



Digesting the KS1 Curriculum

| | |
|--|----|
| Breaking down the KS1 curriculum | 2 |
| Threading KS1 | 5 |
| KS1 curriculum example | 7 |
| What to consider next | 10 |

Breaking down the KS1 Curriculum

The KS1 history curriculum can often be more problematic in its structure than the KS2 curriculum. Part of the reason for this is the sheer scope and potential for including just about anyone and everyone or any event throughout history. For me, the key to a successful KS1 history curriculum is thinking primarily about the locality and introduction of the disciplinary skills of history as much as possible, and then content second. Essentially, preparations for a KS1 curriculum should START with the skills you want them to learn, and then map the content around those skills.

So let's take a look at what the KS1 curriculum asks of us and break each part down:

- ***Changes within living memory – where appropriate, these should be used to reveal aspects of change in national life***

Within living memory should be just that – currently from roughly the 1930s and 1940s onwards. This will of course change over time. These could look at aspects of life such as toys, clothing, entertainment, politics etc. or changes in national life such as transport, settlements, shopping etc. including elements such as science and technology.

For this, *national* doesn't just mean choosing something completely unrelated to your own locality. If you choose to look at somewhere away from your local area, then try to make *relevant* links back to your area. The situation may have changed in one area, but did it another? Did the transport systems of London impact transport systems elsewhere? Did the first shopping centres around the country impact the growth of them (or lack of) in your own area? Your area, wherever it is, is a part of national life, and so it will most likely have been affected in one way or another by whichever changes you have chosen to look at.

- ***Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally [for example, the Great Fire of London, the first aeroplane flight or events commemorated through festivals or anniversaries]***

This can be VERY open ended and gives you plenty of scope to choose from a plethora of different events from pretty much all of British or world history. But be careful. If there is no apparent reason for your decision, then it will stick out like a sore thumb and you may be questioned as to why you have included that particular topic. As an example, in my own school based in Stockton-on-Tees in the North East, our Y1 children study the Titanic. Now on the face of it, the North East has little to do with the Titanic, so why do we do it? Well, after some investigation, it turns out that one of the Titanic's sister ships, the Lord Cromer, was actually built in the ports of Stockton-on-Tees, travelled along the SAME route as the Titanic, encountered the SAME patch of ice as the Titanic a few days prior and then actually warned the Titanic about it, to which the warnings were ignored. At this point, we have made a local link to the wider topic, giving us a solid reason for studying it.

This doesn't have to be the only way into a topic that is set away from your area, but you should try to make local links if you can. For example, if you're studying the Great Fire of London and are nowhere near London, ask yourself WHY you are studying it and what relevance it has for the children. There's nothing wrong with studying it, but how many of your KS1 children will have had any sort of experience

of London and be able to comprehend what it was like without seeing it? Ensuring that you look at the local as well as the national impacts will help bridge that gap and explain to the children WHY they are studying this particular topic, highlighting the significance of the event nationally. Many other areas of the country experienced 'great fires' and because of the lessons learned from the Great Fire of London, many of them were nowhere near as damaging or as 'great' as they could have been.

If you are unable to make a local link back, then ensure that there are some sort of threads elsewhere that help link your topic to some of the other ones in KS1. Perhaps there are individuals that you have studied linked to this? Perhaps you can base the topic around a skill that needs reinforcing or a new skill that needs teaching that will be built upon elsewhere? Maybe it bridges a chronological gap between topics? Whatever your event is, make sure that it has some reasoning behind it other than 'choosing one from the list', 'it's interesting' or 'we've always done that topic.'

- ***The lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements, some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods [for example, Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong, William Caxton and Tim Berners-Lee, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and LS Lowry, Rosa Parks and Emily Davison, Mary Seacole and/or Florence Nightingale and Edith Cavell]***

Just like the statement above, it can be very easy to look at the exemplar individuals and just choose them from the list. If these people are appropriate to you by linking to other topics or by location then great, by all means study them! But if there is no tangible reason for WHY you have studied these people, then you may become a little unstuck!

First of all, let's break down the statement: this shouldn't JUST be a study of *one* individual and their impact. It should be a *comparison* of similar types of people from across different periods so that the children can see how life has changed for that type of person, whether they were monarchs, inventors, explorers, activists etc.

Personally, I feel that we should TRY to find at least ONE individual that we can try to link back to the local area in some way. This may not always be possible in the direct local area, but there will most likely be SOMEONE within about an hour's drive away that will sufficiently class as 'local' by all intents and purposes. These individuals should also have had some sort of impact nationally or globally which is surely what makes them significant. But don't forget to look at the impacts that they may have had locally too! What kinds of national impacts affected the local area? Did the explorer's achievements inspire someone else? Did their innovations connect one area to another? Is that person remembered in the local area in some way?

