History Key Stage 3 Curriculum Overview

Years 7 to 9 | Castle Mead Academy

History at Castle Mead Academy promotes Discipline and Discovery, drawing on Ben Walsh's work. Scholars discover Britain and the wider world, connect national and global stories to Leicester, and learn how historians use evidence to explain, question and reach informed judgements.

What we want scholars to learn

Our curriculum gives scholars powerful knowledge of the past and the means to use it: understanding events, examining evidence and debating interpretations. Familiar and less well known stories include the experiences of women, local communities and people whose voices have often been overlooked.

Four recurring questions connect learning across the curriculum:

- How were people ruled?
- How did people live?
- What did people believe?
- How do we know about the past?

How the curriculum is organised

The main sequence moves from early and medieval Britain in Year 7, through the early modern world in Year 8, to industrial and modern history in Year 9. Studies of other places and communities broaden this chronological framework. Scholars revisit ideas such as monarchy, Parliament, empire, migration and democracy in new settings. The year maps show the sequence across the school's three learning cycles.

Each enquiry is built around a question that scholars answer using knowledge and evidence, such as how King John should be remembered. Learning about medieval rulers prepares scholars to understand later debates about the power of monarchs and Parliament. Studies of African kingdoms, slavery, rights and empire deepen their understanding of the modern world.

Story Sources Scholarship

Our Story, Sources, Scholarship approach draws on Dan Warner-Meanwell's model. Clear accounts of events, sources from the period and historians' arguments work together. Guided reading and teacher explanation help scholars build knowledge, investigate evidence and test claims. Historical scholarship sits at the heart of learning.

Our History provision received the Historical Association Gold Quality Mark in 2024. Castle Mead Academy is also recognised as a Heritage School by Historic England.

How scholars learn and make progress

Key Stage 3

Knowledge and historical thinking

Substantive knowledge means knowing about the past, including people, events and concepts such as monarchy and empire. Disciplinary knowledge means understanding how historians investigate the past: explaining causes, consequences, change and significance, using sources, and evaluating interpretations. Both develop together.

Year	Growing knowledge and understanding	Growing independence
7	Establish chronology; learn key historical vocabulary; identify causes, consequences and changes; use evidence to support an inference.	Explain an idea with relevant examples; move from a modelled answer towards a supported judgement.
8	Connect causes; compare experiences; evaluate claims and begin to explain why historians reach different conclusions.	Select evidence more carefully; develop linked explanations and longer arguments as support is reduced.
9	Connect periods and events; evaluate sources and interpretations in context; judge the extent and significance of change.	Organise sustained answers; weigh evidence and alternatives; reach and defend a reasoned judgement.

Reading discussion and writing

Teachers guide scholars through carefully structured stories, teach vocabulary and model how to select useful information. Discussion and rehearsal help scholars clarify a claim before writing. Regular independent practice and extended writing build confidence. Support is reduced as scholars become more secure; stretch questions at the end of enquiries deepen thinking.

Assessment and feedback

Questions that ask scholars to recall earlier learning, discussion and short tasks check understanding throughout lessons. Common assessments bring together recall, chronology, explanations, evidence and the evaluation of claims. Scholars increasingly compare periods and events and develop extended judgements. Spelling, punctuation, grammar and historical vocabulary are considered across the whole KS3 paper.

Feedback identifies what to improve. Scholars use models, self checking and green pen improvements to strengthen their answers. Teachers use the patterns in scholars' work to revisit gaps and plan the next steps.

Access Homework and Enrichment

Key Stage 3

Access and challenge for every scholar

Clear layouts, visuals, short sections of text, explicit vocabulary, teacher reading and structured questions help scholars access demanding history. Teaching responds to Scholar Passports and Education, Health and Care Plans. Building Belonging resources provide additional support with reading and historical thinking, while maintaining ambition and opportunities for deeper thinking.

Homework and learning beyond lessons

Homework combines Look, Cover, Write, Check to secure key knowledge, extended reading and Meanwhile, elsewhere tasks that broaden historical understanding. Scholars are taught how to complete tasks and check their learning. Homework and assessment preparation are shared through Satchel One.

