An exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

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Declaration of original authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged

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Abstract

This thesis explores decision-making of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum in England. In a period of increased scrutiny by the school inspectorate of the wider primary curriculum, the study seeks to understand history subject leaders' perceptions of the factors influencing curriculum content, content sequencing and also their agency to determine the curriculum in their school.

The research approach was exploratory, qualitative and situated within a constructivist paradigm. A purposive research sample was drawn from five subject leaders who had received the Historical Association Gold Quality Mark award. This sample was chosen to gain insights into the nature of best practice in schools. Data collected via the use of semi-structured interviews were subject to inductive analysis, based upon constructivist grounded theory. This elicited key themes and also drew upon sensitising concepts related to curriculum and teacher agency.

The findings showed that subject leaders based curriculum content selection on their perceptions of the child's present as well as their future aspirations for the child as a learner of history. Content selection also drew upon making purposeful connections to other subjects and to other primary phases. Content sequencing emphasised the importance of ensuring children's ability to access the history curriculum, by considering both phase transition and by beginning with contexts familiar to learners. Progression in history also emerged as a factor, although to a lesser extent. Subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the curriculum were situated within the multiple roles, past and present, held by teachers and within collaborative decision-making processes, both considered the norm within primary school settings. Subject leaders also valued access to external professional development as

this both supported and legitimised their curriculum decision-making. Overall, curriculum construction was seen as an ongoing process, rather than a fixed outcome.

The study recommends that closer attention is given to the distinctiveness of the early primary phase when theorising or enacting the history curriculum for young children. It also recommends the importance of developing subject leader expertise of primary history to develop their agency as curriculum decision-makers. Finally, the study recommends further research to explore how curriculum decision-making operates within complex primary school settings.

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1   Introduction

This research intends to provide insight into outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history in England's schools. Using a qualitative exploratory research approach, curriculum decision-making for history in five primary schools will be explored in depth.   This includes a specific focus on the factors that influence content selection, content sequencing and the agency of history subject leaders to determine the curriculum.

In England, the existence of a National Curriculum for history for pupils aged between 5-14 years sets out some specific content to covered (Department for Education [DfE], 2013). However, these programmes of study are only detailed for those pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 (7-11 years and 11-14 years, respectively). At Key Stage 1 (5-7 years), there is no such prescription: just a general criteria for children to learn about some significant individuals and events from the past, some local history and some periods within and beyond living memory. The National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 history is therefore a potentially unhelpful document as it provides very little guidance for primary class teachers and places a huge responsibility upon those who select and sequence the content that children encounter in the classroom.

The question of which history should constitute the curriculum has long been associated with debates regarding the place, value and purpose of the subject at school level (Lee, 1991). Some debates have centred upon views that either advocate for, or caution against, content which makes an association between the subject and a 'national story'. Debates have also centred on the extent to which emphasis should be weighted towards a focus upon substantive content and/or a focus upon disciplinary processes. A history curriculum for young children also involves consideration about the interrelationship between child maturation and the types of knowledge that frame and constitute the subject.

There has been very little recent research on the primary history curriculum in England or on subject leadership of the primary humanities (Barnes & Scoffham, 2017; Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018). The main subject association for history in the UK, The Historical Association (HA), conducts a national primary survey once every two years (e.g. HA, 2023). This does provide some details about which curriculum content is frequently taught in the Key Stage 1 phase. However, it does not provide the potentially more valuable information about what beliefs have influenced this content, how this content is sequenced and the actors and processes that have contributed to this decision-making. Butt et al. (2017, p. 296) argue that the most appropriate means for the delivery of the primary humanities is a matter for "legitimate debate" and warn about the "startling lack of information and research" in this area.

Curriculum design in history has become a focus for research in recent years, but this has largely been conducted within the secondary phase (e.g. Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ormond, 2017; Smith, 2019). However, there are questions about the efficacy of relationships between history and the other subjects of the school curriculum which are more pertinent to the primary sector, given a mode of curriculum delivery based upon a class teacher. And some of the recent debates in secondary history education, such as the application of Young's (2008) concept of powerful knowledge to the subject, may have less relevance when applied to an early childhood context. Curriculum design, in relation to history and the primary humanities overall, is therefore in need of much greater research focus (Maddison, 2017; Swift, 2017).

1.1   Context of the study

Although history has been a statutory subject in the English National Curriculum since its inception in 1989 (ERA, 1988), it has been described as an "endangered curriculum"

(Cooper, 2018a, p. 615). The primary National Curriculum is divided into separate subjects. These subjects are classified as core (English, mathematics, science) and foundation: history constitutes one of the latter (DfE, 2013). Statutory pupil assessment in English and mathematics has compromised the intention of the National Curriculum for schools to provide a "balanced and broadly based" curriculum (DfE, 2013, p. 5), with schools choosing to privilege resources, timetabling and teacher development opportunities in favour of the core subjects (Barnes & Scoffham, 2017; Eaude, 2017; Spielman, 2017).

This unintended consequence of some subjects being prioritised over others has been described as "collateral damage" (Harris & Haydn, 2012, p. 90). The English school inspectorate, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), reported in 2019 that where schools have an imbalanced curriculum, it is usually to the detriment of the foundation subjects (Ofsted, 2019a). This issue has been compounded by insufficient coverage of the foundation subjects in initial teacher training (ITT), which has affected teachers' subject expertise and their ability to deliver the curriculum (Catling, 2017a). Primary subject leadership of history is often a transitory position (Temple & Forrest, 2018), for which many teachers receive little training (HA, 2023).

The current school inspection framework in England has recently given more emphasis to the wider curriculum, with heightened scrutiny of the foundation subjects (Ofsted, 2019b). Ofsted inspectors conduct 'deep dives' of individual subjects, during which subject leaders are expected to justify their curriculum intent, implementation and impact. This includes providing a rationale for content selection, sequencing and overall curriculum design (Ofsted, 2019b). At primary level, English (reading) and mathematics constitute the most common deep dives; the next most common subject is history (Ofsted, 2023a). The current situation in primary schools therefore constitutes a 'perfect storm': the problems of subject marginalisation and a potentially inexpert teacher body are exacerbated by a high-stakes

requirement for history subject leaders to justify their Key Stage 1 curriculum decision-making to the inspectorate.

The extent to which subject leaders have, or should have, agency to determine the history curriculum in their school setting should also be positioned within wider debates about teacher professionalism. In the UK, The Chartered College of Teaching has recently situated professionalism within four intersecting dimensions: authority, status, prestige and esteem; within these dimensions, teachers should have autonomy to make decisions that are informed and that are based upon collaborative engagement with knowledgeable others (Müller & Crook, 2024). It is a view of professionalism which is akin to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion of professional capital, premised on the importance of human, social and decisional capital. Decisional capital, sustained opportunities for teachers to develop and exercise judgment, is perhaps most germane for this research study. It is considered to be crucial in school workplaces which are characterised by ever-changing contexts (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Decisional capital may be depleted when teachers are denied opportunities to exercise their judgment and where there is little trust in their expertise (Perryman et al., 2024).

The impact of neoliberalist policies, dominated by metrics, markets and managerialism, on teachers' professional identity has been well-documented (e.g. Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2015; Hall & McGinity, 2015). Teacher professionalism in England is now characterised less by autonomy, trust and the exercise of judgment and more by compliance with, and acquiescence to, external directives (Fox, 2021). The emergence of curriculum materials produced by multi-academy trusts for groups of schools, the DfE plan for a model history curriculum (DfE, 2022) and recent government funding for centrally-produced curriculum materials (e.g. Oak National Academy) bear witness to a context of increasing control over curriculum decision-making. While the provision of such materials has been justified as an

attempt to reduce teacher workload (DfE, 2016), more recent voices from the profession suggest that it is the very pressures of external accountability, in a context of increasing pupil needs, which actually constitute the greatest demands upon the workforce (DfE, 2024). The ostensible 'freedom' for schools to determine their Key Stage 1 history curriculum may therefore need to be situated within a wider picture of increasing prescription.

1.2   Research approach

Rather than pursue the deficit in the current context, I am, however, interested in exploring credit. There are some examples of outstanding practice in primary history to be found. The Historical Association introduced a Quality Mark award in 2014. It is awarded to schools based on achievement in the following areas: learning and teaching, leadership, curriculum, and enrichment (HA, 2018). The award lasts for three years and schools can achieve one of three rankings: no award, Silver or Gold. This research is an exploratory study of the curriculum in five primary schools which have been awarded the Gold Quality Mark award.

My study aims therefore to both address the deficit in research in the Key Stage 1 phase and also to provide greater guidance for those involved in professional practice by exploring what insights may be gained from schools where the curriculum for Key Stage 1 history is considered exemplary. If history is always the product of its time (Carr & Lipscomb, 2021), then it is timely to consider what factors are influencing the history and histories taught to those pupils who are encountering the subject for the first time.

