HISTORY: PROGRESSION OF VOCABULARY

Bredbury Green Primary School | Nursery–Year 6 curriculum companion

Purpose and principles

This document sits alongside the school's Progression of History. It identifies a carefully selected set of Tier 2 academic vocabulary and Tier 3 historical/topic-specific vocabulary for explicit teaching, use and retrieval. It is a planning aid, not a list to teach in one lesson: teachers should prioritise the words most important to each unit and revisit them deliberately.

Tier 2 vocabulary comprises high-utility words that help pupils explain, compare and reason across the curriculum (for example, impact, significant and evidence). Tier 3 vocabulary names historical people, periods, systems, events or ideas (for example, invasion, monarchy, civilisation and hieroglyphs). Some words can function differently depending on context.

Progression is shown through increasing precision and independence: pupils first encounter and explain words in accessible contexts; they then retrieve them, connect them across periods and use them to justify interpretations. Retrieval suggestions are opportunities to plan into teaching, not additional content requirements. The sequence below follows the topics and end points in the school's curriculum. Nursery and Reception provide developmentally appropriate foundations in talking about the past, noticing change and using simple sources before the Year 1 curriculum begins.

Whole-school conceptual vocabulary

Concept	Early language (Nursery–Y2)	Developing language (Y3–6)	Retrieval thread
Change and continuity	change, before, after, then, now	continuity, development, remain, gradual, turning point	Use across every period: What changed? What stayed the same? Was change rapid or gradual?
Cause and consequence	because, caused, led to, result	cause, consequence, impact, influence, short-term, long-term	Revisit from Y1; progress from naming an effect to explaining chains of causes and lasting consequences.

Significance	important, remember, affect	significant, achievement, legacy, influential, interpretation	Ask who or what was affected, why it mattered at the time, and why it matters now.
Evidence and enquiry	source, clue, find out	evidence, account, interpretation, reliable, perspective	Use artefacts, images, written accounts and timelines; distinguish a source from what it can tell us.
Chronology	past, present, old, new, timeline	period, century, era, chronological, contemporary	Place each new topic on a shared timeline and compare it with previously studied periods.
Society and power	leader, ruler, family, community	monarchy, empire, hierarchy, government, law, rights	Compare who held power, how decisions were made and whose lives were affected.

Vocabulary progression by year group and unit

The lists below are suggested priority vocabulary, not exhaustive glossaries. Tier allocation is a teaching aid rather than a fixed label: for example, 'invasion' is topic-specific in some units but also supports wider historical reasoning. Teach meanings in context and revisit them in speech, reading and writing.

Nursery | Talking About the Past (WellComm-informed foundations)

EYFS emphasis: Communication and Language / Understanding the World

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / concept-specific
same, different, before, after, remember, change, old, new, because	past, now, family, baby, child, adult, photograph, object, story

Retrieval and progression: Use familiar experiences, family photographs, objects and stories to develop spoken language about time and change. Adults model 'before', 'after', 'past' and 'now' so children can talk about things they remember and notice simple differences between then and now.

Reception | Past and Present

EYFS emphasis: Understanding the World / Communication and Language

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / concept-specific
compare, remember, explain, order, similar, different, important, change	past, present, timeline, event, family, community, source, photograph, artefact

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve Nursery Tier 2 vocabulary 'before, after, same, different, change' and Tier 3 vocabulary 'past, now, photograph, object'. Children begin to order familiar events, compare past and present, and use photographs, objects and stories as simple sources of information. This prepares them to retrieve 'past', 'present', 'change' and 'before/after' when beginning Year 1 history.

Year 1 | The Internet

Curriculum strand: Impact and Consequence

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
compare, communicate, information, impact	internet, World Wide Web, invention, inventor, Tim Berners-Lee

Retrieval and progression: Use before/after language to compare how people found and shared information before and after the Web. Retrieve 'change', 'past' and 'present' when comparing communication methods. Revisit 'invention' in Y1 Industrial Revolution and Y3 Shang Dynasty.

