CELT History: Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

CELT Primary History

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Intent

At CELT, we believe that a high-quality history education enables children to understand the world they inherit by understanding the people, events, ideas, beliefs and changes that have shaped it. History gives pupils access to human stories beyond their own immediate experience, helping them understand both the diversity of human life and the connections between people, places and periods across time.

This reflects the wider moral purpose of the CELT Primary Curriculum: to provide every child with an inclusive, equitable and inspiring education which opens doors to lives of choice and opportunity. We maintain high expectations for every learner. Children should both see themselves reflected within their curriculum and encounter people, cultures, experiences and perspectives beyond their own.

History contributes directly to our five curriculum aims. Through history, pupils develop a sense of identity, belonging and connection as Happy & Healthy learners; build knowledge, vocabulary and critical thinking which ensure they are Prepared for the Future; encounter diverse cultures, identities and perspectives as Global Citizens; become curious and Inspired to Learn through powerful stories and meaningful enquiry; and become Creative Thinkers who question, connect, compare, interpret and reason.

Our history curriculum is deliberately knowledge-rich, story-rich, vocabulary-rich and disciplinary. Children do not encounter a collection of isolated topics. They build an increasingly connected understanding of the past in which earlier knowledge enables them to understand later knowledge.

Building Historical Knowledge

We develop both substantive knowledge – knowledge of the past – and disciplinary knowledge – knowledge of how historians investigate, construct and debate accounts of the past.

Recurring substantive themes provide pupils with increasingly sophisticated lenses through which to understand history:

- **Power**
- **Migration & Exploration**
- **Belief & Culture**
- **Everyday Life**
- **Innovation**

Alongside these, pupils repeatedly encounter the disciplinary concepts of:

- **Change & Continuity**
- **Cause & Consequence**
- **Similarity & Difference**
- **Significance**
- **Evidence & Interpretation**

These are not taught as generic skills detached from historical content. Pupils become better historical thinkers because they know more history. Our ambition is that children know more history, remember more history and are increasingly able to think historically because of what they know.

A Coherent Journey from KS1 to KS2

Our curriculum creates a deliberate journey from children's first encounters with the past in KS1 to the rich chronological and disciplinary study of history through Opening Worlds in KS2.

In KS1, pupils follow the CELT KS1 History Curriculum. History alternates with geography and is usually taught in the second half of each term. This allows each humanities discipline to be explored with sufficient depth while pupils begin to recognise connections between people, place and time.

Through enquiries into toys, the Great Fire of London, explorers, Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale and local history, pupils develop the foundations of chronology, change, causation, significance, similarity and difference, evidence and interpretation. They encounter history at different scales: from changes within living memory and their own locality to nationally and globally significant people, places and events.

Local history is an important part of this entitlement. Schools draw upon the distinctive histories of their Cornish communities, including china clay, fishing, harbours, engineering and trade, helping children understand that the places in which they live have histories which connect to wider national and global stories.

In the summer of Year 2, the usual history and geography sequence switches to enable pupils to complete the Opening Worlds History Transition Unit, providing a deliberate bridge into KS2.

From Year 3 onwards, history is taught throughout the year through Opening Worlds. This increased frequency allows knowledge to accumulate continuously, strengthens chronological understanding and enables connections between periods, places, people and recurring themes to remain active.

Opening Worlds provides carefully sequenced substantive and disciplinary knowledge, ambitious historical breadth, rich vocabulary and strong connections across history, geography and religion. Its design supports our commitment to ensuring all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, access an ambitious curriculum.

Story, Chronology and Connection

History is fundamentally about human stories through time. Our history curriculum therefore reflects the CELT principle that memory privileges story.

Chronology is more than remembering dates. Pupils progressively build a mental framework into which new historical knowledge can be placed. Earlier stories, people, places, vocabulary and ideas are deliberately revisited and reused so that pupils can connect new learning to what they already know.

Progression comes through increasingly secure chronology, connected historical narratives, recurring themes and vocabulary, richer historical texts and increasing breadth, depth and complexity.

Our curriculum is the progression model: pupils progress because the curriculum systematically changes what they know, remember, understand and can subsequently think about.

Implementation

History is taught explicitly as a distinct academic discipline through carefully sequenced substantive and disciplinary knowledge.