1.3   Personal and professional background

A researcher's choice of research focus is a deliberate one, informed by particular interests or agendas. I have a long-standing connection to the Historical Association. As a trustee, Quality Mark assessor and current chair of the HA primary committee, I am in a

privileged position to survey the issues affecting the status and enactment of the primary history curriculum in England. The pathway of my own career is also illustrative of such issues and situates my interest in this research area.

Although I studied for an undergraduate degree in history, my postgraduate initial teacher training programme (PGCE 3-7 years) prepared me for the role of a generalist class teacher. As an early years and primary class teacher, I may have taught children about the past, but I also taught PE, phonics and place value. And while I was a history subject leader for a number of years, I find resonance with Hammersley-Fletcher et al.'s (2018) research which found that, in the primary phase, the subject leadership role tends to be subordinate to the role of class teacher.

At different points of my career, I have been a Key Stage 1 phase leader, inclusion leader, a deputy headteacher, a headteacher and a school governor. As a senior leader, I was constrained by the pressure to ensure pupil outcomes in the core subjects of English and mathematics in order to satisfy the school inspectorate and 'achieve' in public league tables (Ball, 2003; Perryman et al., 2018). During this period, the history curriculum in my school occupied only a small part of my preoccupations and my undergraduate degree in history seemed very far away.

Since 2016, I have worked at a university as senior lecturer in initial teacher training (ITT) with a focus on the primary humanities. For perhaps the first time in my career, history is at the forefront of my professional identity. However, the opportunities I have to deliver both undergraduate and postgraduate training in primary history education are affected by timetabling decisions which mirror the privileging of the core subjects at school level (Duncombe et al., 2018). This is coupled with a recent DfE focus on promoting generic, rather than subject-specific, teacher competencies (Hordern & Brooks, 2023). My trainees'

experiences are further affected by reduced opportunities to teach history during their school-based training placements (Caldwell et al., 2020). Most of my students have not studied history beyond the age of fourteen (Key Stage 3) and I am inclined to agree with Maddison (2017) that primary teachers of history often begin their careers from limited starting points and with low levels of confidence in the subject.

1.4   Structure of thesis

Chapter 2 will explore the extant literature which underpins key debates associated with curriculum decision-making in relation to Key Stage 1 history. These are centred around content selection, curriculum sequencing and overall curriculum design. The agency of primary teachers of history as subject leaders and curriculum decision-makers is also considered. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach underpinning the choice of a qualitative research design with a justification provided for the research sample, method of data collection and process of data analysis. This includes the ethical approaches adopted and my positionality as a researcher. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 set out the research findings. Chapter 4 explores subject leaders' perceptions of the factors informing their school choice of specific content selection and chapter 5 explores their perceptions of the factors informing the sequencing of this content. Chapter 6 explores subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the Key Stage 1 curriculum at their school. Chapter 7 forms the discussion of the research findings. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis: it outlines the study's contribution to new knowledge, identifies the limitations of the research and considers the implications this study holds for professional practice and future research.

2   Literature Review

This chapter begins by considering some key debates surrounding the purpose of history education in relation to the National Curriculum and the nature of history as a discipline. The second part of this chapter considers the concept of curriculum. The lack of specificity in the Key Stage 1 curriculum is problematised in relation to curriculum content selection and content sequencing, including a study of the inter-relationship between the child, the phase and the subject, and how knowledge of the learner (Turner-Bisset, 2013) may influence decision-making at primary school level. Also considered are the potential merits and deficits of subject-discrete and thematic approaches to overall curriculum design. The final part of this chapter explores the extent to which subject leaders are curriculum decision-makers, drawing on a theoretical framework of teacher agency and the factors that may facilitate and/or inhibit this agency. This encompasses primary teachers' beliefs about the nature and purpose of history, their knowledge and expertise of the subject, and the wider political and policy contexts that have affected, directly or indirectly, the acquisition of this knowledge and expertise. The broader context of primary school structures is also explored, within a theoretical framework of distributed leadership for curriculum decision-making.

Part of the rationale for this study is the lack of research in relation to history at Key Stage 1. In reviewing the extant literature, it has therefore been necessary to draw on wider research, for example, in relation to the secondary sector (e.g. Harris & Reynolds, 2018) and beyond the English context (e.g. de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2019). Expanding the scope of the literature search does, however, have some merit. It provides insights into how the issues affecting curriculum decision-making in Key Stage 1 history may be phase-specific or context-specific, and where issues may be more generic, crossing sectors and national jurisdictions.

2.1 What is the purpose of history education?

In considering the purpose of history for children, it is pertinent to explore how an education in history might contribute towards a pupil's overall education. Given that the remit of this research is based within England, the overall aim of the English National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) provides a relevant benchmark for this:

> The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.   (DfE, 2013, p. 6).

Embedded within this statement are terms which are seemingly straightforward: 'essential knowledge', 'educated citizens' and 'the best that has been thought and said'. These terms are, however, problematic when considered in relation to history and the purpose of history education.

2.1.1 Developing pupils' 'essential knowledge' of history

The reference to 'essential knowledge' in the National Curriculum may be interpreted in a number of ways. Essential knowledge might encompass knowledge of a discipline; it may encompass ways of knowing a discipline; it may also encompass the body of knowledge which is the product of a discipline.

Knowledge of history as a discipline and ways of knowing the discipline tend to be based on developing competencies in relation to syntactic and substantive knowledge. This may include a focus on developing meta-historical awareness and understanding how historians use sources to construct interpretations and representations of the past (Seixas, 2017) - what Barton and Levstik (2004) have defined as an analytic stance to the subject. Such aims can be seen as intrinsic to the study of history. That is to say, the purpose of

learning history is to get better at history and, in doing so, the intent is to transform the learner and how they view the world (Lee, 1992).

In England, there has been a well-established emphasis on the disciplinary nature of history. This was influenced by the work of the Schools Council History Project (SCHP) which began in the 1970s, but has been most recently reaffirmed by the idea of powerful knowledge (Chapman, 2021). Powerful knowledge was outlined as a sociological concept and curriculum principle by Young (2008) as a social realist approach to the theory of knowledge. Social realists accept that knowledge is socially constructed, yet also argue that this knowledge has some independence from the contexts of its production. It draws upon disciplinary traditions, it is specialised and it differs from everyday knowledge. An effective education is deemed to be one which provides powerful knowledge to all learners, irrespective of their individual starting points (Young, 2008). The school curriculum is intended therefore to facilitate social justice, providing to all pupils "the best understandings of the natural and social world" (Young, 2013a, p. 196).

The use of powerful knowledge as a curriculum rationale has become increasingly influential in some schools in recent years. Such schools have been categorised by Ofsted as 'knowledge-led', based on the 'invaluable knowledge' that pupils are required to learn (Spielman, 2018). However, in some instances, this has led to a misrepresentation of the original concept, one that is reductive and draws on Hirsch's (1987) advocacy of a single, agreed or collective narrative of the past – which equates knowledge with the transmission and memorisation of facts (Ford, 2022; Muller & Young, 2019). The 'essential knowledge' articulated in the aims of the National Curriculum is interpreted as the body of knowledge produced by the discipline, with little consideration of the contexts of its production. Lee (2004, p. 10), however, has argued that pupils should not be handed any "preformed grand narrative" of the past but rather a framework to help them make sense of how these narratives

in history are established. This framework should therefore be provisional, replicating how the past is continually being remade.

Powerful knowledge has been critiqued for diminishing student contexts and learner identities, both considered more crucial if education is to effectively facilitate social justice (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Wrigley, 2018). It has also been critiqued for its emphasis on the sources of knowledge, at the expense of a consideration of how such knowledge can be used as a resource in specific contexts and for specific students (Deng, 2015), leaving a silence therefore on the "inner work of schooling" (Deng, 2018, p. 702). And perhaps most relevant for this research study, it has also been critiqued for marginalising the real life experiences that help primary-aged pupils make sense of the formal curriculum (Catling & Martin, 2011). Equally, if temporal orientation is fundamental to human existence (Körber, 2011), then too great an emphasis on the disciplinary nature of history may marginalise how children begin to form their own personal and emotional connections with the past.

2.1.2   Developing the 'educated citizen'

The intention within the National Curriculum to develop 'the educated citizen' finds resonance with extrinsic broader educational aims for the study of history (Slater, 1995). An explicit moral stance to the past (Levstik & Barton, 2011), for example, may use history as a means of celebration or condemnation. This stance can also be associated with exemplary and traditional notions of historical consciousness, which assume that history may instil an agreed tradition or stable set of values that transcend past, present and future (Rüsen, 2004). In this way, the 'objective' syntactic structure of the discipline is internalised by the pupil and becomes the 'subjective' (Lee, 2004).

