



SHP

Curriculum PATHS

Principled Alternatives for Teaching History in Schools



Curriculum PATHS

Guide

Preparing for the 2028
History National Curriculum

Suggestions for Subject Leads in Secondary History

Introduction

Thank you for downloading this [SHP Curriculum PATHS Guide: Preparing for the 2028 History National Curriculum](#).

The aim of this guide / timeline is to empower subject leaders for history to meet the challenges of the changing National Curriculum in History. It goes alongside the Curriculum PATHS [blog post](#) on preparing for curriculum change.

We know that colleagues will not have been through curriculum reform at a national level for a long time, and with the last major revisions coming in 2013-14, this may be the first time for many. We therefore wanted to share ideas and wisdom from colleagues who have been through the process multiple times over the years.

The guide is broken down into three key stages: preparation, collaboration and implementation. Each stage has some suggestions for key actions which could be taken to prepare for the launch of the 2028 Curriculum. The overriding message is that starting the thinking process big and starting it early is the best way to be prepared for change when it comes.

The timeline has a mixture of more intensive and slower-burn actions based on the time of year. It assumes that for most schools, the Spring 1 and Summer 2 half terms are often quieter, however you will need to adjust for your own context accordingly.

As you begin planning units and enquiries, you may find it helpful to utilise the [Curriculum PATHS unit template](#). These were originally created for sharing finalised units but can be used as a tool to share resources and collaborate on unit creation.

We would be delighted if colleagues would consider sharing units they develop over the next couple of years via the [Curriculum PATHS Sharing Hub](#) to support other colleagues in their own efforts to update the curriculum.

We hope you find the guide useful as you prepare for the challenges and opportunities coming with Curriculum 2028.

Alex Ford

Curriculum PATHS Council (Chair)

2025-26: Preparation

May-
June
2026

One key thing about preparing for curriculum reform is starting early. Some of the bigger questions about curriculum need time for reflection and, by the time you are actually re-writing units, you may find the time pressures push this kind of thinking out. Starting early and starting broad is one of the best ways to have a good sense of direction as you undertake the process of change. It will also help you to justify any of your choices or decisions clearly down the line, whether that is to SLT, colleagues, pupils or parents. We suggest starting by revisiting your bigger aims and purposes in teaching history and engaging with pupils and the wider community where you can. Try one or more of the following:

- **Think Big:** Get people thinking about why they teach history and then bring this together for discussion. You might like to use the [Curriculum PATHS Principles](#) to help with this. Focus on:
 - What history offers uniquely to young people.
 - The [kinds of history](#) pupils should encounter
 - How pupils should learn about history. This blog on the [radical potential of historical enquiries](#) may be useful
 - The wider goals of a good education and the role of History in these. E.g. Here's a [short blog](#) on how history can challenge 'red pilling'
- **Listen to Pupils:** Conduct some pupil-voice surveys. Get a sense of what pupils have enjoyed AND what they feel has been most important to learn. Get their view on what they enjoyed least or saw the least point in. This is especially important for thinking about what changes you might want to make to how you frame units. I would also suggest asking what they would like to study and what they understand about what history is all about. Even a small sample of pupil feedback can make a really rich discussion to inform potential changes.
- **Listen to the Community:** If you are brave, you could also put this out to parents and/or the wider community as well. What do they see as the value of history? What do they hope it contributes? What parts of the community story do they hope it touches on? This is a nice opportunity to share your own aims for teaching history as a department with them too.
- **Create a Manifesto:** Create one page document outlining your departmental vision for what school history should do and feel like. Keep coming back to this, revising it as needed, but using it as a compass.

