

History in the Early Years - Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community, including the passage of time and how the past influences the present. Through stories, artefacts, family history, and shared experiences, children begin to develop an awareness of change, continuity, and chronology. Visits to museums, local landmarks, and significant sites, alongside discussions about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members, deepen their understanding of history in meaningful contexts.

Listening to a wide range of stories, non-fiction texts, rhymes, and poems introduces children to important historical figures, events, and traditions from different cultures and times. These experiences not only broaden their knowledge of the world but also extend their vocabulary, helping them articulate ideas about time, sequence, and cause and effect. Enriching children’s language and understanding at this stage provides the foundations for later historical enquiry and interpretation.

At Sunnyside Primary Academy, we recognise that pupils’ historical understanding begins well before formal subject teaching in Year 1. Our Reception curriculum is carefully designed to lay the foundations for historical thinking, fully aligned with Development Matters and the *Early Learning Goals* within the *Understanding the World* area of learning.

Through our topic-based EYFS curriculum, children explore ideas about the past and present, comparing their own experiences with those of others, noticing how people, objects, and places have changed over time. These early encounters with concepts such as *similarity and difference*, *sequence and change*, and *cause and consequence* provide the essential building blocks that are explicitly developed within the Primary Knowledge Curriculum (PKC) History sequence from Year 1 to Year 6.

Our approach ensures that from the earliest stage, pupils begin to develop a sense of chronology and curiosity about the past — enabling a smooth transition into the rich, knowledge-driven study of history that follows in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Development Matters	Statutory Framework: Early Learning Goals
Children in Reception will be learning to: - Comment on images of familiar situation in the past - Compare and contrast characters from stories, including figures from the past	<u>Speaking</u> - Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions with modelling and support from their teacher. <u>Past and Present</u> - 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.

Transition from Reception to Year 1

Early Learning Goals	KS1 National Curriculum Objectives
<p><u>Speaking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions with modelling and support from their teacher. <p><u>Past and Present</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 	<p>The national curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day. • Know how people’s lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world. • Understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world. • Gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as <i>empire</i>, <i>civilisation</i>, <i>parliament</i> and <i>peasantry</i>. • Understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference, and significance. • Use these concepts to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically valid questions, and create their own structured accounts. • Understand how evidence is used to make historical claims. • Gain perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts local, regional, national, and international.

Our Reception Curriculum

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Topic	All About Me	Space	Superheroes	Dinosaurs	Minibeasts	Fairy Tales
History: Past and Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk about their own life and family history. - Recognise that they have grown and changed over time. - Discuss similarities and differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn about significant historical events such as the first moon landing. - Explore real-life heroes like Neil Armstrong and Mae Jemison. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn about real-life ‘heroes’ from the past (nurses, firefighters, inventors, explorers). - Compare people’s roles and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore the concept of ‘long ago’. - Discuss fossils, extinction, and how scientists know about the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe change and continuity in the natural world. - Discuss how living things and environments have changed over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore how stories, traditions, and objects have been passed down over generations. - Notice that some things stay the same while others change.

	between life now and in the past (e.g. toys, homes, school).	- Compare past and present technology (rockets, space suits, communication).	achievements across time. - Discuss how people's actions have changed society.	- Understand how the Earth has changed over time.	- Explore famous naturalists such as Charles Darwin or David Attenborough.	- Compare 'long ago' story settings with modern life.
Links to PKC across the school	- Year 1: <i>Changes within living memory</i> – how life has changed since parents/grandparents were children. - Year 2: <i>Significant individuals</i> – Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole – people who shaped society. - Lays foundation for chronology and sequencing.	- Year 1–2: <i>Significant events beyond living memory</i> – The Moon Landing. - Year 3–4: <i>Ancient Civilisations</i> – early exploration and discovery. - Introduces the concept of technological advancement over time.	- Year 1–2: <i>Significant individuals</i> – Florence Nightingale, Rosa Parks, Edith Cavell. - Year 5–6: <i>Impact of leadership and social reform</i> – e.g. civil rights, women's suffrage. - Builds understanding of historical significance and moral courage.	- Year 3–4: <i>Prehistory</i> – Stone Age to Iron Age; how humans learned from the land. - Year 6: <i>Evolution of ideas and evidence</i> – how historical knowledge is constructed. - Introduces historical enquiry through evidence and artefacts.	- Year 2: <i>Explorers and pioneers</i> – significant individuals who studied the world. - Year 5–6: <i>Scientific and industrial developments</i> – growth of knowledge and discovery. - Develops curiosity about how human understanding has evolved.	- Year 1–2: <i>Historical storytelling and cultural history</i> – how we learn about the past through stories and artefacts. - Year 3–4: <i>Myths and legends of ancient civilisations.</i> - Encourages historical imagination and empathy for life in the past.