If 'essential knowledge' is open to interpretation, it also follows that its contribution to the formation of the 'educated citizen' may prove problematic. The relationship between

history and citizenship, moral education and values formation is not easily negotiated (Harris, 2017; Peterson, 2017; Priestley & Philippou, 2019). History and citizenship, for example, are uneasy bedfellows. Attempts to use the former as a conduit for the latter may suggest an equivalence between a national story and national identity; they also risk privileging more recent history, as this may align more closely with understanding current issues in society (Harris, 2017). Aligning the study of history with broader societal aims may also engender a greater focus on a body of knowledge rather than ways of knowing (Shelmit, 1992) and may not ultimately translate into any behavioural, attitudinal or societal change on the part of the learner - whether positive or negative (Lee, 1992).

The proposition that history should be used as a mechanism for citizenship education is explicitly advocated by Levstik and Barton (2011, p. 172) who argue that a core purpose of history (within the context of the USA) is to prepare students "for participation in a pluralist democracy", based on a concern for the common good. They suggest that history should therefore focus on diverse perspectives, ensuring that representations of the past do not form a single voice.

In England, this issue has been more recently foregrounded in debates about the need to diversify or decolonise the history curriculum (Alexander et al., 2015) as an attempt to acknowledge, reckon with, or reduce social inequality. Any commitment to including diverse perspectives or different interpretations of the past raises a question about what might constitute "the best that has been thought and said" (DfE, 2013, p. 6) and perhaps most critically 'by whom' and 'for whom'. However, most research into diversity in history education in England has been conducted in the secondary sector (e.g. Alexander et al., 2012; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Huber & Kitson, 2020) or in relation to the Key Stage 2 curriculum (e.g. Moncrieffe, 2020) and it is less clear the extent to which issues such as diversity are

considered as a curriculum purpose for pupils in Key Stage 1, nor whether such a purpose is attributed to a broader educational aim.

The purpose of history for children can therefore be viewed through a range of different lenses – all of which are potentially problematic – and yet these lenses will shape how the subject is enacted in the classroom. This is because identifying purpose at school level will influence decision-making in relation to the rationale underlying curriculum content selection or omission (Levstik & Barton, 2011). Clarity of purpose is also important as it has an impact on the quality of teaching and therefore the learning experience of pupils (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

A key feature of this research study is therefore to explore what purpose subject leaders articulate in relation to their Key Stage 1 history curriculum, and the factors that inform this. This is an area that has been under-researched but is fundamental to developing our knowledge base of primary history and how it is perceived to contribute to the overall aims of the National Curriculum.

2.2   What constitutes the nature of history as a discipline?

The purpose of history can also be related to how the subject is understood as a distinct discipline. This is because an understanding of the discipline of history is key to exploring how it can be effectively "recontextualized" at school level and evidenced in a school curriculum (Young, 2013a, p. 197).

2.2.1   Syntactic knowledge in history

Disciplinary traditions or communities form knowledge domains, the boundaries of which shape and form learner and learning identities. This means that disciplinary integrity is therefore relational (Bernstein, 2000). Each discipline has a distinct syntactical and substantive form or structure (Schwab, 1978). Syntactical knowledge refers to how a

disciplinary community establishes truth or validity. In history, syntactical knowledge is grounded in the way that sources are used as evidence to construct interpretations of the past. However, although this process of enquiry can determine what may constitute legitimate history (Kitson, 2017; Shulman, 2013; Young, 2013b), establishing truth in history can also be seen as a moral endeavour; this is because it should extend beyond the intellectual pursuit of enquiry in order to ensure that interpretations of the past are both ethical and honest (Haydn, 2017).

2.2.2   *Substantive knowledge in history*

Substantive knowledge goes beyond the form of the discipline, to encompass the way that the concepts and principles of a discipline are organised or framed. It refers to the types of conceptual frameworks which are used for "defining, bounding and analysing the subject matters they investigate" (Schwab, 1978, p. 246). Key concepts in history are generally categorised as either first order or second order, although there is no fixed consensus about which of these are essential to the subject (Havaekes et al., 2012). The first order concepts frame specific phenomena and refer to terms such as civilisation, trade and empire; the second order concepts frame processes and relationships and refer to terms such as consequence and change (Lee & Shemilt 2003).

Reference to first order concepts is considered an effective way to secure primary pupils' understanding of key terminology (Lomas, 2016) and can also serve a proximal role in supporting learners to make connections across periods (Counsell, 2017). However, first order concepts are dependent on their spatial or temporal context and therefore should not be considered fixed in meaning (Havaekes et al., 2012). In the humanities, these types of conceptual frameworks are horizontal which means that substantive knowledge in history is cumulative and non-hierarchical (Bernstein, 2000; Counsell, 2017). This can render attempts to create curriculum sequences across year groups more problematic in history than in other

subjects (for example, mathematics) which have a more vertical conceptual ladder to embed within school progression frameworks.

Curriculum decision-making for schools therefore involves a consideration of how to actualise the theoretical: how to embody syntactic and substantive knowledge within a sequenced and progressive programme of study. For teachers in Key Stage 1, this involves not just an understanding of history, but also an understanding of how to make the subject accessible and meaningful to pupils aged five to seven years. Part of the remit for this research is therefore to explore how knowledge of the subject may be married to knowledge of the learner (Turner-Bisset, 2013), alongside a wider consideration of what constitutes the purpose of history for children who are encountering the subject for the first time.

2.3   What constitutes the curriculum for Key Stage 1 history?

2.3.1   Defining curriculum

The current school inspection framework in England limits its definition of curriculum to simply the substance of what is taught in school (Ofsted, 2018). However, different traditions and interpretations of curriculum theory exceed far beyond this. Curriculum has been understood to be a holistic and evolving process, one which should always be in conversation with the needs of the child (Dewey, 1938; Dewey, 1915/2001). From this standpoint, the curriculum and the child are not distinct, but are "two limits which define a single process" (Dewey, 1915/2001, p. 86). Curriculum has also been seen as a rational and technical framework for analysis, based upon the achievement of a set of school intentions or objectives (Tyler, 1949). Style (1988) argues that a balanced education is one focused upon the dialectic between the self and the world; the curriculum should therefore be both a mirror and a window: a mirror to reflect the self and also a window to reveal the realities of others. Pinar's (2010) reconceptualist stance proposed that curriculum is both

practical and theoretical: the practical relates to the purposes, content and processes of instruction, the theoretical relates to the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts that have influenced the former. From Pinar's standpoint, any curriculum is symbolic, because "through the curriculum and our experience of it, we choose what to remember about the past, what to believe about the present, what to hope for and fear about the future" (Pinar, 2010, p. 268).

Behind the visible school curriculum lies the hidden and the absent. The hidden curriculum refers to the types of norms or values that are implicitly imparted by curriculum choices, design and delivery. What is included on the curriculum, by definition, also involves decision-making about what is not included. The absent or null curriculum (Eisner, 1994) is particularly pertinent to history. Wilkinson (2014) draws on Bhaskar's (1993) notion of ontological monovalence, to argue that too great a focus on the present, selected curriculum fails to acknowledge the potential effects of the absent, unselected curriculum on pupil engagement and achievement in history.

Proponents of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987) would advocate for the establishment of a national collective memory of the past, yet a single set of prescribed content dictated by a government would be a challenge to curriculum freedom (Smith, 2019). No content in history is innately core (Ofsted, 2021). This means that negotiating the absent, the hidden and the visible renders curriculum formation an "extraordinarily complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2010, p. 268) and places a considerable responsibility upon curriculum makers. This research study intends to centre this 'complicated conversation' within Key Stage 1, as it is a phase which has suffered from a deficit of research in this area.

2.3.2   *The historical context of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum*

There is little documented evidence of how history was first formally taught to young children in England and what constituted the nature of subject content. Their earliest instruction in formal history education seemed to begin at the age of seven and was seen to be intertwined with literature such as myths and legends, focusing on the deeds of the 'great and good' (Cannadine et al., 2012). A Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) inspection commentary from 1960, for example, recommended that history at primary level should be taught through the use of story – the selection of which should be informed by a combination of historical significance and teachers' and pupils' interests (HMI, 1960). The same report, however, commented that history was difficult to teach to young children as the nature of the discipline had changed over the course of the twentieth century; "biography was losing ground to movements" which gave less certainty about what might be deemed objectively important (HMI, 1960, p. 276). This provisional nature of history was perceived to be difficult to translate to primary-aged pupils.

The Plowden Report review of primary education in 1967 agreed with this potential issue arguing that "history for children is a subject on which it is not easy to reach agreement" (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967, p. 225). The report advocated for the use of creative approaches to teaching history including the use of sources, access to the local environment, and heritage sites. However, the expectation that pupils understand that history is the product of the historian was positioned as a matter for the upper years of primary. The report recommended that infant children (aged five to seven years) should be primarily taught through story – with a focus on the heroic – as this approach would promote children's moral development.

While the advent of a National Curriculum for primary history continued to emphasise the importance of story for Key Stage 1 pupils (HMI, 1988), there were specific learning outcomes which focused on the importance of children engaging with the processes of historical interpretations and enquiry (ERA, 1988), based upon a view that history should be concerned with more than a simple conveyance of fact (HMI, 1985). Such an expectation remains a feature of the current National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) which means that all pupils aged five to seven years in England are required to learn history, in part, by 'doing history'.

