



Meridian
Trust

Curriculum Overview

History



Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 3

Curriculum Aims

In our Meridian Trust schools, our aim is to help students understand the complexity of our world, the process of change, the diversity of societies and culture, and more. Alongside this we want to achieve a balance of local, national and international history in our curriculum which is also sufficiently diverse to reflect the students in front of us. Furthermore, Key Stage 3 will give students the context for topics at GCSE without repetition, therefore laying foundations for study in Key Stages 4 and 5.



Key Curriculum Content

We aim to give students powerful knowledge of the world and help them use this to explain and prioritise reasons for change, to explain similarity and difference, to evaluate interpretations, to reach judgements, to decide on the utility of historical evidence, and more. Students will then develop their skills by revisiting these core disciplinary concepts over time. Likewise, in order to make the most of GCSE, students should be aware of a variety of substantive concepts such as 'nationalism', 'monarchy', 'dictatorship', 'parliament' and as well as many others. These concepts will be regularly revisited in evolving forms throughout KS3 so that students have built up a complex picture of them by the start of GCSE, and they will do this through an array of stories, sources, scholarly reading and concrete examples. The exact topics that students in our Trust will encounter depend on the specific school that they attend but we always aim to meet and exceed the demands of the National Curriculum. This means that the minimum our students can expect to be taught is:

- the development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509 potentially including the Norman Conquest, medieval life, the Crusades and the Black Death;
- the development of Church, state and society in early modern Britain 1509-1745 potentially including the Reformation, the Tudors, the beginnings of English colonisation and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms;
- ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901 potentially including the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the British Empire, the Age of Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution;
- Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day potentially including the World Wars, the rise of extremism, the end of the British Empire and Britain's place in the world since 1945;



- The Holocaust;
- A local history study;
- the study of an aspect or theme in British history that consolidates and extends pupils' chronological knowledge from before 1066 potentially including Roman and post-Roman Britain;
- at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments potentially including the legacy of the Voyages of Exploration, and the Silk Roads.

How are students taught and assessed?

History lessons across our Meridian Trust schools creatively use rich resources that include primary sources and scholarly reading because we want students to engage with the substance of History.

Typical Curriculum Allocation:
3-4 hours per fortnight

Historians craft and answer questions so each lesson will have an enquiry question that becomes the focus of that session but that in turn will form part of a larger enquiry. The enquiry questions aim to reflect current scholarly debate such as, who or what was predominantly responsible for the outbreak of World War I? Through engagement with these debates and questions we want students to generate their own authentic discussions and use evidence to support their points of view. They will be able to construct and defend arguments whilst engaging respectfully with other points of view and they will become curious, life-long learners who ask questions about the world they live in.

Fundamentally our students need to be challenged at all levels and this will be achieved in a variety of ways – through reading scholarship, by considering the complex interrelationships of factors in causation, by judging significance, and by evaluating sources in-depth. For lower prior attaining students, scaffolding strategies will be used to help them access the challenging work that we aim to do. Ultimately, we will know that students have met our aims for them through the assessment of both their substantive and disciplinary knowledge in their written work. Following each assessment, students are provided feedback on their work's strengths and areas on which to improve, and then complete a Close the Gap task to move them forward in their learning. This might involve redrafting a section of their work following some feedback or pushing them even further by answering more challenging questions.



Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 4

Curriculum Aims

The GCSE History specification supports students in learning more about the history of Britain and that of the wider world. The study of history at GCSE inspires students to deepen their understanding of the people, periods and events studied and enable them to think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, make informed decisions and develop perspective and judgement. This, in turn, will prepare them for a role as informed, thoughtful and active citizens. The discipline of history and a knowledge and understanding of the past will also help them to understand their own identity and significant aspects of the world in which they live, and provide them with the basis for further learning and study.



Key Curriculum Content

Across our academies, we are aligned in choosing the Edexcel GCSE History specification. This means that students in all our academies carry out four studies across three exam papers. The first is the thematic study and historic environment which forms Paper 1 with schools usually opting to teach Medicine in Britain, c.1250–present or Crime and Punishment, c.1250–present. The thematic study requires students to understand change and continuity across a long sweep of history, including the most significant characteristics of different ages from the medieval to modern periods. They include people, events and developments and reveal wider changes in aspects of society over the centuries and allow comparisons to be made between different periods of history. This course is divided into four sections, which run sequentially from medieval to the present day. The historic environment is linked to the thematic study and might focus, for medicine, on the British sector of the Western Front or, for crime and punishment, on Whitechapel in the 19th century. It examines the relationship between that place and broader historical events and developments.

