

HISTORY at ABBEY



At Abbey, we nurture a love of learning. We open windows of opportunity by creating memorable moments. Learning with meaningful relationships supports our children to become valued members of the community. We embed the core subjects within an expansive and challenging curriculum. We develop and nurture young minds, creating memorable moments and events. We promote and celebrate equality and diversity.

Intent

At Abbey Primary, our history curriculum is built on the belief that every child deserves to understand the world they have inherited — where it came from, how it was shaped, and what their place is within it. We use the Ark Mastery curriculum as our foundation, which provides a carefully sequenced, knowledge-rich programme of study that takes pupils from their own immediate past in Year 1 all the way through to global conflict in Year 6.

Our curriculum is designed around 19 substantive concepts — including society, power, trade, democracy and conflict — which pupils encounter repeatedly across all 15 units, building richer and more complex understanding with every visit. Alongside this, pupils develop six disciplinary skills — cause and consequence, continuity and change, similarity and difference, significance, evidence and chronology — which are explicitly taught and progressively deepened across both key stages. This dual focus on substantive knowledge and disciplinary thinking means our pupils are not just accumulating facts but learning to think like historians. We have carefully aligned our curriculum to the National Curriculum, ensuring all statutory requirements are met while going significantly beyond them. Our units span British history, ancient world history and non-European civilisations, ensuring pupils gain a genuinely global perspective. We have made deliberate choices to ensure our curriculum is diverse and representative — studying figures such as Rosa Parks, Malala Yousafzai, Mary Seacole and the scholars of the Islamic Golden Age alongside the traditional British narrative. This reflects our commitment as a Rights Respecting School to ensuring all children see themselves and others represented in what they learn, and to developing their understanding of human rights, justice and the actions of individuals who have fought for a fairer world.

Our intent is also that pupils learn to communicate historically, both through talk and through writing. We want pupils to speak like historians, using precise vocabulary and structured argument, and to write like historians, constructing disciplined responses that are grounded in evidence and organised around historical thinking. This is not writing about history: it is writing as a historian. Our intent is for every pupil to leave Abbey Primary with a coherent, chronological understanding of the past, a rich historical vocabulary, the ability to ask and answer perceptive questions about evidence and significance, and a genuine curiosity about history that will sustain them into secondary school and beyond.

Implementation

History is taught for one and a half hours each week, giving pupils sustained time to engage deeply with historical content rather than skimming the surface. Each unit is approached through an overarching enquiry question which gives lessons focus and direction, and which pupils return to at the end of the unit to construct a substantive response drawing on everything they have learned.

Every lesson has a clear main disciplinary focus alongside its substantive content, so that pupils are always doing something with their knowledge — evaluating evidence, identifying causes, comparing societies and assessing significance. Key vocabulary is explicitly introduced,

displayed and returned to throughout each unit, and pupils are expected to use historical language with precision both in writing and in discussion.

Oracy is central to how we teach history at Abbey. We are a school that places exceptional value on spoken language, and history provides rich and frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills. Pupils regularly engage in structured discussions, debate historical questions, justify their thinking out loud, and build on each other's ideas. From Year 1, where pupils talk about what they can observe in a historical object, to Year 6, where pupils argue about the causes of the World Wars or the significance of Alexander the Great, spoken language is treated as a thinking tool as much as a communication skill. Talk partners, cold calling, sentence stems and Socratic questioning are all used to ensure all pupils can access and express historical thinking. Speaking like a historian is taught explicitly: pupils learn to use connectives of causation, vocabulary of significance, and the language of evidence and argument in their spoken responses before they are expected to deploy them in writing.

Each unit contains two dedicated opportunities for disciplinary writing (extended written tasks in which pupils write as historians rather than simply about history.) These tasks are carefully designed to match the main disciplinary focus of the unit: a pupil studying the Great Fire of London might write a causal explanation; a pupil studying the Romans might construct an argument about significance; a pupil studying Ancient Greece might write a comparative analysis of Athens and Sparta. Both pieces receive meaningful written feedback, allowing pupils to understand not just what they got right but how to strengthen their historical thinking and expression. This disciplinary writing progression runs from simple, scaffolded sentences in Year 1 to extended, independently structured historical arguments in Year 6.