2.3.3   The purpose of the National Curriculum for history

The current iteration of the National Curriculum, which was introduced in 2013, aims to develop pupil's "knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world" (DfE, 2013, p. 188). The curriculum has a disciplinary focus on developing children's understanding of syntactical and substantive knowledge, but there is also a stated emphasis on how history should contribute to pupils' understanding of their own identity and diversity within society (DfE, 2013). The National Curriculum also states an intention to foster pupils' curiosity about the past. However, there is potentially a paradox between a National Curriculum which argues for curiosity and government rhetoric which focuses more upon compliance. Uncertainty and risk-taking are key dimensions of curiosity, yet these are not compatible with the accountability embedded within current school inspection mandates (Whitehouse et al., 2018).

2.3.4   The programme of study for Key Stage 1 history

While the National Curriculum does outline a stated purpose for history, it allows schools considerable freedom over actual curriculum content in the earliest primary phase (DfE, 2013). The Key Stage 1 programme of study specifies only four general areas of statutory content:

- changes within living memory
- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally
- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality

(DfE, 2013, p. 189).

It is not clear why the Key Stage 1 programmes of study are focused on these particular themes, nor why they allow teachers more autonomy compared to the more prescriptive core study units which characterise Key Stages 2 and 3. The freedom of choice embedded within the Key Stage 1 programme of study poses both a challenge and an opportunity. Schools need to make decisions about how to organise and sequence teaching and learning across years 1 and 2 of the primary curriculum, translating four general areas into a fully realised history curriculum. The selection and sequencing of this specific substantive content draws together beliefs about the purpose of history, about the nature of the subject and about the overall purpose of the curriculum.

2.4   What factors may inform decision-making in relation to curriculum content?

2.4.1   Knowledge of the child

Although a history curriculum may draw upon a range of views informed by what constitutes the purpose of the subject, specific curriculum content may also be based upon teachers' knowledge of the child. This knowledge of the learner can be cognitive (based on their understanding of child maturation) or empirical (based on their experiences in the classroom) (Turner-Bisset, 2013).

Levstik and Barton (2011) argue that history for young children should connect with pupils' formative experiences and focus upon people and their everyday lives. They draw on the earlier child psychology work of Donaldson (1978) who argued that young children understand situations which enables their thinking to be embedded in known contexts and

which make 'human sense'. Such a view aligns with Dewey's (1938) earlier recognition of the importance of experience as essential to a good education. And it is a view which seems to resonate across other aspects of the humanities in the early years of primary schooling, in the emphasis placed on a curriculum that can enable children to understand themselves, their family and their place in the world (Catling & Willy, 2018; Siraj-Blatchford, 2014).

Knowledge of the learner may also extend to the inclusion or avoidance of specific historical content. The teaching of sensitive or controversial individuals can be included from an early age in the history curriculum, albeit with carefully scaffolded teaching and learning approaches (Bracey et al., 2011). However, more recent research by Stow (2023) suggests that primary teachers are more hesitant about the inclusion of this type of content in the Key Stage 1 phase. This focus on child maturation as a rationale for decision-making seems to differ from similar research conducted in the secondary phase. Kitson and McCully's (2005) research on the teaching of controversial histories in the secondary classroom found that decision-making tended to be based upon the social utility of proposed content rather than on pupil age. Harris and Clarke (2011) found that consideration of the student did emerge in research conducted with secondary trainee teachers in relation to the teaching of diverse histories, but this tended to be framed upon the extent to which content might be engaging or relevant, rather than upon the basis of learner maturation. Knowledge of the child may therefore present as a particular dimension to curriculum content decision-making in the primary phase, and perhaps, more specifically in the early primary phase.

2.4.2   Curriculum inertia

The main iterations of the primary National Curriculum in England (DES, 1991; DfES, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999; DfE, 2013) have specified similar themes for Key Stage 1 history. They have specified that pupils should learn about significant individuals and events from the past. They have specified the importance of local history. They have placed some

emphasis on the recent past and changes within daily life or living memory. While the battles over the content of the National Curriculum for history have been well-documented (e.g. Cannadine et al., 2012; HA, 2013; Smith, 2017), for Key Stage 1 there have been hardly any changes at all. The status of history in the primary curriculum may have waxed and waned, dependent upon wider contexts such as the introduction of standardised tests (SATS) in English and mathematics and/or the focus of the school inspectorate at any given point in time, but Year 1 and 2 teachers today make curriculum decisions based upon virtually the same programmes of study as their colleagues over thirty years ago.

Structural changes to the education system at national level do not seem to have affected this scenario. Since the 2000s, many schools in England have become academies, state-funded schools which are independent of local authority control. Currently 40.4% of primary schools in England have academy status (DfE, 2023a). While academies are required to deliver a "balanced and broadly based curriculum", they are not required to deliver the National Curriculum (Academies Act, 2010, p. 2). However, 97% of respondents to the recent HA primary survey (2023) – of whom just under one half taught in academies – reported that they were continuing to follow the National Curriculum, either in full or in part.

The way that some long-standing content may be 'enshrined' in school curriculum plans, often as a lasting consequence of previous curriculum mandates, was a finding of research conducted in secondary schools by Harris and Reynolds (2018). Some teacher decision-making is therefore based on maintaining existing norms (Biesta et al., 2015). Even in the era before a national curriculum in England, there was still perceived to be some uniformity in content selection. This was seen to be a consequence of tradition and a collective primary professional body (HMI, 1960). A recent Ofsted subject survey (2023b), based on a survey of twenty-five schools, found that curriculum content in Key Stage 1 history is often based on existing practice or easy access to resources. The HA primary

survey (2023) reported a similar picture in some areas of the Key Stage 1 curriculum: for example, the Great Fire of London, which is only a suggested significant event beyond living memory, was taught by 78% of survey respondents. Given the lack of research in this area, it is not clear whether this can be attributed to positive teacher 'approval' of common curriculum topics or merely passive acceptance of existing curriculum norms.

2.4.3   Curriculum variance

However, there is also some evidence of variance in content selection. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are required to learn about "the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements" (DfE, 2013, p. 189), a requirement which seems to align with a moral stance of utilising history to seek out positive role models for children (Levstik & Barton, 2011). In the National Curriculum, thirteen different figures from the past are suggested for teachers to guide their selection, including specific monarchs, artists, activists, explorers, inventors and nurses (DfE, 2013). The National Curriculum does not provide a definition of historical significance and there is no direction for teachers to guide which figures they might choose to teach and why. The recent HA primary survey (2023) noted that the range of individuals chosen by schools is wide, covering both the suggested National Curriculum content as well as school-selected content; however, survey respondents were not asked to provide any rationale for their selection.

Proponents of history education informed by a disciplinary approach would argue that the second order concept of significance may supersede the selection of one historical figure over another (Swift, 2017). However, significance is assigned by the historian – it is not innate to the phenomenon being studied (Bradshaw, 2006). As such, it is temporal and may wax and wane dependent on what is perceived to be of relevance in the present (Butler, 2017). Historical significance is therefore culturally and politically situated, as dominant norms and discourses influence the selection of content (Cooper, 2018b; Smith, 2019). What

might constitute historical significance, and significance for young children, is therefore open to debate.

The focus on the concept, rather than the individual, may present further limitations. The issue of which content knowledge is the most 'valuable' to learners remains unaddressed (Harris, 2021a) and there is a risk of privileging disciplinary competency over content (Thorp & Persson, 2020). Given that the Key Stage 1 phase affords the highest degree of curriculum freedom to schools, part of the purpose for this research is therefore to explore what is informing specific content selection within the Key Stage 1 history programme of study.

2.5   What factors may inform decision-making in relation to curriculum sequencing?

While the primary National Curriculum outlines separate programmes of study for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science (DfE, 2013), for foundation subjects, such as history, content sequencing is not specified within key stages. In history, substantive knowledge is cumulative (Bernstein, 2000) which means that there is no explicit conceptual ladder for children to ascend. This poses a potential problem for primary teachers when attempting to navigate the issue of curriculum sequencing.

In a recent research review, Ofsted (2021) emphasised the importance of schools establishing a planned route for their history curriculum. This section therefore centres on the factors that may influence curriculum sequencing in Key Stage 1 history, exploring issues such as transition between phases and the potential interplay between content sequencing, child maturation and progression in history.

2.5.1   *Phase transition*

One issue for schools to consider is transition between phases, taking into consideration prior and future curriculum experiences and overall curriculum coherence. This may include selecting content in Year 1 which builds upon learning experiences within Early

Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), as well as content in Year 2 which prepares pupils for Key Stage 2. For example, a school may choose to select Queen Victoria as a significant individual in Key Stage 1 as a precursor to a post-1066 study of Britain in a subsequent year (Cooper, 2018c). The majority of the twenty-five primary schools surveyed by Ofsted (2023b) did not, however, consider how content choices in the early years of primary might prepare pupils for later study of history in Key Stage 2.