Paper 2 consists of a British depth study and a period study. Divided into three topics, the British depth study focuses on a substantial and coherent short time span and requires students to understand the complexity of a society or historical situation and the interplay of different aspects within it. This may include social, economic, political, religious and military aspects. The content is divided into three key topics.

Popular choices for this include Early Elizabethan England, Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, and Henry VIII and his ministers. The period study is also divided into three topics and focuses on a substantial and coherent medium time span of at least fifty years and requires students to understand the unfolding narrative of substantial developments and issues associated with that period. Popular topics include Superpower Relations and the Cold War, and the American West.



The final component is the modern depth study that makes up Paper 3. Divided into four key topics, it focuses on a substantial and coherent short time span and requires students to understand the complexity of a society or historical situation and the interplay of different aspects within it. This will include social, economic, political, cultural and military aspects. Alongside Paper 1, it targets students' abilities to analyse and evaluate primary sources, and is the only paper that does so for interpretations. Popular modern depth studies include Weimar and Nazi Germany as well as the USA, 1954-75: conflict at home and abroad.

How are students taught and assessed?

**Typical Curriculum Allocation:
5-6 hours per fortnight**

Just like in Key Stage 3, GCSE History lessons inspire students using a variety of resources that include primary sources and scholarly reading because we want students to engage with the substance of History. We continue to use enquiry questions to give our lessons real focus. For example we ask 'why do historians disagree about the extent of Germany's recovery in the Golden Years?' and 'what can sources tell us about the effects of gas attacks during World War I?' Through engagement with these debates and questions we want students to generate their own authentic discussions and use evidence to support their points of view. They will be able to construct and defend arguments whilst engaging respectfully with other points of view, and they will become curious, life-long learners who ask questions about the world they live in. Fundamentally our students need to be challenged at all levels and this will be achieved in a variety of ways – through reading scholarship, by considering the complex interrelationships of factors in causation, by judging significance, and by evaluating sources in-depth. In addition, scaffolding strategies will be used to help students access the challenging work we aim to do.

The nature of GCSE study is that students will be externally assessed through three exams sat at the end of Year 11. Paper 1 is the thematic study; Paper 2 includes a period study and British depth study; and Paper 3 comprises the modern depth study. There is no coursework. For more information on this assessment, please visit the Edexcel GCSE specification here: [Edexcel GCSE History Specification](#)

We make sure our students are making excellent progress towards their goals by planning for regular exam practice. Before, we model what strong answers look like, think about how to approach the task, and then following any practice, students are provided feedback on their work's strengths and shown how to improve. They then complete a Close the Gap task to move them forward in their learning. As they get into Year 10 and Year 11, students will undertake mock (or pre-public) exams to get them used to the rigour of the real thing. Meridian Trust colleagues undertake moderation of marking to ensure we have a more precise idea of where all our students are in their learning. However, it is also vitally important that students are confident in the knowledge that underpins excellent explanations and so knowledge-recall tests are also utilised to ensure regular retrieval of knowledge.



Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 5

Curriculum Aims

The A Level History specification chiefly aims to prepare learners by providing a suitable foundation for the study of History and other courses in higher education. It is designed to foster the development of critical thinking about the past with an understanding of a variety of historical topics. We aim to develop their interest in, and enthusiasm for, history and an understanding of the intrinsic value in its study. We seek to build on their understanding of the past through experiencing a broad and balanced course of study, and to improve them as effective and independent learners who can ask well-crafted questions about the past and research answers to them.



Key Curriculum Content

The precise content that is studied in A Level courses across our trust depends on the academy, and the exam board and topics they have chosen to teach. Broadly speaking, however, there are some similarities in that students are required to study the history of more than one country including at least one outside of the British Isles. Over a chronology of at least 200 years, they will study aspects of the past, such as significant individuals, societies, events and developments in breadth and in-depth including ways in which different groups in the same society were affected by key issues. The lens through which these aspects are studied will also range from the political and religious to the social and economic.

As a result, students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of these aspects of history and the historical debates that underpin them as well as disciplinary concepts such as cause and consequence, change and continuity, and significance. They will analyse and evaluate the causes and consequences of historical events and developments in the periods studied as well as their significance. In order to develop key disciplinary skills, students will use historical sources critically to reach substantiated conclusions, and analyse and evaluate how the past has been interpreted in different ways including in debates among historians.

"THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM STUDENTS DEVELOP A LIFELONG LOVE OF LEARNING AND THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO BE A RESILIENT, CONFIDENT AND INDEPENDENT LEARNER."

As well as the content studied for examinations, A Level students will carry out a historical enquiry that is independently researched and that investigates a specific historical question making use of their own knowledge as well as primary sources and historians' interpretations.



In addition to the independent coursework module, some of the huge variety of topics studied might include:

- Civil Rights in the USA, 1865–1992
- The Cold War in Europe, 1941–1995
- Liberals, Conservatives and the Rise of Labour, 1846–1918
- From Pitt to Peel: Britain, 1783–1853
- Italy and Unification, 1789–1896
- Russia, 1894–1941
- Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany, 1919–1963

Typical Curriculum Allocation: 4-5 hours per fortnight

How are students taught and assessed?

A Level History is a stimulating course and so we expect our students to be ready to rise to the challenge. To get them thinking deeply about the past we pose contentious enquiry questions based on the key issues and developments in the topics studied such as, ‘who was responsible for the beginning of the Cold War?’ It is vital that students engage as much as possible with the substance of History and so we continue to make use of engaging primary sources as well as historians’ interpretations of the past, allowing students to get stuck into the key debates. Through engagement with these debates and questions we want students to generate their own authentic discussions and use evidence to support their points of view. They will be able to construct and defend arguments whilst engaging respectfully with other points of view, and they will become curious, life-long learners who ask questions about the world they live in. Fundamentally our students need to be challenged at all levels and this will be achieved in a variety of ways – through reading scholarship, by considering the complex interrelationships of factors in causation, by judging significance, and by evaluating sources in-depth. In addition, scaffolding strategies will be used to help students access the challenging work we aim to do.

In order to build up students’ abilities to answer questions well we make use of several strategies that will aid their confidence. Retrieval practice of the core knowledge is vital for having that information at their fingertips ready to be deployed. In response to some of the key historical questions, they will complete several practice essays throughout their studies for which they will receive feedback that develops them as historians.

We also want students to practice their oracy and so verbal debates are a staple of A-Level classrooms. The precise way that students are formally assessed at the end of Year 13 is again dependent on the exam board that the student’s school uses. However, again, there are broad similarities. In addition to the non-exam assessment (NEA) – which is the independently researched historical enquiry that results in an essay – A Level students will sit three examinations at the end of Year 13. These are externally assessed and will then result in the award of a grade.



Curriculum Overview

Enrichment

Beyond the classroom

One of Meridian Trust's core values that we hold dear is extending the boundaries of learning and a key way of doing this is through enriching our History curriculum with amazing opportunities. Whether it be trips to local history sites like Ely Cathedral or IWM Duxford, sites of national importance like Parliament, or even international expeditions to places like the Battlefields of the First World War, experiences like this help to bring our classroom studies to life.

Students across our Trust have benefitted from a variety of experiences including essay writing competitions organised by the Historical Association, and the Lessons from Auschwitz project where sixth-form students travel to that infamous camp to learn more about the Holocaust. Schools have often invited guests to give talks on a range of subjects from medieval life and surgery on the Western Front of WWI to experiences of the Holocaust and Apartheid in South Africa. We also join in with national events yearly to mark Armistice Day on the 11th of November and encourage students to reflect on the importance of remembrance. It is experiences like these that are so powerful in making the abstract so tangible to our young people.



Cross-Trust Activities

History Departments across Meridian Trust have planned cross-trust activities for students across our family of schools. Where possible we would like to invite external speakers to talk to our students about their work in history, heritage and research. We have more events in the pipeline in the form of investigations into sources and competitions too.

Homework and opportunities

Homework is used to broaden students' horizons, giving them time to read, research and reinforce their knowledge. At some academies knowledge organisers are used to help students quiz themselves on the core knowledge they need to know for each unit. In addition, work at home can provide opportunities for enrichment too. At some schools, Year 7 create models of motte and bailey castles to help them think about their defensive features.

At Key Stages 4 and 5, more emphasis is placed on the importance of revision to keep students confident in the core knowledge of their studies. Homework time should be used to consolidate that knowledge through practicing examination questions or completing retrieval activities. Many students also use this time to carry out further reading to supplement what they have learned in the classroom.



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