Core substantive facts that pupils must secure in long-term memory are identified for every unit and revisited regularly through retrieval practice at the start of lessons. This ensures that knowledge does not simply accumulate and then fade but is genuinely embedded over time.

Our Rights Respecting Schools status shapes the way history is taught as well as what is taught. Pupils are encouraged to consider the rights of people in the past — who had them, who was denied them, and what happened when individuals stood up for them. This lens is particularly powerful in units on People Who Made a Difference, Ancient Greece (exploring who was excluded from Athenian democracy), the Romans (slavery and power) and Conflict and Resolution (human rights abuses in both World Wars and the formation of the United Nations). Teachers are supported to facilitate these discussions sensitively and confidently.

Impact

By the end of their time at Abbey Primary, pupils have a secure, chronological understanding of British and world history from the Stone Age to the Second World War. They can place the periods they have studied in sequence, explain connections between them and identify how events in one period shaped what came next. Pupils use historical vocabulary with confidence and accuracy — words like invasion, democracy, empire, hierarchy, significance and evidence are not just terms they have encountered but concepts they can apply in new contexts. They can explain not just what happened in history but why it happened, what its consequences were, and why it still matters.

Pupils at Abbey can evaluate historical evidence, understand that sources have limitations and perspectives, and begin to appreciate that history is not simply a fixed set of facts but an ongoing process of interpretation and argument. By Year 6, pupils can hold and articulate a historical argument, weigh up competing causes, and make substantiated judgements about significance.

The impact of our disciplinary writing is visible in books across the school. From Year 1 to Year 6, pupils produce two pieces of disciplinary writing per unit, showing a clear progression in their ability to write as historians — from simple causal sentences in KS1 to extended, evidence-based arguments in upper KS2. Feedback on these pieces is evident and acted upon, demonstrating that pupils are not just writing but improving as historical thinkers and communicators. The oracy emphasis is equally visible — in the quality of pupil voice interviews, in the confidence with which pupils discuss historical ideas, and in the way pupils use historical language naturally and precisely when talking about what they have learned. Pupils do not simply know historical facts; they can argue with them, question them and communicate them effectively to others. The impact of our Rights Respecting Schools ethos is visible in the way pupils talk about history — with empathy, with a sense of justice, and with an awareness that the people they study were real human beings with rights, feelings and agency. Pupils understand that history contains difficult truths and that studying them honestly is part of what it means to be an educated, compassionate citizen.

Pupils from all groups — including those with SEND, those eligible for pupil premium and those with English as an additional language — access the full history curriculum. The use of oracy strategies, visual supports, vocabulary scaffolding and the enquiry-based approach means that history is inclusive, and that all pupils can make progress regardless of their starting point.

PROGRESSION OF SUBSTANTIVE KNOWLEDGE – KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PAST

Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
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EYFS

Adults in the EYFS will be:

- Presenting children with pictures, stories, artefacts and accounts from the past, explaining similarities and differences.
- Offering hands-on experiences that deepen children’s understanding, such as visiting a local area that has historical importance, including a focus on the lives of both women and men.
- Showing images of familiar situations in the past, such as homes, schools, and transport.
- Looking for opportunities to observe children talking about experiences that are familiar to them and how these may have differed in the past.
- Offering opportunities for children to begin to organise events using basic chronology and recognising that things happened before they were born.

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;
- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

