

# The Quality of Education: History - Purpose and Provision

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**St Christopher's:**  
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither-  
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

“Not to know what happened before you were born is to remain forever a child”

Cicero

History teaches us about the past in order to grasp the causes of the present, and so the future. The skills we wish to impart have changed little over time, in 1944 the Historical Association suggested, ‘the study of history can and should give boys and girls some of the kind of knowledge indispensable both as a foundation for any real understanding of the world of to-day and as a basis for culture of any kind.’

As part of a Church school, the History department has a moral duty to operate alongside other departments within a caring and supportive community, preparing pupils and students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experience of their adult life. Indeed, as our foundation scripture illustrates, ‘that person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season.’ The study of History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people’s lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity (‘Knowing What It Is To Be Fully Alive’) and the challenges of their time (‘Learning How To Live Well Together’).

The purpose in the department is to embed these values alongside fostering a historical curiosity and love of learning in every student. As the National Curriculum suggested in 1999, ‘In history, pupils find evidence, weigh it up and reach their own conclusions. To do this they need to be able to research, sift through evidence, and argue for their point of view—skills that are prized in adult life.’ Our success as a department, and within the school, depends upon the extent that their ‘leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers’, binding us intrinsically to our school foundation scripture.

All pupils will experience a high quality of education helping them to secure a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain’s past and that of the wider world. It is our aim that all pupils will complete their studies having acquired a coherent and chronological understanding of the British nation, from the earliest times to the present day, including the way in which Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world. Pupils will also gain an understanding of significant aspects of world history including characteristic features of past non-European societies. The successful teaching of the subject will enable pupils to develop an understanding of 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.

Pupils will consider 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.

It is hoped that all pupils, regardless of whether they opt to continue to study the subject after the age of fourteen, will 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.

# Complementing the School Purpose

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## Foundation Scripture

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The teaching of History encourages all to 'prosper'. It is an appropriate and important academic discipline which requires pupils to tackle challenging topics, concepts and skills. There will be times when individual pupils, groups and even classes will experience a sense of 'withering' but even during these difficult times it is hoped that they will have the confidence to continue and flourish through initiatives such as the 'History Projects' or the annual KS3 essay competition.

## Key Themes

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The acquisition of knowledge is not limited to a collection of unrelated facts. Pupils are taught to use this information in a manner which exhibits discernment and the ability to show a grasp of historical concepts and perspective – of wisdom and understanding. For example, pupils will confront abstract terms such as 'government', as well as skills such as 'evaluating utility', and be able to apply these to events throughout the centuries.

Pupils will learn how to live well together through their understanding of their place in the ongoing story of the past. They will learn from the lives of great men and women, from conflict and peace, seeking to draw out lessons that are relevant to their own lives. Lessons will be taught in such a way that encourages collaboration and cooperation whilst not shying away from topics and content which are controversial or open to debate such as the impact of empire or industrialisation.

By studying the past it is hoped that pupils will comprehend the joy of 'being fully alive' in the here and now, by being alert to their place within the great sweep of history. Engagement with the subject is paramount to embedding a love of learning and this comes first and foremost from the teachers own engagement with the content, sharing their own passion for History with their pupils as we cement the school objective of 'Knowing what it is to be fully alive'. Opportunities to reward broader engagement such as extra-curricular trips to Skipton Castle (Yr7), Liverpool Slavery Museum (Yr8) and the WWI Battlefields (Yr9) deepen understanding of our pupils place in the world.

## Christian Virtues

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Arguably too much of the study of History includes reference to significant battles or wars. The medieval period for example is commonly described as beginning with the Battle of Hastings and ending with the Battle of Bosworth Field. The study of cataclysmic events of this sort offers rich opportunities for explicit references to the school's Christian virtues. Peace, often fragile and faltering, follows conflict and how central to this are the values of Trust, Justice and Friendship? The National Curriculum encourages the study of Christian changes through the Medieval Church, questioning morality and humanities vulnerability with the Black Death, and can give us opportunities to explore the Christian virtues at the core of our school through treatment of others with 20th century study of the Holocaust.

The promotion of Christian Virtues is evident also in the ethos and atmosphere of the History classroom. We hope that all pupils will learn to love the subject and be provided with opportunities for work which will help to establish new friendships with classmates.

## Curriculum Aims

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All pupils will be provided with opportunities to learn and achieve. On some occasions this will be apparent on a lesson-by-lesson basis with new knowledge taught and tested as part of a one off piece of work. This will typically be the case for aspects of social history where a topic will sit entire of itself and with few links to wider themes or skills. The study of 17th century Witchcraft would be an example of this. More often however, learning will take place around a key line of enquiry, taught over a period of lessons and which will introduce new substantive knowledge whilst deepening an understanding of the disciplinary approach to the study of History. An example of this is the study of 'causation', a concept which pupils will be introduced to in year 7 when they study the reasons for the outcome of the Battle of Hastings, but will return to in subsequent years, increasing their understanding and deepening their comprehension, with the causes of Henry's break with Rome, the causes of the Industrial Revolution or even the causes of the Wall Street Crash. By the time that pupils reach year 9 and study the causes of the Second World War they will be able to analyse and evaluate a range of complex and interrelated causes which will require of them a sophisticated and nuanced response. In this way pupils' learning and achievement is driven by a curriculum which is at times cumulative, segmented and spiral.