June- August 2026

The latter part of the summer term is a good time to set aside some departmental time to discuss your aims and review your current curriculum. Although it can be tempting to change everything at once (definitely my main mistake as a new HOD – Alex) this can be very costly in terms of time and effort. With nearly 6 years of change of the horizon, pacing is definitely important. A good curriculum review later will hopefully reveal things which are working and can be left alone and areas which are more of a priority for change. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Evaluate:** Use some of the research and discussion you did in the previous step to evaluate your curriculum.
 - How well is it furthering your departmental goals for history education? How well is it meeting the needs of pupils? Are the pupils seeing the point of their history lessons? What about the needs of the wider community?
 - Once you have done this, look objectively at which of your units or topics seem to be doing the most or least for your own aims and the needs of pupils BEFORE you start considering change.
- **Audit:** Look at your current curriculum and audit it using the [broad focus areas](#) of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. How well are you covering off the focus areas? Are any areas coming up weaker? Do these overlap with any weaker areas already identified in your review against your goals and pupil feedback?
- **Prioritise:** Colour code your existing curriculum outline. Highlight all the units where you have question marks in yellow and ones which you think are working really well in green.
 - Identify the 3-6 units out of these which need the most urgent attention based on the steps above. Code them red. For example, maybe your Hastings unit is one that pupils saw least value in, you are less clear about how it meets pupil needs, and there are limited connections to the Curriculum and Assessment Review.
 - **Look at any green coded units. If they also match the broad themes of the CAR consider sharing them more widely to support the wider community as they identify their own priorities. The [Curriculum PATHS Sharing Hub](#) is ideal for this.**

2026-27: Collaboration

Summer- Autumn 2026

The Autumn term is usually very busy so the aim here is to set off some slow burn work. Think about how you will spread the planning and preparation burden out as well as how you will keep encouraging your team in their work without over-burdening them. Crucially, don't dive into planning units and outlines too soon. Here are some suggested actions:

- ❑ **Delegate:** Give teachers in your team a specific priority area of the curriculum to focus on. Depending on your departmental experience you might want to have people working individually, pair people up or even work collectively on a single unit which you have identified as needing change.
- ❑ **Evaluate in Depth:** Encourage each mini team to revisit the reviewing work from the summer (using the CAR, departmental aims and pupil feedback). Get them thinking about whether a specific unit can be updated or revised or if it might need replacing. Get them to note down a rationale for that decision.
- ❑ **Get Inspired:** Encourage your mini teams to start looking at potential options for change. There are loads of places you could go for this but why not start with the [Curriculum PATHS Sharing Hub](#) which is now organised to match the priorities from the CAR. Don't forget the wealth of other community led projects which can help too: [SHP](#), the [HA](#), [Teaching Indigenous Histories and Perspectives in Schools \(TIHPS\)](#), [End Sexism in Schools](#), [Justice2History](#), [Teach Climate History](#), [BeBold Network](#). Schedule in some time to get excited about what is out there and how it might meet curricular needs.

Spring 2027

The draft curriculum may be published as early as January 2027 (though likely later). Either way the January-February period is a good time to regroup before examination pressures kick into high gear. A suggested plan for Spring 2027:

- ❑ **Gather:** Plan some time to review your team reflections from the Autumn term on priority units: Are they able to be revised? If so, how? Do they need to be replaced? With what? What have they been inspired by along the way?
- ❑ **Re-Evaluate:** Take some time to review the draft curriculum when it emerges. Note whether or not it changes any of your priorities for curriculum change and consider any additional challenges or focuses it raises.
- ❑ **Co-Plan:** Pick a single unit to begin revising together – this can act as a pilot unit for curriculum change and also help develop a shared set of approaches to planning. Ideally something for Autumn 2027.

Summer 2027

Use the late Spring and Summer terms to collaborate on a plan for a trial unit for first teaching in Autumn 2027. This is a great opportunity to model what high quality curriculum revision should look like. You can draw on expertise within your team and support newer members to develop their curricular thinking. There's lots of great work out there on doing this, but a good starting point would be to look at Mohamud & Whitburn's "[Anatomy of an Enquiry](#)" and Riley's "[KS3 History Garden](#)". If you want some introductory reading for newer teachers, [this guide on planning enquiries](#) may be helpful. Here's an outline of steps for co-planning:

- **Building Subject Knowledge:** Read around the content of the unit – are there any good books / documentaries / articles / textbooks everyone could access? Getting someone to compile a list of teacher-friendly and pupil-friendly subject knowledge resources can be a great starting point. A departmental meeting around this reading is always really valuable. Why not use the [Curriculum PATHS Padlet template](#) to start creating a shared planning space.
- **Setting Aims for the Unit:** Make space to wrestle with the aims of the unit both in terms of departmental goals (your manifesto) but also the focuses of the CAR. What will it achieve and how? You may find the Curriculum PATHS Padlet structure (linked above) really helpful here too.
- **Wrestling with the Enquiry:** Use your aims to really wrestle with different enquiry question options. Once you have some candidates try to outline what the unit would look like in outline, and how it would be assessed meaningfully.
- **Setting Pedagogical Priorities:** Consider your pedagogical priorities. How should pupils encounter the content? What approaches to history / historical thinking do they need to engage with? How will you ensure your unit centres your departmental aims and the needs of pupils through its pedagogical choices? What implications does this have for your outline enquiry and assessment? Again, you may find [this blog](#) on the potential of historical enquiries of use.
- **Preparing the Materials:** Agree on a person or small group to be responsible for completing the plans and resources for a first run through. Find some time to discuss these before first teaching.
- **Sharing:** If you develop something really great then why not share your enquiry to help support others. The [Curriculum PATHS Sharing Hub](#) is ideal for this. If you have used the template from the start then this will be very easy.

2027-28: Implementation

Autumn 2027

Autumn 2027 is a good time to pilot a new unit and evaluate its success / impact. It is also the time to start setting timelines for the rest of your priority units ready for September 2028.

- **Test and Evaluate:** Test out your new enquiry and schedule in time to discuss how it went. Come back to the aims you set out with and consider how the unit contributes to the overall priorities of the new National Curriculum and your own manifesto. This is also a good time to get some pupil feedback.
- **Set Timelines:** Establish clear timelines for individuals or small groups to plan or revise additional units. Leave plenty of space for preparation but ensure you have a half term lead-in before first teaching. If you are going to trial something in Summer 2028, make sure you have space to introduce that unit and its aims to the department in Spring 2028.

Spring 2028

If you have got to this point, Spring 2028 is most likely to be split between continued work on new and revised units and looking at any incoming information on GCSE reforms. Make sure you allocate at list some time to...

- **Check in:** Having some formal points to meet and chat about any delegated planning work is often really helpful and enables those ongoing discussions and dialogue. These could be individual or part of team meetings.
- **Revise Curriculum Plans:** This is also a good window to start drawing threads together and update curriculum plans for the 2028/29 academic year. It will also give something clearer to discuss and audit before the new curriculum kicks in.
- **Check Resourcing:** Now is a good time to see if you need to budget for any additional resources. Having someone explore options is a good idea but be wary of purchasing resources which will dictate rather than support your curriculum aims.
- **Engage with Pupils and Parents:** Before the main planning time in the summer there is always a good opportunity to talk to pupils, either collectively or in small groups about the changes you are planning on making and why. Pupil feedback here can really help make any last refinements before you commit to the final planning. The same is true of parents. Sometimes you might find there are some great sources of expertise out in the community.

Summer 2028

Summer 2028 will be the last major space to do planning and sharing work before the new National Curriculum arrives. Make space to:

- Finalise:** Complete any planning for Autumn Term 2028 and ideally Spring also.
- Prepare:** Discuss the aims and outlines of new and revised units and give people who planned them the time to take other teachers through the aims and assessments.
- Share:** Share your final curriculum plans with pupils and parents. It's a good chance to get them excited about what is coming. Again, if you have something really great then why not share the plans and resources to help support other colleagues. The [Curriculum PATHS Sharing Hub](#) is ideal for this.
- Review:** Set a timeline for reviewing new units during 2028-29 and establish if any more units need revision during the year (your second level priorities)
- Do it all over again:** Start making plans for the GCSE changes (more on this another time!)... but not before you've had a celebratory cake and looked back over everything you achieved as a team over the last couple of years.