stone Age?		What is the secret of the standing stones from the Bronze Age?		How do artefacts help us to understand the lives of people in Iron Age Britain?	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>The Stone Age represents the longest period of British prehistory, spanning from the arrival of the first European humans up until the written records of the Roman invasion in AD 43. Because prehistory lacks written documentation, pupils learn that our understanding of this era relies heavily on the subjective archaeological interpretation of physical artefacts. The investigation aims to dispel common misconceptions, such as humans coexisting with dinosaurs, while reinforcing the fundamental historical concepts of continuity and change. Ultimately, students explore how nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyles gradually transitioned into permanent farming communities, marking one of the greatest societal shifts in British history.</i>		<i>This investigation explores the societal advancements in Britain toward the end of the Neolithic period, driven by the arrival of the Bell Beaker people from mainland Europe. Pupils examine how these settlers introduced metal-smelting skills, enabling communities to create versatile bronze alloys for tools and weapons. The curriculum guides students to investigate the construction and mysterious, potentially astronomical purposes of the Bronze Age stone monuments that populate the British landscape. Finally, by analyzing the famous Amesbury Archer grave in Wiltshire and the ceremonial site at Merrivale, pupils evaluate evidence regarding prehistoric beliefs in the afterlife.</i>		<i>The Iron Age marks the final period of British prehistory, offering pupils an abundance of physical artefacts to interpret a society undergoing profound changes. Students explore the features and functions of massive hill forts, which served as essential defensive structures, trading hubs, and ceremonial gathering places. The curriculum addresses the period's intense tribal violence, explaining how rapid population growth and resource scarcity drove over 40 Celtic tribes into frequent warfare. Finally, pupils analyze the emergence of early writing and non-currency coinage alongside deep spiritual beliefs, concluding with the tribal resistance against the Roman invasion of AD 43.</i>	
Ash	The story of the Trojan horse – Fact, Legend or Fiction?		What did King George VI mean when he said ‘The history of York is the history of England’?		Why did Britain once rule the largest Empire the world has ever seen?	
<i>Reason</i>	<i>This investigation guides learners to analyze the causes, consequences, and conflicting evidence surrounding the 10-year Trojan War. Students interrogate written, visual, and archaeological evidence to form a personal judgment on whether the Trojan Horse story represents historical fact, legend, or myth.</i>		<i>This Key Stage 2 local history investigation uses the city of York as a model to demonstrate how multiple historical eras are superimposed on a single location. The first inquiry explores the Roman era, challenging pupils to reconstruct the expunged image of co-ruler Geta from fragmented pottery shards. Students then investigate the Anglo-Saxon period by attempting to solve the mystery of why a nobleman never returned for his buried helmet. The third and fourth studies examine the financial sacrifices of ordinary people building York Minster and the Puritan propaganda surrounding a royalist dog during a major Civil War battle. Finally, the project analyzes the Industrial Revolution through the York Rowntree factory, contrasting its enlightened Quaker working conditions with typical Victorian exploitation.</i>		<i>This investigation helps pupils explore the rise, peak, and eventual decline of the British Empire by examining its vast global expansion. Students analyze the driving factors behind British imperialism alongside the post-WWII independence movements that led to its collapse and the formation of the Commonwealth. The curriculum also covers remaining British Overseas Territories, using the 1982 Falklands War to illustrate ongoing defense responsibilities and territorial disputes. Ultimately, pupils use historical evidence to evaluate these events and develop a deeper understanding of how global empires grow and dissolve.</i>	

Willow class will learn their History curriculum through the EYFS Areas of Learning: Understanding the World. Please refer to the EYFS Curriculum Plans.