Just like the previous statement, if there is no local aspect to the study, then think about WHY these people have been chosen and how they fit into your KS1 curriculum. Did they impact on other topics in KS1 or KS2? Do they fit a chronological scale? Do the different periods contrast enough to show the similarities and differences in their lifestyle or achievements?

When comparing these two people, comparative elements could be about their achievements, the challenges they faced, the impact that they had on their own generation, the impact they had on future generations, attitudes towards societies in their own times, the types of clothes, religious beliefs or many other aspects. Comparison is the key here, as this will provide contextualisation of both individuals, especially if they are linked to the present day in some manner.

- ***Significant historical events, people and places in their own locality***

Like the others, this can lead to a huge number of choices and choosing the best one can be difficult. For others, there is actually very little choice and that can be just as frustrating. If there is little choice, then try to find the NEAREST local event or person with the understanding that they are as local as you can make it. Alternatively, contact your nearest archaeological society/history group and see if they can reveal any nuggets of history that you can latch onto.

Lots of national events have had very significant local events such as wars, industrialisation or settlement development. Most areas will have had some experience of WWI or WWII or be able to demonstrate a change in population due to a specific event, whether this was a growth or a decline. Understanding what the impacts of these people and events were are the major foci here and why we choose them to study. Trying to make both local and national (or even international) links is always a bonus as it helps contextualise the learning and demonstrate how one area can be affected by another or by an event or person.

Confusing?

By now we have realised that there is an awful lot to think about when mapping out our KS1 curriculum. There are periods, people, places and events that can all overlap with each other and ultimately make our decisions confusing. Is our study of this local event that affected the country a local study, or a national one? Is this significant person who came from our area who helped change the country or the world a local study or a national one? Do these individuals meet the criteria that I need to hit? Does this event show national changes or is it just an isolated event? In these cases, you need to try and ensure that the foci of each is clear. Are you making this a predominantly local study with wider elements to contextualise learning? Are you looking at a broader national or international topic with a lesson or two to contextualise the local aspects? Are the wider implications of the event/individual studied?

Trying to combine some of these statements can be tricky and may result in you lacking coverage, or it at least being perceived that you are lacking coverage. For this, I would suggest that you ensure that you are covering EACH of the four statements across KS1 as a separate study and include any others that may overlap as extras. Ultimately though, how you choose to structure your curriculum is up to you, just be prepared to explain your choices and threads throughout.

Threading KS1

Given the diverse nature of KS1 and the many different people and aspects that can be included, it can be hard to see how KS1 can come together as one cohesive unit. But by spending a small amount of time researching the various topics that you have chosen or are wanting to choose, you can begin to start forming links in a variety of ways. Perhaps there are chronological links between people and events? Perhaps there are thematic links such as gender, society, beliefs, achievements or impact? Perhaps they are all linked by your locality? Whatever the threads, there should be some present as isolated and compartmentalised learning does little to help build the narrative of history that the National Curriculum expects.

If we are successful at threading, then our KS1 curriculums will be a cohesive unit that has logic and reasoning behind it, rather than a potted history of episodic events and individuals. Building on previous learning will show the children that their learning was important for a reason: you WILL be coming back to it. Ensuring that children understand WHY they are learning something is essential in them feeling like the topic has some sort of purpose, even within KS1. For lots of people, and children especially, if there is no motivation in learning about something or no reasonable explanation for why tasks are 'important' or 'significant', then they can be cast aside or completed with minimal effort or engagement. By creating threads that tie topics together, even KS1 children will begin to understand that their learning is a coherent roadmap that has purpose and a sense of rationality: 'I'm learning about (x) because it will help me with (y).'

Ultimately, by threading your KS1 curriculum carefully, you will enable several important elements:

1. You will be able to (or be *more* able to) speak about the structure of your curriculum, the coherence that it has, the choices that you made and the impacts of it in future learning.
2. Deliver a more reasoned and well-sequenced set of lessons knowing that each lesson you teach has a purpose beyond 'learning something new'.
3. Demonstrate how people, places and events throughout history can be linked to each other in any number of different ways, thereby motivating the children to make their own connections, contrasts and comparisons.
4. Revisit previous learning to embed that knowledge and provide contextualisation of both the old and the new learning.
5. Demonstrate that your curriculum has been given serious thought and contributes to the narrative of history that the National Curriculum expects.