Decisions affecting curriculum sequencing in Key Stage 1 may be influenced by the structure of the EYFS framework, which is holistic, play-based and centred on the development of the whole child. Learning about the past fits within a broader thematic area called Understanding the World (DfE, 2023b). The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) used to assess pupil understanding are closely aligned with subject disciplines (for example, history can be equated with the ELG for 'Past and Present'), but the framework remains founded upon recognition of, and response to, each child as a unique individual (Crawford, 2021; DfE, 2020). The lack of continuity between a play-based EYFS curriculum, centred around broad areas of learning, and a subject-based curriculum in Key Stage 1 has been widely identified as an area of tension for effective pupil transition between these different phases (e.g. Crowther et al., 2022; Fisher, 2022; Seleznov, 2020; Taylor-Jones, 2021). However, the focus of this tension has tended to centre upon pedagogy rather than subject content. Exploring decision-making in relation to curriculum sequencing, as a focus for this research, will expand knowledge of how or whether schools choose to respond to issues associated with transition at individual subject level.

The DfE currently plans to introduce a model history curriculum which will "set out a year-on-year programme of study from year 1 to year 9, following the National Curriculum as the framework for a chronological approach to history" (DfE, 2022, p. 2). Approaches to content sequencing at secondary level have often focused around such a chronological

framework, designed to develop students' understanding of chronology or specific themes (Harris & Reynolds, 2018). However, 47% primary schools in England have some mixed-aged classes (DfE, 2023c) which inhibits a chronological approach to teaching the subject year by year (HA, 2023).

In addition, the Key Stage 1 curriculum does not specify any particular periods of the past and time is described only relatively, as "living memory" and "beyond living memory" (DfE, 2013, p. 189). There is therefore potentially less of a scaffold in Key Stage 1, from which teachers can establish and justify an overarching curriculum sequence. By contrast, the focus on periods of history pre-1066 in Key Stage 2, succeeded by a focus on periods of history post-1066 in Key Stage 3 (DfE, 2013) suggests that the National Curriculum affords greater curriculum coherence between the primary to secondary phases, rather than within the primary phase itself.

2.5.2 Child maturation

The factors affecting curriculum sequencing may also draw upon teachers' understanding of child development. Part of the remit of this research is to explore, not only if schools draw upon knowledge of the learner in relation to content selection, but also if this knowledge determines the sequencing of the selected curriculum content.

Dewey (1915/2001, p. 74) argued that a young child's history education should commence with "a picture of typical relations, conditions and activities" as this aligned with their maturation. A focus on the typical should then extend beyond the child's immediate experiences to more abstract content in the later years of primary schooling. Guidance published to support the first version of the National Curriculum (HMI, 1988) was also in support of such a scaled approach. While the guidance argued for a broadly chronological approach to content organisation, it also stated that it is, "sensible for very young pupils to

begin their study of history with the local and familiar, with stories about their own lives and about the times of older people well-known to them such as their parents or grandparents" (HMI, 1988, p. 10). This recommendation remained a feature of the 1995 iteration of the National Curriculum (HMI, 1995) but was dropped from the 2000 revised version (DfEE/QCA, 1999). It is not clear what prompted this omission. Nor does the current National Curriculum mention any such approach (DfE, 2013).

Empirical research confirms that young children do draw upon their own contexts as a means to make sense of the past (e.g. Cooper, 2002; Waldron, 2003; Vella, 2010). More recent research conducted with pupils up to the age of six in Norwegian kindergartens also found that teachers tend to begin children's informal introduction to the study of history with a focus on the local area; this was perceived to be more "real for children" than the type of historical content found in books and which forms the basis of later schooling (Redvaldsen, 2023, p. 10).

2.5.3   Children's competency in history

Perceptions of child maturation also extend to a specific focus upon the child as an emerging learner of history. There has been relatively little research into primary-aged pupils' competences in history (Becher & Glaser, 2018) and most recent studies have focused on pupils in non-UK contexts (e.g. Arias-Ferrer et al., 2019; Fardi, 2022; Ludvigsson et al., 2021; Ní Cassaithe et al., 2022; Perikleous, 2019). The CHATA (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) project (1991-96) which was UK-based revealed that children's thinking about history was often decoupled, meaning that their understanding of concepts in history was asynchronous (Lee & Shelmit, 2003). However, the project focused on pupils aged from seven to fourteen years and there has been no comparable large-scale research on learners aged from five to seven years.

Much of the research in relation to the progression of children's learning focuses on their understanding of historical time, both objective dimensions (e.g. using correct temporal vocabulary) and subjective dimensions (e.g. showing a sense of period). A comparative study of the primary curriculum in the Netherlands and England concluded that children's understanding of historical time was dependent on the learning they had experienced, rather than their maturation (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2014). These findings corroborate earlier research in this area (e.g. Barton & Levstik, 1996; Harnett, 1993; Hodkinson, 2003). It challenged an earlier view, aligned closely with Piagetian stage theory, that children require competence in clock and calendar time before being able to successfully navigate longer periods of duration.

However, some age-related differences were apparent in more recent research. For example, de Groot-Reuvekamp et al. (2019) conducted interviews with 22 children aged six to twelve years, of whom six pupils were equivalent to the Key Stage 1 age range. They found that the youngest pupils tended to use more relative temporal language (e.g. long ago) and also encountered problems with using dates correctly, a consequence of assuming that the higher the date, the more distant the time period. Chronological understanding is central to the development of a framework for structuring an understanding of the past (Doull & Townsend, 2018), but it is not known whether schools consider such issues when sequencing their Key Stage 1 curriculum. For example, whether they foreground 'events within living memory' before those 'beyond living memory' based on knowledge or assumptions held about pupils' competency in history as they move from Year 1 into Year 2.

Given the lack of a clear conceptual route through the Key Stage 1 history curriculum, coupled with the absence of guidance in the National Curriculum, part of the rationale for this research is to explore the extent to which subject leaders do consider issues such as pupil competencies, child maturation and phase transition in their school curriculum sequence.

2.6   How is the study of history related to overall curriculum design in Key Stage 1?

In England, the class teacher model at primary level means that history as a subject cannot be divorced from wider conversations about the organisation of the whole school curriculum. The next section of this chapter therefore explores the potential merits and deficits of different curriculum design models in relation to primary history. These debates are contextualised geographically and historically (in relation to the emergence of the subject-based English model), and pedagogically (considering child-centred and subject-centred rationales for curriculum design).

2.6.1   *The context of the subject-based model in England*

England differs from the other jurisdictions of the United Kingdom with its division of the primary curriculum into separate and distinct subjects (Butt et al., 2017). In Wales, opportunities for pupils, aged five to seven years, to learn about the past are embedded within an area of learning entitled 'knowledge and understanding of the world' (KUW) (Jones & Whitehouse, 2017). In Scotland, the Curriculum for Excellence, introduced in 2010, has eight curriculum areas: history is located within a broader area of Social Studies; cross-curricular approaches to curriculum design are the usual mechanism for the delivery of this (Robertson et al., 2017). And in Northern Ireland, history is situated within an area of learning called 'The World Around Us (WAU)', which places a strong emphasis on integrated learning (Greenwood et al., 2017).

England positions history differently because of the political contexts that have informed curriculum formation. The Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967) had recommended that it should be for teachers to determine the best means to organise and deliver the primary curriculum. This freedom was challenged by the advent of the Education Reform Act in 1988 which introduced a centralised curriculum, intended to

enable standardisation and accountability across the education sector (Cannadine et al., 2012). The introduction of a national curriculum which was explicitly subject-based was posited by the architects of the curriculum – the Conservative party – as a focus on tradition and rigour (Sheldon, 2010).

Debates about primary education at the beginning of the 21st century under a Labour government suggested a momentum towards a more integrated primary curriculum. The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) recommended a more thematic approach to curriculum design, and for teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 to be more closely aligned with EYFS than Key Stage 2. However, the election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 instigated a revised National Curriculum with the maintenance of a 'traditional' subject-based approach to curriculum (DfE, 2013).

While the notion of the subject-discipline remains a statutory element of the National Curriculum, there is no prescribed template for curriculum design in England. Schools may opt for discrete subject teaching, discrete subject teaching with cross-curricular links, or integrating history within a thematic/topic approach (Maddison, 2017; Percival, 2018). In the 2019 HA primary survey (HA, 2020), 53% of respondents reported that the subject was delivered through 'topic or project work'. Schools made links between history and a range of other subjects, with the greatest connections made with English, geography and art, respectively (HA, 2020). However, both the most recent Ofsted history subject survey (2023) and HA primary survey (2023) have identified fewer thematic or topic approaches to the teaching of history. This increasing trend towards teaching history as a discrete subject has been attributed to the impact of the current inspection framework and a renewed emphasis upon knowledge bases within individual subjects (HA, 2023).

