

Area of Excellence

Accredited to Manor Leas Junior Academy, Lincoln by Challenge Partners

A Critical Thinking History Curriculum

Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

'I'm excited about what I am going to learn about next in history.' This statement from a Year 3 pupil encapsulates the unique appeal of the history curriculum at Manor Leas. The curriculum goes way beyond the sheer chronology of history. Ancient cultures are studied intently over time, leading into more modern passages of history, for example, the slave trade and World War 2. The meticulously planned and sequenced curriculum not only informs pupils about life in past ages, but it also encourages curiosity and enables them to take a more critical approach to the world they live in.

Because the curriculum is designed around the three fundamental areas of knowledge (Head), empathy (Heart) and skills (Hands), it encourages pupils to think not just about how people in ancient civilisations lived, or the Romans or Mughals, but examines the significance of these peoples, their individual cultures, and the influence they have had on our world today.

The curriculum is knowledge-rich and this leads pupils to revisit prior learning so that their understanding builds commensurately. Themes, such as empire, democracy, invasion and slavery, also link to the way the school introduces Fundamental British Values into the curriculum, contributing further to pupils' beliefs, opinions and comprehension of the modern world. In addition, more abstract historical concepts are critically examined through Key Questions. For example, 'should it be called Herstory rather than History?' and 'Did World War 2 prove people are inherently good or bad?' Not only does this methodology extend knowledge, it challenges pupils' thinking, in order for them to develop their own opinions and develop empathy and tolerance.

As Lincolnshire is not culturally diverse, the curriculum enables pupils to develop their understanding of different cultures, and to celebrate diversity through study of people and cultures across the world. The programme of study for all year groups culminates in academic essays that not only reflect the debate, discussion and learning that has taken place, but challenges them to develop their opinions, relate to real-life and also link to prior areas of learning so that they remember more.

Pupils are exposed to a range of enrichment activities throughout their study. Analysis of artefacts, virtual workshops with leading historians and authors, trips and visits to local sites and museums, or workshops offers an understanding of why it is important for pupils to understand history. The pedagogy involved in teaching the history curriculum has a sharp focus on the development of reading, with non-fiction texts and extracts being prominent features and valuable teaching resources in all year groups. The use of myON, an online library and teaching tool, enables teachers to assign texts for pre-learning so that pupils gain a foundation of knowledge prior to study. This has improved engagement from parents and guardians, as they can help support their children to develop their learning outside of school. This has made a significant improvement in reading outcomes across Key Stage 2.

Leaders are immersed in research and frequently visit other schools both locally and nationally. The curriculum model has been developed by establishing high expectations and reviewing models in action around the country. Leaders deliver training to staff and keep abreast of national updates from the EEF, Ofsted and other organisations.