PROGRESSION OF SUBSTANTIVE KNOWLEDGE – KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PAST

Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
<p><u>Toys in Time</u></p> <p>There are different kinds of toys — soft toys, outdoor toys, puzzles and games.</p> <p>Toys from the past are similar and different to toys today in terms of appearance, materials, movement, safety and strength.</p> <p>The past is when something has already happened.</p> <p>A timeline shows when things happened in the past.</p> <p><u>Transport and Travel</u></p> <p>Transport is a vehicle that takes people or goods from one place to another, for example cars, trains, boats, aeroplanes and the London Underground.</p> <p>Journeys made in the past were often long, slow and uncomfortable, so most people stayed close to where they lived.</p> <p>There were different kinds of transport in the past, for example horse-drawn omnibuses and steam trains.</p> <p>Some kinds of transport are only used in certain places, for example the</p>	<p><u>Great Fire of London</u></p> <p>London looked very different in 1666 — buildings were made of wood, streets were narrow and there was no running water.</p> <p>The fire began in a bakery on Pudding Lane and spread quickly because of narrow streets, wooden buildings, flammable materials, a summer drought and strong winds.</p> <p>We know about the Great Fire from Samuel Pepys' diary, which is a primary source.</p> <p>The fire led to long-term benefits — London was rebuilt with wider streets, brick buildings and better fire prevention.</p> <p><u>Kings and Queens</u> Monarchs are kings and queens, for example William I, King John, Elizabeth I, Charles I, Elizabeth II and Charles III.</p> <p>Monarchs are significant people — they changed events, improved or worsened people's lives, and had a lasting impact on their country.</p> <p>Some monarchs are remembered positively, for example Elizabeth I, who was a strong ruler who helped England become powerful.</p>	<p><u>Stone, Bronze & Iron Ages</u></p> <p>Prehistory is the time before written records and includes the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages.</p> <p>The Stone Age is divided into three periods: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic.</p> <p>An artefact is an object made by humans, for example a pot or a weapon.</p> <p>In the Bronze Age, people made tools and goods from bronze and used these to trade — as a result, some people became wealthy for the first time.</p> <p>In the Iron Age, people started to use iron rather than bronze to make tools and weapons, which increased trade but also caused conflict.</p> <p><u>Ancient Egypt</u> Ancient Egypt was a civilisation in north-east Africa that began around 3100BCE and ended around 30BCE.</p> <p>The River Nile was central to Egyptian life — it was used for farming, trade and cleaning.</p>	<p><u>The Romans</u></p> <p>The Romans came from Rome in Italy.</p> <p>Julius Caesar led two invasions of Britain in 55 and 54BCE, but permanent conquest came later under Emperor Claudius in 43CE.</p> <p>The strength of the Roman army was key to the success of the Roman Empire — it was strict, well-organised and the largest military force of its time.</p> <p>Boudicca was Queen of the Iceni people who raised a rebel army after the Romans took control of Iceni lands.</p> <p>In 122CE, Emperor Hadrian began building Hadrian's Wall as a controlled border to monitor people, tax trade goods and regulate travel.</p> <p>Roman rule in Britain ended in 410CE due to rebellions and increasing problems within the Roman Empire itself.</p> <p>The Romans built towns across Britain with similar features including aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers.</p>	<p><u>Anglo Saxons</u></p> <p>The Anglo-Saxon period lasted from approximately 410CE to 1066.</p> <p>The Anglo-Saxons came to England from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands and were made up of three main groups: Angles, Saxons and Jutes.</p> <p>We know about the Anglo-Saxons from the writings of the Venerable Bede, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and discoveries at Sutton Hoo.</p> <p>Anglo-Saxon Britain was divided into seven kingdoms, each ruled by a different king, including Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex.</p> <p>Anglo-Saxons were pagans until King Ethelbert converted to Christianity.</p> <p>Alfred the Great became king in 870CE and was highly significant — he defeated the Danes, protected England from further invasion and created a set of laws to promote justice and order.</p> <p><u>Vikings</u> The Viking age in European history lasted from approximately 790CE to 1066.</p>	<p><u>Ancient Greece</u></p> <p>The Minoan civilisation was the first to develop in Ancient Greece, around 4,000 years ago.</p> <p>Around 1450BCE, the Mycenaean came to dominate mainland Greece and expanded through former Minoan territory.</p> <p>The Golden Age of Greece began around 508BCE — a time of peace, prosperity and growth. Athens introduced democracy, structured in three parts: the Ekklesia, the Boule and the Dikasteria.</p> <p>Alexander the Great was born in 356BCE — he never lost a battle and conquered a vast empire stretching from Greece to Egypt and into Asia.</p> <p>The Ancient Greeks made important contributions that still influence the world today, including democracy, the Olympic Games, philosophy, the alphabet, theatre and the study of medicine.</p> <p>Athens and Sparta were both powerful city-states but were very different — Athens valued democracy and education, while</p>