2.6.2 Thematic approaches to curriculum design

Thematic approaches to curriculum planning have often been premised on the assumption that younger learners may benefit from a holistic curriculum; this view has its basis in constructivist theories of learning which seek to avoid, "artificial barriers in the minds of young children" (Hayes, 2010, p. 383). Both of these factors emerged in interviews conducted with eight lower Key Stage 2 teachers about the influences affecting their curriculum design of the wider primary curriculum (Pratt & Atkinson, 2020).

Equally, primary history has been deemed an 'umbrella' subject which, by virtue of its varied subject matter, can encompass other fields of study (Rowley & Cooper, 2009; Turner-Bisset, 2005). Bernstein's (2000) theory of knowledge classification states that some disciplinary boundaries have low insulation from one another; there are some concepts common to the primary humanities (e.g. continuity and change) coupled with a common focus on enquiry-based pedagogy (Eaude, 2017; Hoodless, 2009). Integrating historical study within other fields may also provide a more authentic real-world context for learning (Levstik & Barton, 2011).

2.6.3 Subject integrity

Arguments in favour of subject-specific approaches to curriculum design tend to be premised upon theoretical rather than empirical knowledge bases (e.g. Young, 2008). However, where links between subjects are tenuous, this can result in a lack of disciplinary rigour (Barnes, 2015; Caldwell et al., 2020; Hayes, 2010). Cross-subject connections may not therefore provide the necessary structure and scaffolding for pupils to develop key features of learning in history such as chronological understanding (de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2014).

Case-study research, conducted by Percival (2018) in three English primary schools, found that cross-curricular teaching does not necessarily challenge disciplinary integrity. His

research found that a combination of strong subject leadership, meaningful subject connections, and learning outcomes which were explicitly based upon historical concepts were the most importance variables in successful curriculum enactment. This resonates with earlier arguments that subject integrity may not be compromised by relaxed curriculum boundaries (Alexander, 2010; Rose, 2009). A review of findings from UK school inspectorates concluded that pupils benefit from a disciplinary 'lens', even when taught within a cross-curricular approach (Catling, 2017b). Good practice was based on teachers displaying "curriculum clarity" (2017b, p. 357), which Catling defined as teachers having secure knowledge and understanding of the nature of each subject, which was then made explicit to children during lesson delivery.

Given the flexibility afforded to schools in overall curriculum design and the merits and deficits of different approaches, a key feature of this research study will be to explore if content selection and/or content sequencing are informed by subject leaders' views about the relationship between history and the other subjects of the Key Stage 1 curriculum.

2.7   Conceptual framework of curriculum construction

The following diagram summarises the concepts, and the relationship between these concepts, that may influence decision-making of both content selection and content sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum.
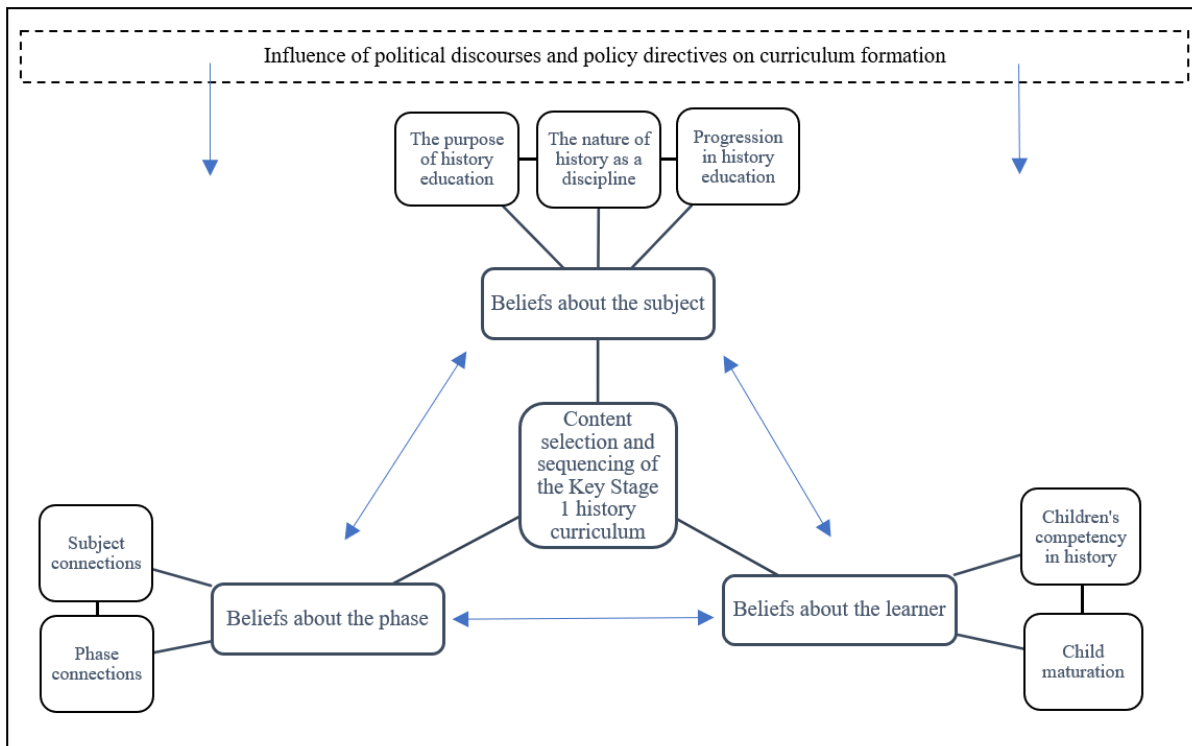
Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework of curriculum construction

The curriculum, when defined as practical-theoretical, influences and is influenced by teachers' beliefs (Pinar, 2010). Beliefs about the subject, beliefs about young children as learners and beliefs about the Key Stage 1 phase are interrelated and may inform curriculum decision-making. These beliefs are themselves the product of policy directives, both absent and/or present, and the wider political discourses that shape curriculum and school priorities.

2.8   What factors affect agency in curriculum decision-making for history?

The final part of this chapter explores the extent to which primary subject leaders are curriculum decision-makers, drawing on a theoretical framework of teacher agency and the factors that may facilitate and/or inhibit the achievement of this agency. This encompasses primary teachers' beliefs about the nature and purpose of history, and the factors that may affect their expertise to select and design an effective curriculum. Teacher agency is also

considered within a wider context of primary school systems, encompassing the relationship between the subject leader role and wider school leadership.

2.8.1 *Theorising teacher agency*

Sociological theories of agency have traditionally been framed around the agency/structure debate. For example, the structuralist approach posits that an individual's capacity to be agentic is limited and/or facilitated by organisational norms (Giddens & Pierson, 1998). This capacity for intentional action (or inaction) then forms the basis of power.

Teacher agency, however, is more concerned with social action, and has therefore been theorised by Biesta et al. (2015) as residing within a pragmatist rather than sociological standpoint. Drawn from ethnographic research based within the Scottish school system, their ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015) builds upon the earlier work of Emirbayer and Mische who argued that agency can only be understood analytically within the "flow of time" (1998, p. 963); it is a chordal triad of past influences, present circumstances and future aspirations.

The ecological approach to teacher agency is also based upon a relational interplay of cultural, structural and material influences (Biesta et al., 2015). For example, the beliefs and values that teachers bring to their professional practice, the interrelationship between teacher roles and school systems, and the types of resources available in schools - all of which might be influenced (directly or indirectly) by dominant discourses of educational policy and practice.
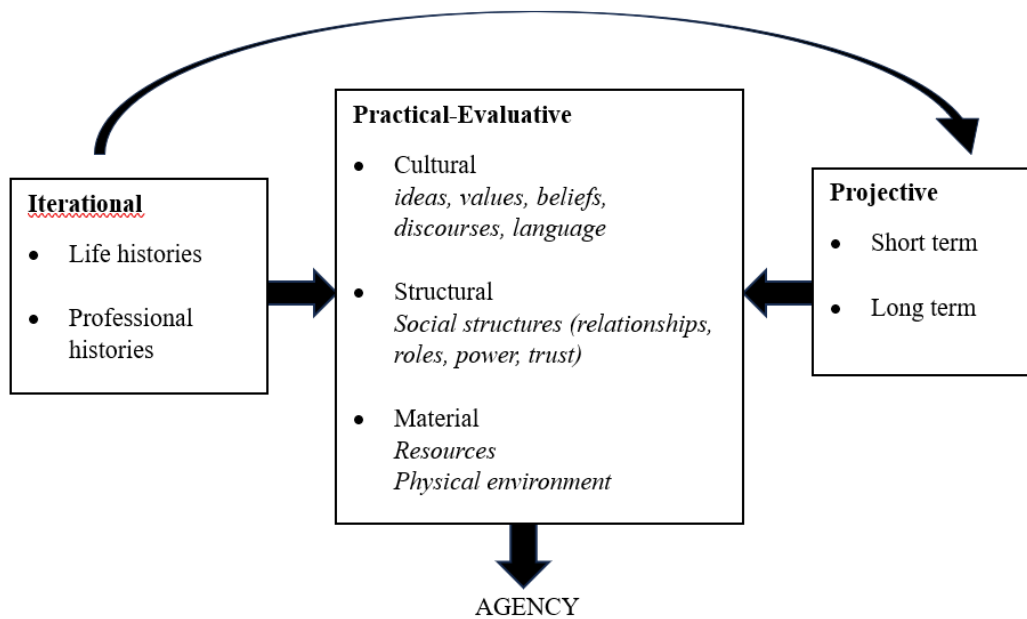
Figure 2.2 The ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015)

Teacher agency is therefore not static in relation to school structures. It is achieved, rather than possessed, by the individual teacher; and it is achieved by teachers acting by means of their environment, rather than in their environment (Biesta et al., 2015).