There's no denying that threading a curriculum can be a monumental task, especially if there are people, places or events that, on the surface, show few signs of creating links between. Or having a curriculum that is 'forced' on you with little-to-no negotiation about can make you feel like you have little control over it. But it is our responsibility to start fostering these links in whatever way possible, and for me, the best way of doing this is to spend some time researching each event, place or person and sharing the information with the staff that teach them, so that they can share their own knowledge that may help create those links. Collaborating with staff and having their input can be vital in everyone understanding the threads that are made throughout. Identifying the themes and impact of studying these on future learning is a sure-fire way of staff ensuring that something is taught and taught well. If they know that the children need to know (x),(y) and (z) for the next set of learning, there is a greater chance that it will be taught.

KS1 Curriculum Example

Here is a breakdown of my own school's KS1 curriculum. By no means am I suggesting that this is a 'perfect' curriculum or one that should be directly copied, but hopefully it will demonstrate some of the links, threads and thought processes behind each topic:

Y1

| <u>Topic</u> | <u>NC Statement</u> | <u>Rationale</u> | <u>Threads</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| George Stephenson and the railways | <i>Significant historical events, people and places in their own locality</i> | This topic builds on the EYFS topic of learning <i>All About Me</i> and starts children's KS1 historical learning right in the town that live in. Most, if not all, will have seen trains and railways in the local area and this helps contextualise the knowledge that Stephenson's Rocket and the development of the first public railway line (Stockton-Darlington) were very much local aspects that had huge national and even international ramifications. They look at the causes and effects of railways locally, nationally and internationally, as well as ascertaining why Stephenson is considered a local hero. | Links are made back to the local area and how a local achievement can have national or even international impacts. The focus moves from being about the immediate history of the child to the immediate area of the child. This is something that is then built upon throughout future topics. Focusing upon the achievements of Stephenson helps provide comparisons in future topics. |
| Stockton shipbuilding and the Titanic | <i>Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally</i> | Building on from the previous topic, children then learn about the impact of local shipbuilding and how the town's coat of arms developed. They learn how Stockton was once famed for its shipbuilding and built one of the Titanic's sister ships. The study then moves onto looking at the Titanic itself and the national and international impacts that the tragedy involved. | Impact is another key feature here and provides an alternative form of transport to provide comparison against the railways, also seeing how the local area affected transport. Geographically, the focus is still on the immediate area to show how much history there can be in the place they live. They will most likely have seen the river Tees that runs alongside the town of Stockton. This will also tie into the next study about seaside holidays and transportation. |
| Changes in seaside holidays | <i>Changes within living memory</i> | This topic starts by looking at the Victorian impact on the locality to provide contextualisation and to understand the heritage of the neighbouring seaside resorts. The children then learn about what seaside holidays looked like nationally before looking at them locally. The focus then becomes about the changes that happened post-WWII and the decline of seaside holidays in favour of package-holidays abroad. | The topic inherently links to the previous two by investigating the impact of the railways and sea travel on either helping to build local seaside holidays, or contributing to their decline. Geographically, the topic extends the children's knowledge to places in the surrounding area that they will most likely have visited (around a 20min drive away) and so this is something that they will most likely have seen first-hand. |

Y2

| <u>Topic</u> | <u>NC Statement</u> | <u>Rationale</u> | <u>Threads</u> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Commemoration – Bonfire Night and Remembrance | <i>Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally</i> | <p>This is a very time-specific topic that looks at how each of these events have a national impact in terms of ongoing commemoration.</p> <p>The study of Bonfire Night starts with the causes of the Gunpowder Plot before examining the national (and therefore local) impacts, with the understanding that the event is carried out nationwide. Children also learn about how the meaning of the event itself has changed over time.</p> <p>With remembrance, the children learn about 3 specific questions: What is remembrance? What do we ‘remember’? How do we ‘remember’? This then allows us to explore the event itself and its significance before delving into the local and national impacts of it. By looking at ‘what we remember’, they learn about local heroes and the wider implications that they had. Finally, by looking at ‘how we remember’, the children learn about the diverse nature of remembrance and the unity that it brings across different races, religions and cultures. They also learn that it is not observed by certain people which is their choice.</p> | <p>Links are made back to how local and national impacts can be intertwined and that these commemorations are carried out in local areas, but across the country.</p> <p>Having learned that the Gunpowder Plot was based around religious views and the division that those views brought, with Remembrance, the children learn that this is not a factor (or shouldn’t be) and just how diverse the event is.</p> <p>Studying local heroes and events helps continue the idea that their own locality has a long and diverse history that can be explored.</p> |
| Explorers – Captain Cook and Dr Nicholas Patrick | <i>The lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements, some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods</i> | <p>Rounding off KS1 is the comparative study of two significant individuals who fall under multiple categories. Both Cook and Patrick are locals (born within 20mins drive away) who achieved something amazing. Cook helped navigate many unexplored islands, Patrick was a NASA astronaut who helped to build the ISS. The initial focus is upon Cook with comparisons of his achievements linked back to Stephenson. Explanations of his voyages and travels are explored before Patrick is introduced, at which point direct comparisons about their journeys, struggles, achievements and impacts are made.</p> | <p>Comparisons between the achievements of Stephenson and Cook are made initially so that the learning from KS1 is revisited.</p> <p>Comparisons are also made between the ships Cook sailed upon and the Titanic, another chance to revisit KS1 learning.</p> <p>Both individuals are locals who had international impacts, just like Stephenson and those of the Remembrance study. Their impacts on the surrounding area is investigated as well as local commemoration of the two of them, linking back to the previous topic.</p> |