For Look, Cover, Write, Check, scholars study a word or idea, cover it, write what they remember and check the result. The aim is to remember and understand. Extended reading develops vocabulary and knowledge. Meanwhile, elsewhere tasks introduce other people and places from the periods studied in class.

How families can help

Ask a scholar to explain an event, show where it belongs on a timeline or discuss a question from their enquiry. When revising, encourage them to recall an answer before checking it in their booklet or knowledge organiser. Satchel One provides the current task and any assessment preparation. Families can contact the History team if access to homework is difficult.

History beyond the classroom

History Society gives scholars opportunities to follow their curiosity through questions beyond the taught curriculum. Leicester's buildings, monuments and community stories provide connections to classroom learning, from medieval kingship to industry, suffrage and the world wars. Information about specific activities is shared with scholars and families through school communications.

Ready for the next stage

By the end of Key Stage 3, scholars should have a secure outline of the periods studied and be able to explain connections between them. They should use evidence to question a claim, consider different interpretations and write a supported judgement. These foundations prepare scholars for GCSE History and help every scholar approach accounts of the past thoughtfully.

Year 7 Curriculum

Enquiries in teaching order | Early Britain and the medieval world

Scholars establish a chronological framework, learn how historians use evidence, and explore how power, belief and everyday life changed. Leicester provides a recurring connection between the past and the places around us.

Cycle	Enquiry focus	Principal knowledge	Historical thinking
1	Early Britain and the so called Dark Ages	The Roman conquest and its impact; Britain after Roman rule; Anglo-Saxon life and kingdoms. Archaeology and written accounts help scholars question labels applied to the past.	Place events in order; make inferences; test a historical claim.
1	The Norman Conquest	The succession crisis of 1066, Hastings and the Bayeux Tapestry; how William secured control; castles, land, law, language and the impact of conquest.	Explain causes and consequences; consider source usefulness; identify change and continuity.
2	Medieval life	Village life, homes and work; the Church, leisure, law and justice; women and medicine. Scholars consider how experiences varied and challenge simple stereotypes.	Use precise examples to compare lives and support an explanation.
3	Medieval rulers and the limits of power	Matilda, Henry II and Becket, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard I, John and Magna Carta; Henry III, Simon de Montfort and Parliament. Saladin and Genghis Khan widen the medieval perspective.	Compare interpretations of rulers; explain challenges to authority; support a judgement.
3	Richard III and the Wars of the Roses	Dynastic conflict, the Princes in the Tower, Bosworth and Henry Tudor; Richard III and his burial in Leicester. Scholars consider how evidence shapes reputation.	Distinguish evidence from a claim; explain why interpretations can differ.

By the end of Year 7, scholars can locate key developments in time, explain historical ideas using examples, draw supported inferences and begin to question an interpretation.

Year 8 Curriculum

Enquiries in teaching order | Power belief and connections across the world

Scholars build on medieval history to examine religious and political change, global connections and contested accounts of the past. They use a wider range of evidence and write increasingly developed explanations.

Cycle	Enquiry focus	Principal knowledge	Historical thinking
1	Henry VIII and the Reformation	Henry VII and the Tudor dynasty; Henry VIII, the break with Rome and its consequences. Cromwell, Cranmer and Thomas More help explain how religious change affected people.	Explain linked causes; assess change and significance; evaluate claims about a ruler.
1	Elizabethan England	Religion and the idea of a golden age; connections with the Ottoman Empire; diversity, poverty and differences in experience. Portraits are examined as evidence and representations of power.	Compare experiences; use context to evaluate sources and interpretations.
2	The Civil War and Leicester	The Stuart monarchy; religion, money and Parliament; the siege of Leicester, the New Model Army, Cromwell and the Restoration. The enquiry includes women's experiences and participation.	Connect long and short term causes; explain consequences; build an evidenced argument.
3	African kingdoms and historical evidence	West African kingdoms, Kongo, Benin and Asante; power, trade, culture and encounters with Europeans. Scholars use varied evidence to challenge dismissive accounts of African history.	Evaluate historical claims; use material and written evidence; explain differing interpretations.
3	Transatlantic slavery and abolition	The trade in enslaved Africans, its effects on Africa and life on plantations; resistance and campaigns for abolition. Scholars consider the actions and experiences of enslaved people as well as abolitionists.	Explain causes and consequences; consider agency; support judgements with evidence.