2.8.2 Teachers as decision-makers of the history curriculum

Research of curriculum decision-making in history has been largely focused upon the secondary sector (e.g. Harris, 2021b; Ormond, 2017; Smith, 2019). In England, the pressure of student performance in examinations can inhibit teacher agency over curriculum decision-making (Harris & Graham, 2019), with teachers often choosing low-risk curriculum content to maximise student opportunity for success in examinations (Harris, 2021b). The pressure on teachers to ensure performativity in history was also the findings of research conducted in New Zealand (Ormond, 2017), which concluded that this performativity was potentially at odds with ensuring that the history curriculum retained disciplinary integrity. As curriculum makers, teachers have to navigate competing boundaries which may be conflicting rather than consensus-based (Lambert & Biddulph, 2015).

Smith's (2019) research with history teachers in Scotland explored the processes of curriculum decision-making in a system where curriculum content is not prescribed, and teachers have a high degree of freedom. Similar to the English and New Zealand context, Smith found that some teachers' justifications for the curriculum were operational, designed to maximise the chances of exam success. Some curriculum choices also formed a quasi-marketing campaign, intended to encourage students to opt for history in subsequent years of their schooling. A further factor for the Scottish curriculum (which is based around social sciences in the early years of secondary education) was the selection of curriculum content which could be delivered by history non-specialist teachers.

Overall, some of these issues do not resonate with the primary context. Primary pupils in England do not complete public examinations in history, hence the assessment system that a primary school adopts for history can be characterised as low stakes. Although competition with other subjects can be evidenced in the marginalisation of the foundation subjects, history is compulsory across both Key Stages 1 and 2. This means that there is no imperative for teachers to select curriculum content to attract a student 'consumer market'. Finally, all primary teachers in England with Qualified Teacher Status are trained to deliver the National Curriculum. Notwithstanding concerns about primary teacher expertise (Maddison, 2017), there is a presumption that they have competency to deliver the chosen history curriculum.

There is the potential therefore for primary teachers, shorn of some of the challenges of their secondary colleagues, to make curriculum decisions which draw less upon operational matters. However, thematic curriculum design has been based upon instrumental decisions to maximise timetable allocation in favour of the core subjects of English and mathematics (Hoodless, 2009; Rowley & Cooper, 2009). Case-study research (Boschman et al., 2014) based on curriculum design approaches in relation to the use of technology in three Dutch kindergartens (comparable with Key Stage 1) equally found that teachers' decision-

making was framed around logistical considerations such as timetabling, rather than beliefs about the child and/or the subject.

A National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) study of teacher voice (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020) based on 1,144 teachers and middle leaders, of whom at least 500 were primary, found that teachers believed they had less autonomy (defined as the capacity to make informed decisions and/or act independently) over their curriculum compared with other aspects of their role. For example, 55% of those surveyed reported that they had 'a lot of autonomy' over teaching methods or strategies, compared with only 26% for curriculum content. However, the factors accounting for these responses did not form part of the remit for this study, nor were findings discriminated at individual subject level.

2.8.3   Primary teachers' beliefs about history and the purpose of history education

Case-study research (Harnett, 2000) conducted with three Key Stage 2 primary teachers found that curriculum decision-making at primary level is dependent on teachers' own beliefs about history which, in turn, are dependent on their own socio-cultural backgrounds and their own experiences as learners of history. Memories may be powerful in forming primary teacher identities due to the reproductive influence between trainees' pre-existing experiences and their future professional practice (Waldron et al., 2009). However, the type of historical experiences that are particularly memorable (e.g. historical re-enactment days or school visits) are necessarily atypical, and these have been critiqued by Maddison (n.d., as cited in Wren, 2020), because these types of episodic events may not necessarily translate into secure understanding of history as a discipline.

Most of the empirical research in this area concludes that primary teachers align purpose in history with making connections between the present and the past. This belief, that the purpose of history is to make sense of the present, was found in research conducted in

Ireland (Waldron et al., 2009), in Spain (Ortega-Sanchez & Pagès, 2020), and in South Africa (Godsell, 2016). For example, in South Africa, trainees (n=136) ascribed the value of history to moral development, rather than the acquisition of knowledge or skills, a finding that the author attributed to the legacies of apartheid (Godsell, 2016). The purpose of history is therefore contextual; it is based upon teachers' own prior experiences of history education, which have, themselves, been influenced by the wider contexts that determine curriculum formation (Sossick, 2010). This means that teachers may replicate their own history education or experiences during school-based training, perceiving this to be the perceived norm for curriculum content and design. It is noticeable that much of this type of research has been conducted with trainees prior to qualification and there is less research conducted with qualified, serving teachers – a deficit that this research study intends to address.

2.8.4 *Primary teachers' syntactical and substantive knowledge of history*

Teachers' agency over decision-making is not only affected by their beliefs and values, but may be inhibited when teachers have limited understanding of the subject or field of knowledge (Biesta et al., 2015). This is because they may not bring critical awareness to the contexts within which they are expected to execute their professional role.

Empirical research conducted with primary trainee teachers found that they often believe that history is simply the events of the past (McDiarmid, 1994). Not only may trainees fail to fully understand the interpretive nature of the subject (Wineberg, 2001), but they may also consider the teaching of historical interpretations to be developmentally inappropriate for young learners (James, 2008). More recent research conducted with undergraduate primary trainees found that many struggled to explain their understanding of the 'arc of history'; this was a consequence of limited conceptions of the notion of chronology (Doull & Townsend, 2018).

Approaches to teaching diversity within the school curriculum can often be tokenistic (Chapman & Ní Cassaithe, 2023). Bracey (2016) found that primary subject leaders attached less importance to black history than their secondary counterparts. The most recent HA primary survey (2023) suggests that, while schools have become more aware of the importance of a diverse history curriculum, the focus tends to reside mainly with gender and/or ethnicity, with less attention given to other under-represented groups. Lack of expertise may account for this, given that Fidler's (2023) research with four primary subject leaders found that teachers feel they need more support and subject knowledge to have the confidence to teach diverse histories.

Findings from the most recent Ofsted survey suggest that while primary teachers in England demonstrate secure substantive knowledge of the past, too much work with sources at primary level is mechanistic, such as asking pupils to categorise sources as 'reliable' or 'unreliable' (Ofsted, 2023b). The research found that children's syntactic knowledge of history at primary level is therefore an area of relative weakness and this has been attributed to poor teacher disciplinary knowledge of the subject.

2.8.5 *Primary teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of history*

Shulman (2013) emphasises the importance of teachers having secure understanding of the pedagogical content knowledge which is distinct to each subject. The National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) expects pupils to understand the methods of historical enquiry and teaching history can be premised upon the use of enquiry-based processes (Cooper, 2018b; Swift, 2017). Learning history should therefore be perceived as a creative endeavour as the nature of this enquiry lends itself to the active construction of the past (Blake et al., 2010).

Most of the academic literature focused upon teachers' pedagogical knowledge of history is secondary-specific (e.g. Kitson, 2017; Virta, 2002). The most recent review of

empirical research in this area deliberately excluded primary practitioners from the data set because they are, "likely to have only limited subject specific experience and training" (Tuithof et al., 2019, p. 77). However, earlier studies do shed some light on the primary context. Large scale research conducted with undergraduates in Ireland (n=1114) found that many primary trainees valued generic, rather than subject-specific, pedagogies (Waldron et al., 2009). The 'good teacher of history' was one who created active learning experiences such as project work and field trips (33% respondents), with only 19% trainees identifying the use of enquiry and the process of historical investigation (Waldron et al., 2009).

2.9 What factors affect primary teachers' knowledge and expertise of history?

2.9.1 Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

Teaching is a graduate profession in England with a variety of entry pathways. Provision for primary ITT in England can be categorised by an undergraduate route based on three/four years of full-time study, and a postgraduate route (either school-based or university-centred) based on one year of full-time study. Postgraduate study is the most common pathway, with 65% of trainees choosing this route in the 2023-24 academic year (DfE, 2023d).