From this then, you can see that there are central links that are made throughout the entirety of KS1. The overarching theme is that of locality and instilling in the children that our area is somewhere to be proud of that has had national and international impacts throughout history. This is then continued into KS2 where local links are made to as many topics as possible – Bronze Age ‘mud mummies’, Roman villas, Anglo-Saxon and Viking settlements etc. Each KS1 topic also provides some sort of knowledge that is then referred to or directly compared with in future topics. Whilst this breakdown doesn’t go into depth about the various skills that are taught and the progressions within them, they are there and increasingly ask the children to build on their experiences and

knowledge to interpret their learning in more meaningful ways. Evidence is analysed and the differences between primary and secondary sources are introduced; cause and effect is explored in growing complexity to understand how one event can have impacts reaching further than the immediate area; historical enquiry is developed by having the children answer questions and providing age-appropriate evidence to back up their decisions; the narrative of history is developed by comparing aspects of the various topics; a sense of chronology is developed by exploring language and giving the children chances to use it and embed it.

All of this then culminates in a more cohesive KS1 curriculum that demonstrates the thought processes behind it and that time has been taken to consider the impacts of topics upon each other and how they may link. Making tenuous links serves little purpose and may make your curriculum seem 'thrown together' or uncoordinated. Taking some time to research the various aspects of your curriculum and searching for those themes that you feel may connect them or are central to your school is key. If you are the coordinator in school then try to find as many useful resources to help yourself and staff as you can. Asking for time to do all of this will be helpful (although this is dependent on your own school's ability to give you time and cover) or seeking advice and guidance from elsewhere could also be another avenue to explore.

What to consider next

If you are following the National Curriculum, then one of the first tasks should be ensuring that you have curriculum coverage

- Compare your KS1 curriculum with the guidelines of the National Curriculum to make sure that you have all of those areas covered

We should then look at what threads or links can be made between the topics and the KS1 curriculum as a whole

- Identify the overall content of your topics to see if there are any central themes or links that can be made. If not, can they be added in or replace other content?

We can then look at the disciplinary skills that should be introduced into KS1 to ensure we aren't just teaching content-only topics

- Look through planning to see if you can identify which skills are being taught where:
 - Constructing the past (the bigger picture or narrative of history)
 - Chronology
 - Continuity and change
 - Cause and effect
 - Significance and interpretation (what is important, why is it important, how do we interpret its importance and how is it represented throughout history?)
 - Carrying our historical enquiry
 - Using sources of evidence
 - Vocabulary and communication
- If you can't find evidence of these skills being taught somewhere across KS1, then you may want to tweak lesson foci or tasks so that they are incorporated

Finally, map the actual lesson content of your topics so that each topic gives you the opportunities to hit the National Curriculum objectives plus the disciplinary skills.

- For me, I start with a general topic – 'Changes in seaside holidays' for example. I then look at where that hits the National Curriculum objectives (changes within living memory) and consider how that can link with the other topics. In this case, transport and the local area link well to Stephenson, railways and Titanic. I then reflect on which skills have been taught previously within the other topics or which skills I need to build on and which have I not taught at all? From that point, I can consider the content of the topic, knowing that I need to reference certain aspects of previous learning and incorporate the skills in these lessons too. Topics are usually navigated and linked through some sort of enquiry question such as, 'How did seaside holidays change and what impact did that have on our area?'

Whilst this all may be a lot to consider, especially if you are new to the role or feel like you are not a 'specialist' historian, there is plenty of support out there to help through various websites, forums and social media groups and pages. If you *feel* that your KS1 curriculum is something to be proud of, that logic and reasoning shine through and that time and effort have been made to coordinate it, then chances are, that will be reflected in the children's learning and their ability to piece together a widespread and varied history potentially spanning hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

If you would like more details or help with this, then please feel free to contact me through the links to my website or Facebook page.