<p>London Underground or canal boats.</p> <p>Some monarchs are remembered negatively, for example King John, who was seen as cruel and unfair and was forced to sign the Magna Carta in 1215.</p> <p>William the Conqueror invaded England and won the Battle of Hastings in 1066 — this changed England forever.</p> <p>Today, most of the power lies with the Prime Minister and the government, not the monarch.</p> <p><u>People who made a difference</u></p> <p>We all have human rights — for example the right to be treated fairly and the right to education.</p> <p>Significant people can have a variety of jobs — they can be politicians, athletes, doctors or even children.</p> <p>Rosa Parks was an African American woman who refused to obey an unjust law in 1955, and her bravery helped change the rules so that all people were treated equally in America.</p> <p>Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani girl who spoke out bravely for girls' right to go to school, even when it put her life in danger.</p>	<p>Pharaohs ruled over the people like royalty — they were treated as gods and some were buried inside pyramids.</p> <p>Ancient Egyptian society was structured in a hierarchy, with pharaohs and priests at the top, then soldiers, artisans and farmers, and enslaved people at the bottom.</p> <p>The Ancient Egyptian writing system was called hieroglyphics.</p> <p>The Ancient Egyptians worshipped over 2000 gods, including Anubis, Osiris and Isis.</p>	<p>We can learn about Roman people and towns by investigating archaeological sites.</p> <p>The Romans built roads to develop trade, transport supplies and help troops travel easily — many of these roads still exist today.</p> <p>Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.</p> <p>The Romans introduced many things to Britain that we still use today, including the alphabet, words in our language, the calendar and the number system</p> <p><u>Maya</u> The Ancient Maya lived in Central America around 900CE in powerful, independent cities called city-states — at the same time that Vikings were raiding Britain.</p> <p>Maya society was organised into a strict hierarchy, with rulers at the top and enslaved people at the bottom — we know this from ruins that archaeologists have discovered.</p> <p>The Ancient Maya worshipped many gods as well as their rulers and ancestors, and religion was a central part of daily life.</p> <p>The Ancient Maya had their own writing system using</p>	<p>The Vikings travelled from Scandinavia in longboats and raided settlements in England, often targeting religious buildings because they were easy to find and contained gold and silver.</p> <p>Vikings believed that dying bravely in battle would help them reach Valhalla.</p> <p>By 874CE the Vikings had conquered all English kingdoms except Wessex and many settled as farmers and craftspeople.</p> <p>The Danelaw was the area of England where Danish laws dominated those of the Anglo-Saxons, for example in York.</p> <p>Viking raids began again in the late 10th century and Viking rule finally ended when Edward the Confessor became king in 1042.</p> <p><u>Baghdad and the Middle East</u></p> <p>Approximately 1,400 years ago, a prophet called Muhammad gathered a group of faithful followers, beginning the religion of Islam.</p> <p>The Golden Age of Islam lasted from the 8th to the 10th century — a time of great wealth, invention and scientific discovery.</p>	<p>Sparta focused on military strength.</p> <p><u>Conflict and Resolution</u></p> <p>Before 1914, Europe was divided into two alliances: the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia).</p> <p>WW1 broke out in 1914 due to several causes, including the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, rising nationalism and tensions between the alliances.</p> <p>Conscription was introduced in 1916, initially for unmarried men aged 18–41, then extended to married men.</p> <p>Trench warfare defined much of the fighting — conditions were dangerous, cramped and deeply unpleasant for soldiers on both sides.</p> <p>Women took on jobs traditionally filled by men, marking a significant change in society.</p> <p>WW1 ended in 1918. The Treaty of Versailles was a controversial peace agreement that placed heavy blame and penalties on Germany, causing lasting political unrest.</p>
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PROGRESSION OF DISCIPLINARY SKILLS – thinking like a historian

