



A Handy Guide For New History Coordinators

Becoming a History Coordinator

Whether you're a keen purveyor of the past or haven't conducted any sort of history since secondary school, leading a subject like history can be a daunting prospect. Especially if you want to do it well. Here are 6 tips to help get you started on leading history in your school:

1. Look for CPD
2. Audit your topics around school
3. Understand the needs of the curriculum
4. Use your budget wisely, even if you don't have one
5. Think about Ofsted and what they might want to see
6. Join network support groups

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The Importance Of The Role

Leading the subject well is crucial to the successful teaching of history throughout school.

You may be expected to plan and oversee topic content, source and purchase resources, deliver staff training or provide support to your colleagues.

Becoming confident in these areas is paramount in helping you take command of your role as coordinator.



Finding The Right CPD

Think carefully about what it is that is needed:

- Is it YOU that needs the training as coordinator?
- Is there someone in charge of the curriculum in your school that would benefit from it?
- Do all teachers need a refresher or certain year groups or key stages?
- Is there a certain facet of history that needs focusing upon?



1. Look for CPD

If you're completely new to the role or you have little confidence in leading a subject, any subject, try to find some CPD, regardless of how small it may seem. Lots of foundation subject leaders are simply chosen to lead that subject, whether they have any interest in it or not, and few ever receive formal training in it. Connecting with those who have experience or those who specialise in a certain area will undoubtedly give you:

- An insight into themes that you may not be aware of or considered,
- Suggest resources that you never knew existed,
- Show activities that you never knew could be done,
- Provide answers to questions that you never knew you had,
- Or provide answers to questions that you do have.

Even if you feel confident with subject knowledge or how to manage staff, finding effective CPD is a must if you want to develop into an effectual leader that can combine the two.

2. Audit your topics around school

Although this might sound fairly obvious, knowing which topics are covered by which year groups is vital to understanding your curriculum coverage. It's also just as vital to ensure that certain topics are in the correct Key Stages too. Whilst the curriculum is fairly open-ended in terms of content, some topics, like Ancient Greece or Stone Age to Iron Age, are specifically KS2. It is your job as coordinator to ensure that these critical elements of the curriculum are in order before any teaching of history begins in your school.

Looking through individual year groups' planning will also give you an overview of the kinds of areas that are being taught in each topic. If you're looking at something like Roman Britain and then Anglo-Saxon Britain a term later, are there any elements within each topic that can be compared to build on the children's learning? Or are they being taught in isolation where nothing marries up?

Delivering a coherent knowledge of the past is central to developing a solid understanding of the continuities and changes throughout British history and histories around the world. It also helps provide context to some of the choices that were made by those who lived in that period.

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How to audit

Start by asking each year group which history topics they cover and whether they do these as in-depth studies or as overviews.

Cross-reference these with the topics outlined for both KS1 and KS2.

If you find any anomalies, go back and ask why these particular topics are being taught within this year group. If there is no tangible reasoning, suggest a change and state the needs of the curriculum as your justification.



What are the needs?

Simply put, the curriculum wants children to:

- Build up a coherent narrative of history throughout the world
- Understand why these events happened
- How they have impacted people and places
- Develop the necessary skills of enquiry to enable them to ask questions and find the answers themselves.



3. Understand the needs of the curriculum

Whilst the curriculum does give some examples of areas that may be covered within certain topics, the lists are not exhaustive and are more of a push in the general direction of each topic. Understanding the nuances of the curriculum is vital in ensuring that all staff know exactly what they are supposed to be teaching:

- What do they *need* to include?
- What might they *want* to include?
- What should they *leave* out?

Far too often, coordinators are met with opposition to changes in the curriculum from their own colleagues. Teachers who have amassed a collection of resources for a particular theme may defend their claims that they've 'always taught this topic' or 'that's how it's always been', but does that topic or theme actually meet the needs of the curriculum? If the answer is 'no', then it needs to be tweaked or abandoned. Keep the resources by all means, the curriculum will undoubtedly change in the not-so-distant-future, but the teaching of the topic itself needs to bolster the curriculum, not hinder it. If Ofsted were to ask, 'Why is this topic taught here?' would the response, 'Because it always has been,' hold any water with them?

4. Use your budget wisely, even if you don't have one

Some coordinators are fortunate enough to automatically be given budgets at the start of each year, some have to apply for amounts at a time and others simply get nothing. Regardless, you need to ensure you use your budget effectively. Auditing resources around school will help to understand which topics are well-stocked and which are severely under-resourced. Prioritising those under-resourced topics should be key, but also, asking the teachers who teach that topic what *they* would like will be much more effective, giving them ownership. Be careful that the resources will actually help meet the needs of the curriculum, and not just become a shiny display section. Teacher-based resources can often have a much bigger impact than a textbook for the children.

