

Substantive knowledge

Substantive knowledge transforms what pupils see in the world and how they see it and also enables pupils to build a ‘big picture’ of the past within which they can embed new historical knowledge. It is the substantive knowledge of the past which also plays a role in helping people interpret the world today. Pupils’ knowledge of what we often call substantive terms come up time and time again in the curriculum. If pupils are able to build up richer and richer schemata of these concepts and terms over time, this can help them access increasingly complex material throughout the curriculum. This helps pupils to learn, understand, and remember more—meaning they make more progress.

There are 19 substantive concepts that we want our pupils to gain understanding of by the end of Key Stage 2. They learn these substantive concepts through repeated encounters, with meaningful examples that develop in depth and complexity as the years progress.

Substantive concept	EYFS	Year 1 Unit 1	Year 1 Unit 2	Year 2 Unit 1	Year 2 Unit 2	Year 2 Unit 3	Year 3 Unit 1	Year 3 Unit 2	Year 4 Unit 1	Year 4 Unit 2	Year 4 Unit 3	Year 5 Unit 1	Year 5 Unit 2	Year 5 Unit 3	Year 6 Unit 1	Year 6 Unit 2
chronology	X	X	X				X	X								
civilisation								X		X	X				X	
communication				X						X	X					
conflict					X	X			X				X			X
defence												X		X		
democracy															X	
empire									X		X				X	X
government				X	X	X		X							X	X
invasion					X				X				X		X	
migration												X				
monarchy				X	X							X	X	X		
peace																X
power					X	X		X	X			X			X	
religion							X	X		X	X	X				
settlement				X			X	X	X	X	X	X				
society	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
technology		X	X	X				X		X	X		X			X
trade							X			X	X		X	X		
warfare													X	X		X