How learning builds in History

A guide for parents and carers | Years 3 to 6

Children explore people, events and societies from the past. They build from making discoveries through artefacts to comparing sources, questioning interpretations and reaching their own conclusions, using evidence with increasing confidence and independence.

Area	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Understanding time and chronology	Use BC and AD on timelines. Understand prehistory and sequence the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. Place Roman Britain in its historical context.	Follow the transition from Roman to Anglo-Saxon Britain. Sequence ancient Maya history and recognise societies that existed at the same time, including those in Britain.	Sequence significant Viking and Tudor events. Identify key periods in ancient Greece and use timelines to organise knowledge of different societies.	Explore changes across Victorian Britain and the twentieth century. Use census records to compare periods and place World War 2 in its historical context.
Understanding people and societies	Explore how tools, farming, settlements and trade changed prehistoric life. Explain why the Romans invaded, how people responded and how Britain changed.	Investigate Egyptian beliefs and the importance of the Nile. Explore Anglo-Saxon settlement and Christianity, and the cities, beliefs and decline of the ancient Maya.	Investigate Viking raiding and trade, Tudor rulers and everyday life, and Greek beliefs, democracy and philosophy. Consider the lasting influence of achievements.	Explore how World War 2 affected different groups in Britain. Use census records to investigate working lives and changes in people and communities over time.
Investigating through evidence	Use artefacts and archaeology to make deductions about the past. Recognise what evidence can tell us, what it only suggests and what remains unknown.	Ask historical questions and make informed deductions from artefacts and sources. Compare evidence and explore how archaeologists, archivists and historians investigate the past.	Use original evidence from a period alongside later accounts. Compare sources, consider their reliability and use evidence to support interpretations of people and events.	Evaluate sources for accuracy, reliability and usefulness. Check findings against other evidence. Plan enquiries using census records and a range of other sources.
Explaining and judging the past	Identify changes and things that stayed the same. Explain reasons for events and developments, and use evidence to support a choice or conclusion.	Explain changes in settlements and beliefs. Compare societies and consider why important developments happened. Develop answers supported by available evidence.	Explain and justify different interpretations. Compare societies and governments, explore causes and consequences, and judge the significance of achievements and legacies.	Evaluate different interpretations and explain why views may differ. Compare experiences, analyse change over time and reach conclusions supported by evidence.

Revisiting knowledge

Year 3 learning about Roman Britain prepares children to investigate Anglo-Saxon settlement in Year 4 and Viking activity in Year 5. Children also connect developments in British history with civilisations elsewhere. Timelines, historical vocabulary and questions about change connect the units throughout the school.

Applying learning in new contexts

Children return to familiar questions and ways of investigating through different periods and societies. These examples show how earlier learning supports more detailed enquiries later in Key Stage 2.

Area	Earlier learning	Later application
Connecting British history	Year 3 · Roman Britain Explain invasion, settlement and Roman influence. Year 4 · Anglo-Saxon Britain Investigate changes after the Romans left and the threat posed by Vikings.	Year 5 · Vikings Build on Anglo-Saxon learning to investigate Viking raiding, settlement and trade. Compare accounts and assess the impact of Viking achievements.
Finding out through sources	Year 3 · Prehistory and Romans Make deductions from artefacts and recognise gaps in evidence. Year 4 · Egyptians and Maya Ask questions and explore how evidence helps reconstruct the past.	Year 5 · Tudors Question the reliability of sources and use inventories to interpret lives. Year 6 · World War 2 and census enquiry Evaluate sources and check findings against other records.
Explaining change over time	Year 3 · Stone Age to Iron Age Compare tools, farming and trade to identify change and continuity. Year 4 · Anglo-Saxons Investigate changes in settlements and beliefs.	Year 6 · What can the census tell us about the local area? Compare records across time, investigate changes in people and communities, and plan a local history enquiry using several sources.
Considering lasting achievements	Year 3 · Romans Identify Roman legacies and explain which were significant. Year 4 · Egyptians and Maya Explore the importance of beliefs, writing and other achievements.	Year 5 · Vikings and ancient Greeks Evaluate achievements and their impact. Investigate the influence of Greek democracy and philosophy and justify which legacies were most significant.

Understanding different perspectives

Children learn that evidence may be incomplete and that accounts of the past can differ. They build from distinguishing what an artefact proves from what it suggests to comparing sources and justifying interpretations. In Year 6, they investigate how wartime experiences differed between groups and use other records to check census evidence.

Reflecting and explaining

In Year 3, children use evidence to explain which prehistoric period they would prefer to live in. In Year 4, they draw conclusions about past societies. In Year 5, they justify interpretations and consider lasting achievements. In Year 6, they evaluate sources and plan a local history enquiry, supporting conclusions with evidence.

Historical vocabulary, timelines and discussion help children organise their knowledge and explain how we find out about the past.