Year 1 | The British Royal Family

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
represent, important, community, explain	monarchy, royal family, king, queen, family tree, succession

Retrieval and progression: Use a family tree to rehearse relationships and introduce monarchy. Connect 'king' and 'queen' to later study of pharaohs (Y3), Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Y4), and leaders such as Alfred the Great (Y5).

Year 1 | The Industrial Revolution (Local History)

Curriculum strand: Achievement and Innovation

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
change, impact, transport, produce	Industrial Revolution, factory, hat works, Stockport Viaduct, manufacture

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'invention' from the Internet topic. Compare making goods at home and in factories; revisit 'transport' and 'manufacture' when studying Roman roads (Y3), Ancient Egypt (Y3) and World Wars (Y6).

Year 2 | Rosa Parks

Curriculum strand: Impact and Consequence

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
equal, unfair, challenge, rights, consequence	Rosa Parks, segregation, boycott, Civil Rights Movement, Montgomery

Retrieval and progression: Build on Y1 'impact' and 'community'. Ask how one person's action can influence others. Retrieve 'rights', 'law' and 'equality' in Y5 Crime and Punishment and Y6 Suffragettes.

Year 2 | The Great Fire of London

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
cause, spread, destroy, result, because	Great Fire of London, 1666, bakery, Pudding Lane, reconstruction

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve chronology language and the idea of cause and consequence. Explain how building materials and closely spaced buildings contributed to the fire spreading. Compare causes and consequences with Y1 industrial change and Y6 wartime impact.

Year 3 | The Roman Invasion

Curriculum strand: Impact and Consequence

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
invade, expand, influence, impact, legacy	Roman Empire, invasion, empire, fort, settlement, Romanisation

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve Y1 'change' and 'transport' and Y2 'cause/consequence'. Explain how roads, forts, baths and towns affected Britain. Compare invasion and settlement with Anglo-Saxons and Scots (Y4), Vikings (Y5) and World Wars (Y6).

Year 3 | Stone Age to Iron Age

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
develop, settle, compare, technology, continuity	Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, settlement, farming, hill fort, monument, Skara Brae, Stonehenge

Retrieval and progression: Use timelines to secure period vocabulary. Compare hunter-gathering with farming and permanent settlement; revisit 'technology' and 'settlement' in Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Shang Dynasty and Maya.

Year 3 | Shang Dynasty

Curriculum strand: Achievement and Innovation

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
achievement, develop, evidence, civilisation	Shang Dynasty, bronze casting, oracle bones, dynasty, ancient China

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'invention' from Y1 and 'technology' from Stone Age to Iron Age. Explain how writing and bronze casting supported Shang society; compare with Egyptian hieroglyphs and Greek achievements.

Year 4 | The Anglo-Saxons and Scots

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific

migrate, settle, establish, belief, continuity	Anglo-Saxons, Scots, kingdom, Christianity, monastery, place name, Lindisfarne, Iona, Canterbury

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve Roman Britain and the idea of what happens after a group leaves or arrives. Compare migration and settlement with Roman invasion and Viking settlement. Revisit 'belief', 'kingdom' and 'law' in Y5.

Year 4 | The Ancient Egyptians

Curriculum strand: Achievement and Innovation

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
innovation, significant, resource, govern, explain	Ancient Egypt, River Nile, pharaoh, hieroglyphs, pyramid, irrigation, engineering

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'civilisation' and 'achievement' from Shang Dynasty. Compare writing systems, rulers, engineering and the role of rivers. Revisit 'hierarchy' and 'belief' in Maya and Ancient Greece.

Year 5 | The Viking Invasion

Curriculum strand: Impact and Consequence

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
resist, influence, consequence, governance, settle	Vikings, raid, invasion, Danegeld, Alfred the Great, Athelstan, Danelaw

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve Roman invasion and Anglo-Saxon settlement. Distinguish raid, invasion and settlement. Explain how conflict and negotiation affected law, leadership and society; revisit these concepts in World Wars.

