



History Skills Progression from Nursery to Year 2

Purpose Children make sense of the past through family stories, objects, photographs, visits and carefully chosen historical accounts. Nursery and Reception build early awareness of past and present within Understanding the World. In Key Stage 1 pupils use chronology, evidence and questions to study change, significant events and people, and their locality.

Our history curriculum in practice

Stories and sources. Use photographs, objects, oral accounts, buildings and age-appropriate texts. Ask what a source can show and what we still need to find out.

A connected sequence. Begin with the child's own life and family, extend to living-memory changes and local history, then study events beyond living memory and significant individuals.

Provision and independence. Nursery and Reception use story, role play and objects. Year 1 revisits taught enquiries through provision. Year 2 uses focused independent sorting, questioning and source-based explanations.

Values and access. Kindness informs respectful discussion of different lives; resilience helps children revisit an uncertain idea; creativity supports careful representations of the past. Offer real objects, photographs, oral responses and visual timelines.

The progression at a glance

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Past and present	Recognise earlier and now in own routines.	Talk about family life before I was born.	Order events using taught time vocabulary.	Place studied events/people within a clearer chronology.
Change and continuity	Notice what is the same or different in two photos.	Compare a familiar object now and before.	Describe change in family, school or local life.	Use evidence to explain what changed and what stayed similar.
Sources	Look at a photo or object and say what is noticed.	Ask what a picture or object tells us about the past.	Ask questions and use a source to support an answer.	Compare sources and recognise more than one representation.
Significance	Hear stories about people remembered by others.	Say why a person or event is remembered.	Study a significant event and person using sources.	Explain why an event, person or local place matters.
Communicate history	Retell an experience in simple order.	Sequence a familiar story and use past/present.	Explain a past event with time words and evidence.	Make a coherent account using chosen evidence and terms.

How to read the tables. These are progressive teaching and observation prompts, not an age-based checklist for every child. EYFS experiences build foundations; the full Key Stage 1 programme is taught across Years 1 and 2. Teachers use assessment to revisit or extend a skill.

Chronology change and significant history

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Personal chronology	Sequence getting dressed, growing or a birthday.	Place life photographs in broad order.	Create a personal timeline using before, after, long ago and recently.	Relate a personal timeline to family or community events.
Living memory	Talk about what adults did when they were little.	Compare a familiar toy or household object with an older one.	Compare school, homes or journeys now and in family memory.	Explain similarity and difference with oral testimony and objects.
Beyond living memory	Listen to a story set long ago and notice clues.	Use images to understand that some events happened before grandparents.	Sequence and explore a nationally significant event such as the Gunpowder Plot.	Investigate a further significant event and distinguish its period from living memory.
Significant individuals	Hear about a person who helped others or made something.	Retell a key action of someone remembered.	Use sources to study Mary Seacole and why she is remembered.	Compare two significant people or their contributions with evidence.
Local history	Notice a familiar building and ask about its past.	Compare old and new images of a local place.	Study a changed local school/building or coastal place.	Use local evidence to explain a significant person, event or place.
Compare ways of life	See that objects, clothes and journeys may differ.	Talk about a past/present similarity and difference.	Compare features of two periods using named evidence.	Explain contrasts and continuity using a wider set of sources.
Cause and consequence	Say why a familiar event happened in a story.	Notice what happened after an action in a historical story.	Give a simple reason for an event and what followed.	Explain a possible cause and consequence with reference to sources.

In practice. Classroom link Year 1 challenges introduce family chronology, Mary Seacole, the Gunpowder Plot, past and present celebrations, gardens and seaside holidays. A celebration becomes a History enquiry when children use dated evidence to study change or significance; learning about its religious meaning belongs in RE.

Sources enquiry and historical thinking

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Observe a source	Explore a photograph or familiar old object with adult talk.	Describe visible details and ask a question.	Identify what a photo, object or account shows about the past.	Choose and use details from more than one source.
Ask and answer	Ask who, what or where about family pictures.	Pose a question about an old/new object or image.	Ask how we know and use part of a source in an answer.	Test an initial idea against further evidence and explain uncertainty.
Oral history	Listen to a trusted adult tell a family story.	Compare own routine with an adult's childhood memory.	Ask an older person a planned question about living memory.	Compare recollections and a photograph without assuming they match exactly.
Representation	Recognise a photo and a story about the same place.	Notice a story and photograph show different details.	Know that the past is shown through photos, objects and accounts.	Compare ways an event or individual is represented and ask why.
Chronological terms	Use now, then, yesterday in meaningful contexts.	Use before, after, past and present in talk.	Use long ago, recently, earlier and later accurately.	Use dates or periods and sequence more securely when relevant.
Communicating an account	Tell an adult what happened in order.	Sequence a story with pictures and a simple explanation.	Make an oral, pictorial or written answer using a source.	Select evidence and explain a change or significance coherently.

What counts as evidence. Evidence can include a child's question, a recorded conversation at an artefact table, a sequence of photographs with reasons, or an explanation citing a source. Avoid treating dressing up or making a picture as proof of historical understanding on its own.

Provision and independent application

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Home and role play	Compare today's and older-looking household objects.	Set up an old/new home corner and talk about change.	Use sourced photographs and labels to compare a past room.	Explain which evidence supports a model or display.
Family stories and timelines	Share life photographs and sequence routines.	Make a simple family timeline with supported language.	Sequence family and local events using before/after.	Add dates or periods to a studied timeline and justify order.
Artefact table	Handle safe objects and say what they might be.	Compare an older object with a modern one.	Ask a question and identify clues in an artefact.	Compare artefacts and record what remains unknown.
Local visit or images	Notice a building during a walk.	Compare old/new images of the school or nearby street.	Investigate a local place using images and observation.	Explain local change with selected evidence.
Continuous provision to Year 2	Adults model historical talk in play.	Add picture books and sources to a challenge.	Revisit a taught enquiry with labelled objects and photo cards.	Provide focused independent source questions and review answers.

Curriculum links and coverage

EYFS. Understanding the World supports Past and Present, family histories, communities, and the vocabulary children need to describe familiar past and present.

KS1 history. By the end of Year 2 cover changes within living memory; nationally or globally significant events beyond living memory; significant individuals; significant local people, events or places.

Check in planning. Use chronology, historical vocabulary, questions, sources, comparison and different representations across these studies. Choose verifiable local sources.

Sources. EYFS 2026 statutory framework; DfE Development Matters; DfE KS1 history programme of study.

Official programmes. EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2026; national curriculum in England for Key Stage 1. Development Matters is non-statutory guidance.

EYFS <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Key Stage 1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study>