Pupils will also be expected to develop a moral understanding of the past. In years 8 & 9, for example, pupils will study controversial topics such as Slavery and the Holocaust. During this work teachers will encourage a response from pupils which is empathetic towards individual acts and one which shows an understanding of different cultures and times. The study of social history, including that of the local area through the establishment of power in Norman Lancashire, the Pendle Witch Trials or the tragedy of the Accrington Pals in July 1916; will enable pupils to secure a cultural understanding of their own community, in contrast with homework assignments which include independent research of a non-European culture.

In learning about the past all pupils are helped to prepare for adult life. The study of History allows for the teaching of British values such as the evolution of democracy (elements which can be seen throughout key stage 3 from a study of the Magna Carta in 1215 to the advent of universal suffrage in the 20th century) and respect for the law. An understanding of the antecedents of these values is helpful in allowing pupils to prepare to take up an active role in civic society.

# Complementing the School Provision

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## Teaching Approaches

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Teachers ensure that all pupils feel confident to contribute in lessons, and that they are rewarded for doing so. It is important to ensure that our teaching reflects the values and virtues we hope to instill in all pupils.

Regular assessments using the GCSE marking criteria are carried out for all pupils in order to gauge their progress as part of our mission of 'securing wisdom and understanding'. Through individual and whole class feedback, pupils learn how to improve their work, with department marking policy ensuring that all learners receive the feedback needed to progress. Opportunities to improve work are found in the 'fix-it time' initiative at KS3, whilst collective feedback sheets are used in KS4 to correct common examination technique mistakes.

## Pupil Attitudes

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The department has always, and continues to, place the embedding of a love of learning at the heart of our curriculum. The study of History at St Christopher's provides an opportunity for all to engage positively with the acquisition of knowledge, the regular assessment of this acquisition through a variety of approach and assessment, and to encourage all to share the same desire to achieve and prosper.

## Going Beyond the National Curriculum

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Whilst the National Curriculum provides a framework to guide our teaching at St Christopher's, it is not seen as a limit on what we aim to teach, with opportunities throughout our curriculum to go beyond the confines of the prescribed topics. This can be seen in our homework projects, essay titles – most recently the 'most significant scientific discovery since man landed on the moon' encouraged a history of recent scientific breakthroughs – and individual units such as local studies of the Pendle Witches. Furthermore, the lunchtime lectures for KS5 students have provided numerous opportunities to explore topics outside of our curriculum model, most recently history colleagues delivering lectures on The Berlin Olympics of 1936 and the Stonewall Riots.

## Extra-curricular and Enrichment

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We actively promote History outside the classroom in 'learning to live well together', through a variety of activities, including a whole school KS3 & KS4 History Essay Competition, trips at KS3 to Skipton Castle, Liverpool Slavery Museum and at KS4 to Leeds Medical Museum. We also run foreign residential visits to the WWI battlefields and KS4 trips to Germany. At KS5 Students have had opportunities to attend lecture days at local universities as well as performances of Greek plays (Classical Civilisation alongside English Literature). Working alongside the History department under its joint leadership, the Classical Civilisation department also runs a lunchtime 'Classics Club' to support the engagement of KS3 pupils with topics not on the curriculum such as the design and development of Greek Theatre.

## Whole School / Cross Curricular Learning

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Much like the tree in the school's foundation scripture, the study of History at St Christopher's cannot be seen as standing alone but as root and branch, interconnecting with subjects across the school curriculum. Through opportunities for cross-curricular learning, pupils prosper as learners who bear fruit in all seasons.

Alongside the school, in History the enhancement of literacy is paramount, be it in Historian's opinions, descriptive writing or the investigation of primary information. Opportunities for pupils to read independently and with the class are taken wherever possible.

The department has always worked collaboratively with other subjects on projects across the school curriculum such as the R.A.C.E initiative through the PE department, emphasising the use of European languages through keyword acquisition – particularly at KS4 - or promoting an interest in the sciences through our Essay Competition. Extra-curricular activities also encourage cross-curricular learning such as the Battlefields Pilgrimage with Blackburn Diocese and the pupils proposed legacy project in collaboration with the Eco/Sustainability initiative group to create a new garden terrace within school promoting the memory of the Accrington Pals.

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## Meeting the Needs of the Most Able

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The History department endeavors to challenge all pupils and the SOW at KS3 specifically identifies opportunities for challenge within each lesson which teachers can implement. A focus on GCSE skills throughout Y7-11 gives a coordinated response to bridging the gap between KS3 and KS4 study

Homework at KS3 is focused on the 'Projects' which are organised by class teachers from a shared grid of potential ideas given out at the beginning of the year. This includes opportunities for stretch and challenge from the 'challenge' tasks with all pupils expected to complete at least one of these, alongside the self/peer assessment used to judge each piece of work.

At KS4 there are regular opportunities for the development of complex thinking, whilst the History intervention group consists of those High Ability Boys the department is targeting to improve their current progress. This group is supported with tailored sessions each week and regular monitoring, alongside our existing platform of learning support for the wider KS4 cohort, including direct support for those PP students whom we feel this is appropriate for.



# Ad Gloriam Dei

## To the Glory of God



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