By the end of Year 8, scholars select relevant evidence, connect causes and consequences, explain differences in experience and develop sustained arguments about historical claims.

Year 9 Curriculum

Enquiries in teaching order | Industry rights conflict and the modern world

Scholars connect local, national and global history to explain the making of the modern world. Independent practice and extended writing bring together knowledge, evidence and reasoned judgement.

Cycle	Enquiry focus	Principal knowledge	Historical thinking
1	Industrial Leicester and Britain by 1914	Work, urban growth and living conditions; Friars Mill, public health and social change. Historical writing, including Hallie Rubenhold's The Five, challenges assumptions about Victorian lives.	Explain patterns of change; compare experiences; test interpretations against evidence.
1	Women's rights and the vote	Expectations of women, peaceful and militant campaigning, Alice Hawkins and Leicester's suffrage movement; the extent of change in women's rights and experiences.	Evaluate significance and competing explanations; judge the extent of progress.
2	The First World War as a world war	Causes and recruitment, the Somme and interpretations of Haig; soldiers and communities across the world, US entry, the home front and attempts to secure peace.	Explain connected events; evaluate interpretations; construct a supported narrative.
3	The Second World War and its legacy	Why war returned, its early stages and the home front; the Leicester Blitz, the creation of the NHS and the changing British Empire.	Explain causes and consequences; connect local and global experiences; assess change.
3	The Holocaust	The history of antisemitism, Nazi persecution and the development of genocide. Individual experiences, including the story explored through Barney's toy, keep people at the centre of the enquiry.	Use evidence with care; explain developments in context; form precise historical judgements.

By the end of Year 9, scholars use secure knowledge to explain and evaluate, compare periods and events, examine sources and interpretations in context, and write increasingly independent, sustained judgements.

The Thinking Behind Our Curriculum

Research and professional practice informing History at Castle Mead Academy

Discipline and Discovery. Ben Walsh's contribution to our curriculum thinking connects rich knowledge of the past with rigorous historical enquiry. Scholars encounter compelling stories and learn how evidence and argument shape our understanding.

Coherent knowledge and enquiry. Michael Riley's work informs questions that bring a sequence of lessons towards a historical argument. Christine Counsell's work informs the connection between knowledge and historical thinking: ideas such as monarchy, empire and migration become useful foundations for later learning.

Evidence and interpretations. The Historical Association's Teaching History work on evidence and interpretations, alongside Abby Reisman's work, informs how scholars investigate sources in context, test claims and explain how and why historians reach different conclusions.

Reading historical scholarship. Rachel Foster and Tim Jenner inform our use of historians' writing. Guided reading helps scholars identify a question, argument and evidence; increasingly demanding texts, discussion and writing build confidence in engaging with academic history.

Understanding and memory. Kate Jones informs planned retrieval; Oliver Caviglioli informs how we combine words and useful visuals; Daniel Willingham informs attention to prior knowledge and manageable demands on memory. These principles shape our explanations, booklets, timelines, maps and revision routines.

Selected professional reading

Ben Walsh (2022), History Curriculum External Review Visit Report for Castle Mead Academy.
Dan Warner-Meanwell (2020), Story, Source, Scholarship. Credits ideas shared by @SPBeale and @mrfitzhist.
Michael Riley (2000), Into the Key Stage 3 history garden: choosing and planting your enquiry questions. Teaching History 99.
Christine Counsell (2018), Taking curriculum seriously. Impact 4.
Historical Association (2019), What's the wisdom on… Evidence and sources. Teaching History 176.
Historical Association (2019), What's the wisdom on… Interpretations of the past. Teaching History 177.
Rachel Foster (2011), Passive receivers or constructive readers? Teaching History 142.
Tim Jenner (2019), Making reading routine. Teaching History 174.
Abby Reisman (2016), Teaching students to think like historians. Penn Graduate School of Education.
Kate Jones (2019), Retrieval Practice: Resources and Research for Every Classroom. John Catt.
Oliver Caviglioli (2019), Dual Coding with Teachers. John Catt.
Daniel T Willingham (2009), Why Don't Students Like School? Jossey-Bass.