Curriculum Organisation

In KS1, teachers use the CELT History Curriculum. History generally alternates with geography and is usually taught during the second half of each term. Units are organised around meaningful historical enquiry questions and identify the precise knowledge, vocabulary, substantive themes and disciplinary concepts pupils will encounter.

The sequence changes in the summer of Year 2 to accommodate the Opening Worlds History Transition Unit.

In KS2, pupils study Opening Worlds History throughout the year, enabling prior knowledge to be continually activated and connections to be made across historical periods.

A Progressive Pedagogy: EYFS to KS2

Our KS1 pedagogy deliberately bridges the play-based, language-rich and adult-supported learning of EYFS with the increasingly explicit, knowledge-rich teaching of Opening Worlds.

The transition is progressive rather than abrupt. As pupils develop greater knowledge, language, independence and readiness for sustained learning, the balance of teaching approaches gradually changes.

We use three complementary modes:

Mode A – Independent Learning: pupils independently practise, retrieve, apply, record or demonstrate historical knowledge.

Mode B – Adult-Led Learning: adults explicitly teach, tell stories, model, question, scaffold discussion and support pupils to acquire and apply new knowledge.

Mode C – Play-Based Learning: pupils explore and consolidate historical ideas through purposeful provision, play, role play, talk, artefacts, small-world experiences and practical exploration.

At the beginning of KS1 there is a greater proportion of Modes B and C, building upon effective EYFS practice. Short, carefully scaffolded opportunities for Mode A begin to develop independence.

Across KS1, Mode C gradually reduces but remains purposeful; Mode B continues to provide explicit teaching and rich interaction; and Mode A increases in frequency, duration and sophistication.

By the end of Year 2, pupils are increasingly prepared for Opening Worlds. The transition unit provides the final bridge into the routines and expectations of KS2.

EYFS → language-rich adult interaction and purposeful play → KS1 changing balance of Modes A, B and C → Year 2 transition → KS2 Opening Worlds

Crucially, the balance of pedagogy changes, not the ambition of the curriculum.

Story and Vocabulary

As in Opening Worlds, story sits at the heart of KS1 history. Historical content is brought to life through carefully constructed narratives about people, events and places. Stories provide memorable frameworks through which children organise knowledge, understand sequence and connect people, events and ideas.

Key vocabulary is explicitly pre-taught. Teachers select high-leverage words, teach their meaning in context, model pronunciation and provide repeated opportunities for pupils to hear, say, retrieve and apply them.

This begins in KS1 and continues into Opening Worlds, creating consistency in how pupils encounter increasingly complex historical language and knowledge.

Oracy as a Tool for Historical Thinking

Oracy is central to history teaching. Children need frequent opportunities to say, rehearse and refine ideas before writing them, and purposeful historical talk is itself an important means of developing historical knowledge and thinking.

Pupils regularly:

- rehearse and apply historical vocabulary;
- retell and sequence historical narratives;
- explain causes, consequences, change and continuity;
- compare people, periods and experiences;
- discuss significance;
- interpret evidence and justify conclusions;
- listen and respond to others;

- orally rehearse historical explanations before writing.

Talk is therefore not an addition to historical learning: it is one of the principal ways pupils process, retrieve, connect and communicate knowledge.

In KS1, structured approaches including Talk Partners, Agree–Build–Challenge, opinion lines, consensus activities, sentence stems and 'Talk like a Historian' ensure that all pupils participate.

Oracy runs through all three modes of learning. Children talk through purposeful play, engage in sustained dialogue with adults, rehearse ideas collaboratively and increasingly construct independent historical explanations.

This continues into Opening Worlds, where choral response, partner talk, full-sentence answers, repeated vocabulary rehearsal and carefully structured questioning are integral to lessons.

As pupils progress, their historical talk moves from naming, describing, sequencing and retelling towards explaining, comparing, connecting, justifying and interpreting.

Knowledge and Sequencing

Teachers understand what pupils have learned previously and where learning is heading next. Planning identifies the precise knowledge pupils need to secure rather than treating historical topics as ends in themselves.

Earlier stories, people, places, concepts and vocabulary make later historical material more accessible. Recurring substantive themes create connections across the curriculum.