	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Cause and consequence	Simple single causes: technology improved → toys became safer. Slow transport → people stayed local.	Multiple causes of the fire. Consequences: London rebuilt with safer materials and fire prevention. Monarchs' actions cause consequences for their subjects.	Introduction of bronze and iron caused societal change. The Nile's flooding caused Egypt's farming success and prosperity.	Why did Romans invade? Army strength as cause of empire spread. Legacy of Roman rule — towns, roads, Christianity still visible today.	Multi-layered causes: Viking invasions → Danelaw. Causes of Islamic Golden Age and its consequences for science and mathematics.	Complex global causes: assassination, alliances, nationalism → WW1. Treaty of Versailles → conditions for WW2. Pupils analyse interrelated causes and long-term effects.
Continuity and change	Simple before/after: how has transport changed over time? Some forms (trains) still exist — introduction to continuity alongside change.	London rebuilt — change and improvement. The monarchy as an institution is continuous even as the power of individual monarchs has changed.	Three ages of technological change over thousands of years. The Nile's importance to Egyptian life remains continuous across centuries.	Roman roads, place names and Christianity continue into modern Britain. Pupils trace what the Romans left behind long after their rule ended.	Were Vikings just invaders — did their actions change over time? Cultural continuity in settlement patterns despite repeated invasion.	Greek democracy and philosophy continue to influence the world today. Women's roles changed significantly through both World Wars — a long-term societal shift.
Similarity and Difference	Direct comparison of old and new toys — materials, safety, movement. Comparing modes of transport past and present.	London 1666 vs today. Good vs bad monarchs. Rosa Parks vs Malala Yousafzai — same fight, different century and continent.	Tools, trade and conflict compared across three prehistoric ages. Egyptian society compared to later river-based civilisations.	Pre-Roman vs Roman Britain. Roman towns compared across sites. Maya compared to contemporary Anglo-Saxon Britain.	Anglo-Saxon vs Viking society. Baghdad at 900CE explicitly compared to London at 900CE — a cross-cultural simultaneous comparison.	Athens vs Sparta. Minoan vs Mycenaean civilisations. WW1 vs WW2 — causes, tactics, civilian experience and outcome.
Significance	Introduction: why is it significant that toys became safer? Why does transport matter to daily life? Simple personal significance.	Why is the Great Fire significant today? What makes a monarch significant — good or bad? Formal introduction to criteria for historical significance.	Why are these prehistoric periods significant in shaping society? Significance of individual pharaohs and the long-lasting impact of Egyptian civilisation.	Why is the Roman Empire significant for modern Britain? How significant was Maya civilisation — and why did its decline matter?	Why is Alfred the Great significant? Why does the Danelaw matter? Significance of Islamic Golden Age scholars — still used today in science and medicine.	Global significance: why does Ancient Greek democracy still shape our world? Why are the World Wars still studied and remembered today?
Evidence	Introduction: what can objects tell us? Pupils use photographs and	Samuel Pepys' diary as a primary source. What can a diary tell us? What are its limitations?	Archaeological evidence — tools, burial sites, artefacts. Written	Archaeological sites as evidence. Roman written records alongside	Combining archaeological evidence (Sutton Hoo) with written	Evaluating conflicting sources: letters, diaries, photographs, propaganda. Pupils ask who created this, why, and what it

	physical objects as their first encounter with historical evidence.	First encounter with written evidence.	evidence — hieroglyphics, tombs. Expanding the types of evidence available.	physical remains. Maya ruins and glyphs — how do we know about a civilisation with no direct contact?	records (Bede, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle). Pupils begin to use multiple sources together and consider their provenance.	might leave out — full critical source analysis.
Chronology	First encounter with timelines. Pupils place toys and transport in order from oldest to newest. Key vocabulary: past, present, before, after, oldest, newest.	Placing events on a growing class timeline. Kings and Queens in chronological order. Pupils begin to understand 'beyond living memory' as a concept.	BCE and CE introduced. Prehistory defined. Three named periods spanning thousands of years. Ancient Egypt 3100BCE–30BCE — pupils work with large timescales for the first time.	Placing Rome within a world chronology. Maya at 900CE placed alongside Anglo-Saxons — pupils begin to think about simultaneous civilisations across the globe.	410CE–1066CE as a continuous British narrative. Baghdad's Golden Age 8th–10th century overlapping with Viking age — chronological connections across world history.	Placing Ancient Greece within a global chronology from Minoan to Alexander. 1914–1945 as a connected modern period — pupils sequence complex overlapping events across both World Wars.

