SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School

Our Approach to History

How history is taught at SS Peter & Paul · 2026–27

Intent

At SS Peter & Paul, we want our children to become curious, knowledgeable and thoughtful historians who understand how the past has shaped the world they live in. Our bespoke curriculum meets and exceeds the National Curriculum, carrying pupils from changes within their own living memory to the most demanding moral questions of the twentieth century. Many of our children arrive with little sense of the past beyond their own family, so chronology is built deliberately rather than assumed — and the curriculum asks pupils not only to learn what happened, but to weigh how we know it.

As a Catholic school, our curriculum invites pupils to reflect on justice, leadership, compassion and service. They consider the moral dimensions of the past — colonial exploitation, persecution and genocide — and reach historically informed moral positions, including the commitment that flows from studying the Holocaust: Never Again.

Implementation

- **Curriculum design:** 18 units across Years 1 to 6, three per year group, plus a dedicated Reception layer. History is taught for one hour weekly on alternate half terms, alternating with geography.
- **EYFS:** history is embedded within Understanding the World. Children talk about their own past and the past of their family, order familiar events, and handle old objects and photographs — the first seeds of chronology and source work.
- **KS1:** pupils begin within living memory — transport, medicine, holidays — before moving to events and people beyond it. Wimbledon is studied as a local history unit, connecting their own area to national sporting history from 1877.
- **KS2:** pupils build a secure chronological framework from prehistory to the mid-twentieth century, studying ancient civilisations, British history beyond 1066, a non-European society, and the local story of Victorian Merton. Source work deepens from describing to evaluating.
- **Enquiry:** every unit is driven by an overarching enquiry question — from ‘How has transport changed over time?’ in Year 1 to ‘Was Guy Fawkes a terrorist, a freedom fighter, or something more complicated?’ in Year 6. Lessons answer the question; they do not simply cover the period.
- **Sources:** pupils work with artefacts, photographs, diaries, maps, statistics and oral histories. They learn early that a source was made by someone, for a reason — and by Year 6 they corroborate one source against another and evaluate evidence produced under duress or for propaganda.
- **Progression:** units are joined by explicit retrieval contracts and by three golden threads. What Year 3 teaches about power, Year 6 recalls and extends rather than reteaches.
- **Local history:** the curriculum is rooted in Merton. Pupils study Wimbledon, the Surrey Iron Railway, William Morris's workshop at Merton Abbey Mills, and Victorian Merton — and Year 6 visits Parliament.
- **Inclusion:** scaffolds are built into every unit — differentiated sentence stems from SEND to greater depth, pre-taught Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary and adapted sources — so every pupil accesses the full curriculum rather than a reduced version of it.

Impact

- Pupils know more and remember more, placing new learning within an increasingly confident chronological framework, and use Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary with growing precision.
- Pupils treat sources critically — asking who made this, why, and what it does not tell us.
- By Year 6, pupils construct and defend a reasoned historical argument, acknowledging counter-arguments and understanding that significance changes over time.

Assessment

- Low-stakes retrieval opens every lesson; hinge questions check understanding before teaching moves on.
- Each unit ends in a written historical outcome, assessed against published criteria for expected and greater depth.
- Teachers record one judgement per child per unit on the whole-school history tracker, within two weeks of the unit ending.
- The tracker flags disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and pupils learning EAL, so gaps are visible and acted upon each term.
- Subject leadership monitors planning, books, lessons and pupil voice across the year, reporting to senior leaders each term.