For example, early KS1 encounters with power through decisions following the Great Fire develop into understanding pharaohs, democracy and empire and later more complex systems of political power. Early encounters with migration, belief, everyday life and innovation similarly provide foundations for increasingly complex study.

Historical Enquiry

Pupils are explicitly taught to think about the kinds of questions historians ask:

Why did this happen? – Cause & Consequence
What changed and what stayed the same? – Change & Continuity
How were experiences similar or different? – Similarity & Difference
Why does this matter? – Significance
How do we know? – Evidence
Why might accounts differ? – Interpretation

As substantive knowledge grows, pupils become increasingly able to make connections, draw contrasts, ask historically valid questions and construct informed accounts.

Reading in History

Reading is integral to history. Pupils encounter increasingly rich historical narratives and texts which simultaneously broaden their knowledge of the world and strengthen their capacity to learn through reading.

Explicit vocabulary teaching, prior knowledge, oral rehearsal and teacher explanation enable all pupils to access ambitious historical texts.

Retrieval and Remembering

Retrieval is woven throughout history teaching so that important knowledge remains available for future learning.

Remembering is not secured through disconnected quizzing alone. Pupils repeatedly reuse knowledge in meaningful new contexts through story, discussion, comparison, questioning and historical enquiry.

This enables pupils to build coherent historical schemas rather than accumulate isolated facts.

Inclusion and Equity

Every pupil is entitled to the full ambition of the history curriculum.

We do not respond to disadvantage or SEND by narrowing historical entitlement. Instead, teachers use appropriate scaffolding to enable pupils to access the same ambitious core knowledge.

Explicit vocabulary instruction, storytelling, images, maps, timelines, structured talk, choral response, repetition, retrieval and consistent routines reduce unnecessary cognitive demands while maintaining intellectual ambition.

Representation is equally important. Pupils encounter diverse societies, cultures, individuals and experiences and learn to understand the past in its complexity rather than through stereotypes or simplistic narratives.

Our curriculum provides both windows into lives and perspectives beyond pupils' own and mirrors through which their communities, identities and heritage can be recognised.

Assessment

Assessment establishes what pupils know, remember and understand and how successfully they can use that knowledge to think historically.

Assessment is embedded within teaching through questioning, pupil talk, retrieval, observation and written outcomes. Teachers identify misconceptions and adapt teaching accordingly.

End-of-unit assessment establishes whether pupils have secured core substantive knowledge and can use it when reasoning about cause and consequence, change and continuity, similarity and difference, significance, evidence and interpretation.

Assessment informs responsive teaching and identifies knowledge requiring further retrieval, clarification or reinforcement.

Impact

The impact of our history curriculum is seen in what pupils know, remember, connect, explain and question over time.

Pupils develop increasingly rich and coherent mental models of the past rather than remembering disconnected topics. They locate learning within an expanding chronological framework and make meaningful connections between people, places, events, ideas and periods.

As pupils progress through CELT, they increasingly:

- know and remember a broad and ambitious body of historical knowledge;
- develop secure chronological understanding and recognise patterns of change and continuity;
- connect learning across periods and places through recurring themes such as power, migration, belief, culture, everyday life and innovation;
- think historically, reasoning about cause, change, similarity, difference and significance;
- understand historical enquiry, evidence and interpretation;
- use precise historical vocabulary confidently in speech and writing;
- talk purposefully about history, explaining, questioning, justifying and responding to others;
- make connections across history, geography and religion;
- understand history at different scales, from their own Cornish communities to Britain and the wider world;
- understand diverse human experiences and perspectives;
- read, discuss and write about increasingly complex historical ideas with confidence; and
- approach the past with curiosity, asking thoughtful questions about how we know, why things happened, what changed and why events and people matter.

The impact is also evident in pupils' growing historical voice. As knowledge, vocabulary and confidence develop, pupils move beyond recalling what happened to explaining relationships, using evidence, making comparisons, justifying thinking and constructing increasingly coherent historical accounts.

By the end of primary school, pupils have developed a broad, connected and rigorous historical schema which prepares them for increasingly complex historical study at secondary school and helps them orient themselves within the wider world.

Ultimately, history at CELT does more than teach children about the past. It gives them the knowledge with which to understand the present, the language with which to articulate

their ideas, the disciplinary tools with which to question accounts of the world, and the historical perspective through which to imagine and shape their futures.