Year 5 | British Crime and Punishment

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
justice, reform, compare, value, administer	crime, punishment, law, court, policing, prison, legal reform

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'law' and 'rights' from Rosa Parks and 'governance' from Vikings. Compare how ideas of justice and punishment changed over time and consider whose values shaped laws. Revisit equality and legal change in Suffragettes.

Year 5 | Ancient Greece

Curriculum strand: Achievement and Innovation

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
democracy, philosophy, influence, legacy, significant	Ancient Greece, democracy, philosophy, myth, Olympic Games, architecture

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'civilisation' and 'achievement' from Egypt and Shang Dynasty. Explain how Greek ideas influenced later societies; compare democracy with other systems of rule and revisit 'legacy' in Y6.

Year 6 | The Ancient Maya

Curriculum strand: Impact and Consequence

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
hierarchy, environment, influence, evidence, legacy	Maya civilisation, city-state, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, social hierarchy

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'civilisation', 'technology', 'belief' and 'achievement' from earlier ancient societies. Compare Maya achievements and social organisation with Shang, Egypt and Greece, avoiding the assumption that all ancient societies were alike.

Year 6 | The World Wars

Curriculum strand: The Arc of British History

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
consequence, economy, international, significant, continuity	World War I, World War II, empire, rationing, evacuation, home front, international relations

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve invasion, governance, technology, law and impact from earlier units. Compare short- and long-term consequences, including changes to women's roles, society and technology. Link to Y6 Suffragettes when considering social and political change.

Year 6 | The Suffragettes (Local History)

Curriculum strand: Achievement and Innovation

Tier 2: academic / transferable	Tier 3: historical / topic-specific
campaign, equality, civil disobedience, influence, legacy	suffragette, suffrage, petition, protest, right to vote, legislation

Retrieval and progression: Retrieve 'rights' from Rosa Parks, 'law' from Crime and Punishment and 'legacy' from Ancient Greece. Compare campaigns for rights, the methods used and changes achieved. Distinguish suffragettes from the wider suffrage movement where appropriate.

Suggested retrieval routines

- **Every lesson: 2-minute retrieval:** Ask pupils to recall 2–3 previously taught words, give a definition or example, and use one in a spoken sentence.
- **Beginning of each new unit:** Revisit 3–5 relevant words from earlier learning. Use a timeline, image, concept map or comparison prompt rather than relying only on a word list.
- **Within a unit:** Return to key vocabulary after a delay. Ask pupils to explain, sort, contrast or apply words to a new example.

- **Across year groups:** Use the retrieval links in each unit to reconnect learning. Re-teach meanings where needed; do not assume that previous exposure means secure knowledge.
- **End of unit:** Check whether pupils can define the word, recognise it in context, use it accurately and explain links to another historical concept.

What progression should look like

- **EYFS / prior experience:** Talk about family, past events, old/new, before/after and familiar people or places. EYFS is not mapped as a separate history unit in the supplied document; these are suggested foundations, not stated curriculum content.
- **Years 1–2:** Recognise, describe and use simple vocabulary to recall people and events, compare past and present, and explain straightforward impact or cause.
- **Years 3–4:** Use increasingly precise terms for periods, societies, migration, settlement, belief, technology and civilisation; explain causes and consequences and make comparisons between societies.
- **Years 5–6:** Select vocabulary independently to construct explanations about significance, governance, rights, evidence, change and continuity; weigh consequences and connect local, national and global history.

Implementation notes

- Prioritise a small number of essential words for secure learning rather than expecting pupils to memorise every term listed.
- Explicitly teach pronunciation, pupil-friendly meaning, examples and non-examples; display vocabulary in context and expect pupils to use it in discussion and writing.
- Revisit the same conceptual words across topics, but deepen their meaning as contexts become more complex.
- Use formative assessment to identify whether pupils can recognise, explain, retrieve and apply vocabulary—not simply repeat a definition.