

NHGS - History - Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent (Aims and purpose)

We aim to create the very best historians. We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field would: to research thoroughly, to weigh-up evidence, to understand chronology, to evaluate interpretations and develop arguments. We do this by a consistent approach across the department ensuring all students develop the range of skills needed to become confident in their own opinions, make well supported judgements and expressing them articulately using keywords from topics and academic, historical vocabulary.

Our curriculum at NHGS goes far beyond what is taught in lessons, for whilst we want students to achieve the very best examination results possible, we believe our curriculum goes beyond what is examinable. As a department we believe that the transferable skills gained in our subject are essential for life in the 21st century. We teach students the importance of challenging the provenance of information, evaluating different interpretations, and processing large amounts of information to create a coherent argument. We teach empathy and tolerance and an understanding of how history has created the world we live in today. Through extra-curricular projects such as Armistice 100, VE75 (virtually) and History Club we mark important anniversaries and help students appreciate important turning points both nationally and internationally. As a department we took the lead in the preparation of the new Year 8 St Omer trip by writing the booklet and developing a scheme of work to be taught before the trip to ensure that students are immersed in the historical experience once they get there.

Our curriculum in History forms a backbone to our ethos statement. Examples of how our curriculum supports the ethos statement are through challenging the students to think independently, to follow their own lines of enquiry and to present their work in a creative way for example in the Year 9 Personal Interest Project. As staff we are enthusiastic about history and encourage and reward enthusiasm and effort amongst students. Collaboration is encouraged as discussion and debate is at the heart of every lesson in History.

As a knowledge engaged curriculum we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. As a department we define the powerful knowledge our students need and help them recall it through staff who know the content thoroughly and having a carefully planned curriculum which builds on previous knowledge and helps students understand topics in a wider context. Prior to the pandemic we already used Google Classroom consistently to provide links to further reading and revision resources. After the experiences with Covid-19 lockdowns and home-schooling we have since developed this considerably, alongside our use of Google Meets to live teach pupils at home. Low stakes quizzes and formative assessment of longer written answers are regular features of history lessons.

We build the Cultural Capital of our students through everything we teach as history and culture are intrinsically linked. We are constantly improving students' understanding of wider culture through exposure to politics, art, religion and language within the history we teach. We use music and film in our lessons wherever possible to give students access to a wide range of influences and help them to understand how culture can reflect or drive historical events. For example, we watch and then discuss Jimi Hendrix's 1969 Woodstock performance of the Star Spangled Banner when studying Vietnam as part of our US Foreign Policy topic with Y9.

Further rationale behind our curriculum design includes ensuring students see the relevance of history in the modern world. A number of years ago we redesigned our Key Stage 3 curriculum to help students to develop a broad understanding of how Britain has changed in Years 7 and 8 with a focus on major themes of change throughout 1066-1945. In Year 9 we have developed bespoke units which deal with the history of current issues in the news; terrorism, the changing role of women, US foreign policy and British Identity. Through exploring the history of these issues we aim to help students better understand the world they are growing up in. Our choices of GCSE and A-Level exam boards ensure students study a wide range of history and are able to make comparisons within and across periods thus being fully equipped for the study of history at a higher level or for work in the field.

Implementation

Collaborative curriculum planning lies at the heart of what we do in the department. Over the last three years we have been developing our schemes of work for all age groups; embedding challenge, metacognition, memory techniques and literacy into our departmental curriculum

Alongside our schemes of work, we have developed knowledge organisers for all topics throughout all age ranges. This has enabled us to define the core knowledge our students need to master.

In History, we also implement our curriculum through a range of teaching approaches including role play, games and creative tasks as well as more traditional source based questions and essay writing. Discussion and debate are a regular feature of lessons, as well as regular spiralling back to ensure key content is secure.

Impact

We know our curriculum is working in the History department through whole-school engagement with our Armistice 100 project. This showed that History is deemed to be of importance to pupils throughout the school and their contributions demonstrated empathy with the experiences of people in WWI. Additionally, the quality of teaching and learning in History has been praised during learning walks by both external and internal observers. In light of competition from many subjects, numbers are healthy at both GCSE and A-Level.

Students go on to study a range of courses at university following the completion of their History A Level. Many choose courses related to the subject including History itself, Law, Journalism and Politics. Many of these students attend Russell Group universities.

Examination results have been historically good - especially in the light of the skew between Maths and English attainment on entry, with History being a literacy-based subject. Prior to the disruption due to the pandemic our ALPS scores continued to be notable and amongst the best at NHGS. Contributions by History towards the school's P8 score were noteworthy.

Student voice shows that students enjoy the learning activities that enable them to progress in the subject. Above all, students continue to express their interest in the relevance of History and its skills in today's world.