If you have a small budget or even no budget, there are lots of free or low-cost resources that can be found. Local libraries and museums often have loan-boxes that can be hired for small deposits (some refundable) instead of spending hundreds on your own resources. There are lots of free technological resources out there, including apps, that will help develop topic content and skills. If you already have access to iPads, tablets or computers, search for programs or apps that will provide engagement like *Epic!* or *Kahoot!*

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Low-cost Resources

Technology is often overlooked in history because it is usually expensive, but it doesn't have to be. Technology is immensely engaging and deploying it effectively will work wonders for any topic.

Finding information online and creating your own resources, rather than paying for them to look nice, can save you a small fortune. Although something may look aesthetically pleasing, the impact of the content is more desirable.



Things to prepare

Identify where you can find data that highlights progression across different groups of children across school.

Documents that detail curriculum coverage across school, possibly including specific content coverage.

Evidence that you have contributed to the delivery of history across the school, whether it be planning, staff meeting notes or minutes or logs of conversations had with staff to support them.



5. Think about Ofsted and what they might want to see

Second-guessing Ofsted is always tough. Wondering if they will want to see percentages, curriculum coverage, progression or a demonstration of knowledge is at the forefront of most coordinators minds when they get the call. Things like percentages are often fairly easy to find and produce if you're using an assessment tool that can generate that for you, but demonstrating curriculum coverage and progression can often be trickier.

Generating a document yourself that highlights these aspects doesn't have to be onerous or fancy, it just needs to serve a purpose. If you have audited your topics, listed them and looked at their content, it should be fairly easy to note which areas reappear and some of the skills and activities that arise. Do they progress in difficulty, length or level of depth? Small tweaks to an activity that a Y3 child is doing to include more critical thinking for a Y6 child may help to show some of that progression. Written down in an easy-to-read document will also help boost your confidence if you're asked on the spot by an inspector to demonstrate one of the above aspects. It will also show that you are prepared to understand the finer points of your role and ensure that the full needs of the curriculum are being met.

6. Join network support groups

Support groups can be found in multiple places, namely online on social media like Facebook. Groups that are dedicated to specific subjects will usually contain members from all walks of life and at various stages in their careers. Talking to someone who is in exactly the same position as you will make you realise you are not alone, then conversing with someone else who is a specialist, or incredibly passionate, will help boost your confidence and understanding of a particular aspect. Ask questions, regardless of how trivial you may think it may seem, and watch as dialogues open up. Making contributions to other members will also help build your confidence and will help build your reputation as someone who can be interacted with. By that point, you'll understand what it is like to be helped out, so return the favour.

Some councils or bodies have dedicated humanities groups that meet regularly. These can often include guest speakers, leaders or advisors that can give invaluable support. Networking with others in your area may lead to the transferrance of knoweledge or the sharing of resources that your own school doesn't have access to. Even if you only attend once a year to events like this, you are sure to find something that will help develop your skills, understanding or contributions as a leader.

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Social Media

There are numerous history-based pages, groups and threads on places such as Facebook and Twitter.

They often provide articles about new findings, scholarly views, activities, resources or general discussion.

Members of these subject-specific groups tend to be welcoming and supportive. Be bold and interact with members to benefit from their collective know-how.



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Online Resources

There are a multitude of resources online, for both adults and children:

[BBC Bitesize](#)

[Mr Donn](#)

[History Rocks](#)

[DK Findout!](#)

[Primary Homework Help](#)

[NatGeo Kids](#)

[History For Kids](#)

[Ducksters](#)

[HistoryKids](#)

[TheSchoolRun](#)



Suggestions - A Starting Point

CPD

Developing Primary History - www.primaryteacherscpd.com

The Historical Association - www.history.org.uk

Support Networks

Primary History Coordinators - Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/378259429018922/>

History/Geography Coordinators Primary - Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1504628806520704/>

Primary History & Geography Leaders Support Group - Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/728712957233174/>

Facebook Pages To Follow

History Rocks - www.facebook.com/historyrocksuk/

The Historical Association - www.facebook.com/historicalassociation/

Mr T Does Primary History - www.facebook.com/MrTdoesPrimaryHistory/

Schools History - www.facebook.com/schoolshistory/

Primary History Matters - www.facebook.com/primaryhistorymatters/

Historic Workshops - www.facebook.com/HistoricWorkshops/

Following these 6 tips should help get you started in leading history in your school and develop your skills as an effective coordinator.

Make sure to liaise with any leadership staff who manage curriculum content and listen to those who teach it.

Offer support and guidance where you can and don't be afraid to ask for help in support groups and networks if you need to.

And remember, leading a subject like history doesn't have to be daunting, but it does need to be effective.

