

GCSE History

What periods and which countries do students study?

The course covers a mix of Medieval, Early Modern and Modern History, with an emphasis upon British and European history.

- In Year 10 students study the First World War, as well as German history from the late 19th century until 1945.
- In Year 11, students study a topic called Power and the People, looking at how the way our country is run has changed over the last 800 years. We also do a depth study on Elizabethan England, the key events of Elizabeth's reign, and the changes that occurred to England during this time.

Why do you do those topics?

We've chosen these topics for a few reasons:

1. We know that students find these topics particularly interesting!
2. Teachers in the department have expertise in these areas, either through many years of teaching them or through studying them at university;
3. Studying these topics gives the students some of the wider context that they need to help them understand the modern world in a variety of ways.
4. Prior to the pandemic it also meant that we were able to provide students with the opportunity to visit the Battlefields of the First World War, something that we hope to bring back once the impact of the current crisis has lessened.

When I was at school, History was just learning dates. Is it still like that?

Not really! Clearly it's very important that students develop a sound knowledge of the key events and significant figures: we teach a knowledge rich curriculum that goes into plenty of detail. However, the crucial skill at History GCSE is not just what students know, but how they use their knowledge to explain the past. It is important that students develop the ability to think critically: to question, analyse and evaluate the past using their knowledge to help them form arguments.

In the classroom, we concentrate on teaching the students both the knowledge and the skills required to handle and use what they've learnt to answer important questions about the past.

What are the key skills that students need?

There are several attributes that really help students studying History at GCSE. The most important, however, is that they find the past *interesting*- that they are curious about how and why people behaved as they did, and why their actions have shaped the world that we live in today.

The desire and ability to build convincing arguments and defend your points of view is very important too, as we actively encourage students to reach their own conclusions and judgements about the issues that we study. Finally, a comfort with writing at length is extremely useful- we will teach students how to write clear and effective arguments, but there will be plenty of practice involved!

What are the exams like?

As with all GCSEs, the exams will test the full range of skills and knowledge that you study. There are two 2-hour exams, where you will answer a variety of different question types. You will be writing essays, historical narratives, explaining how and why some sources of evidence are useful to historians, and analysing different interpretations of the past.