Trainees need to learn how to teach the twelve different subjects specified in the primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), with a more recent additional requirement to deliver Relationships, (Sex) and Health education (DfE, 2019a). One year postgraduate programmes afford little time for specialist tutor-led input at individual subject level (Catling, 2017a; DfE, 2015), an issue which is compounded by both the focus placed upon the generic role of the class teacher and the emphasis placed upon school-based training experiences (Murray & Passy, 2014; Mutton et al., 2017). A review of primary ITT over the past forty

years concluded that the "current postgraduate curriculum strains to achieve the impossible" (Murray & Passy, 2014, p. 501).

The design of primary ITT programmes has also tended to mirror school-based practices, with priority accorded to the core subjects of the curriculum (Barnes & Scoffham, 2017; Cordingley et al., 2015; Eaude, 2017). In consequence, there is limited support in place for trainees to learn how to teach the foundation subjects (Caldwell et al., 2020; Duncombe et al., 2018; Ofsted, 2020; Pratt & Atkinson, 2020). The challenges associated with developing teachers of primary history have been identified as an ongoing issue for over twenty years (e.g. Harnett, 2000; Maddison, 2017). However, most research exploring the limitations of current ITT provision with specific respect to history has been conducted in the secondary phase (e.g. Lidher et al., 2023) with little consideration of the primary sector.

More recently, capacity to develop subject-specific expertise has been constrained by the requirement for ITT providers to adhere to a generic Core Competency Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019b). This framework, which is neither phase nor subject-specific, has detached "professional knowledge from its disciplinary base" (Hordern & Brooks, 2023, p. 15). The emphasis now placed in England upon generic teacher competencies should also be seen in a broader context of potential 'de-professionalisation' (Mutton & Burn, 2024). The achievement of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is deemed the product of initial teacher training (ITT) rather than initial teacher education (ITE). A focus upon 'training' rather than 'education' may affect teachers' future agency if they are not afforded the opportunity to engage with wider questions about the contexts and processes of curriculum construction (Parker, 2017).

At the heart of this matter is perhaps the extent to which trainees in England are intended to enter the profession as future curriculum makers or merely as curriculum

deliverers. Although the DfE states an intention to develop trainees' curriculum planning skills, current guidance to alleviate workload in ITT has recommended that trainees make greater use of pre-existing curriculum materials and resources (DfE, 2018). However, this focus on preparing the teacher to be a curriculum 'deliverer' does seem at odds with a National Curriculum which deliberately affords primary schools the freedom to determine the scope and sequence of their Key Stage 1 history curriculum.

2.9.2   *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*

Insufficient provision for the foundation subjects in ITT is exacerbated by limited opportunities for CPD (Catling, 2017a; Duncombe et al., 2018; Ofsted, 2019a). Wider systemic factors, such as the dismantling of subject advisory support at local authority level, have compounded this issue (Temple, 2010). In their wake have emerged external 'curriculum brokers' (Leat & Thomas, 2018) who may provide support, resources and training to schools. While membership of subject associations has been recommended as a resource to support teachers' professional development (Barnes & Scoffham, 2017; Ofsted, 2023b), budget constraints can affect the capacity of schools to 'buy in' to such support (Fidler, 2023).

In the 2019 HA primary survey (n=148) only 33% respondents said they had received any CPD in history since qualification (HA, 2020). The most recent survey shows a more positive picture: 58% respondents (n=356) stated they had undertaken at least some training in history subsequent to qualification, an increase attributed to the focus now placed upon the foundation subjects by the school inspectorate (HA, 2023). However, the overall lack of training for history at primary level still emerged as a concern for 56% of those who completed the survey. This matters because Parker's (2017) research into curriculum development in English academies, found that primary teachers' professional learning experiences affected their capacity to achieve agency within their schools.

Research conducted with early years practitioners in one local authority in England similarly found that a lack of professional development opportunities was a barrier to effective provision in relation to the planning and delivery of 'Understanding the World' (Forrester et al., 2021). Empirical research on the impact of teacher CPD has, however, been largely focused upon the core subjects of the curriculum (Cordingley et al., 2015).

2.10   What factors affect subject leaders' agency to determine the history curriculum?

2.10.1 Distributed leadership in primary schools

Curriculum formation is the product of "multi-layered social practices" which incorporate individuals, bodies and institutions (Priestley & Philippou, 2019, p. 3). The research into curriculum decision-making conducted in secondary schools has centred upon exploring and eliciting the views of history teachers and heads of department (e.g. Harris, 2021b; Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ormond, 2017; Smith, 2019). Primary schools, in contrast, are unlikely to have history subject departments or faculties. The class teacher model means that exploring the agency underpinning curriculum decision-making is therefore potentially more complex at primary level. It is also an area that has been significantly under-researched. Fidler (2023), for example, examined subject leaders' decision-making in relation to the inclusion of black history on the primary curriculum. However, she acknowledges that, "*how* [my italics] the subject-leaders made these decisions" was left unexplored (Fidler, 2023, p. 1318).

Over the last twenty years, distributed leadership has been considered the normative practice in primary schools – organisations which are perceived to embody a staff culture based on collegiality (Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011; Lumby, 2016). It can be defined as leadership practices which draw upon a combination of horizontal and vertical organisational structures, shared decision-making, and personal qualities as well as positional

roles (Bush, 2011). Primary school teachers are almost twice as likely to hold a leadership role than their secondary peers (DfE, 2023e). In smaller primary schools all teachers might be required to hold one or more leadership roles (Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011; Ofsted, 2023c). Informal staff networks may compensate for instances where a class teacher has insufficient expertise for their subject leadership role (Stein & Nelson, 2003) and distribution of leadership is therefore key to capacity building and sustainability of practice within schools (Ofsted, 2019a).

2.10.2 Subject leadership expertise

Lunn and Bishop (2002) argue that leadership expertise should encompass three broad areas: pedagogical content knowledge, subject content knowledge, and generic leadership skills. However, research conducted by Spillane and Hopkins (2013) found that different subjects result in different leadership behaviours; this means that subjects should not be perceived to be generic variables. Their research was, however, based on a comparison of primary English and mathematics subject leaders, and there has been no comparable research conducted in relation to leadership of the foundation subjects (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018).

Opportunities for class teachers to develop expertise in primary history leadership, however this may be defined, may be time-bound and affected by staff mobility. Questionnaires completed by five primary history subject leaders revealed that the award of the HA Quality Mark can merit staff promotion (Temple & Forrest, 2018). This may be because leadership of the foundation subjects is often perceived to be an early career step on the ladder towards the more desirable role of core subject leadership (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018).

2.10.3 Subject leadership agency

Critiques of distributed leadership models suggest that they produce a false perception of shared agency, which does not translate to the reality of the school workplace (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Normative approaches have therefore engendered a false dichotomy between distributed leadership and more formal transactional leadership models, when empirical evidence suggests "hybrid practice" in schools (Gronn, 2010, p. 70). Senior school leaders determine the degree of agency that subject leaders have to enact their role and also determine which subjects of the curriculum are prioritised (Alexander, 2013; Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018). This is the legacy of a culture of accountability which is hesitant to allow innovation from below (Ainsworth et al., 2022; Ball, 2003; Forde, 2010).

Equally, however, inexperienced subject leaders may seek support from the headteacher to define how to execute their role (Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005). Percival's (2018) research of primary history curriculum design found that senior leadership support was crucial in ensuring effective cross-subject connections. However, he acknowledged that headteachers could also choose to exert both an "enabling and a constraining role" over history subject status and enactment (Percival, 2018, p. 21). Support or resistance from the school headteacher was also found to be a factor in Fisher's (2022) research on whether teachers chose to use play-based pedagogies in Year 1 classes as part of pupil transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1. The extent to which primary headteachers may affect history subject leaders' capacity to be agentic in relation to curriculum decision-making has, however, been under-researched (Fidler, 2023).

A case-study in six Hong-Kong primary schools (Chi-Kin Lee et al., 2009) found that primary principals were more involved in the school curriculum than their secondary counterparts. The primary schools showed greater evidence of whole school cross-curricular themes which necessitated the involvement of the principal as a central pivot. The primary

curriculum leaders also demonstrated less authority in their role compared to secondary heads of department, requiring the involvement of the principal. However, the authors acknowledge socio-cultural factors which may contribute to these research findings, as Hong Kong society places a high value on work place harmony and an acceptance of power hierarchies (Chi-Kin Lee et al., 2009).

2.10.4 Wider school leadership contexts

Headteachers or principals may also lack agency over their school curriculum. Bush (2011) and Harris and Burn (2011) have questioned how 'free' any school or subject leader may be, due to the high degree of external governmental directives which are a feature of the English context. Ofsted inspection criteria also directly, and indirectly, influence school priorities, a phenomenon described by Perryman et al. (2018) as a type of post-panoptic compliance. An additional factor is the growth of school federations and multi-academy trusts in England; these additional managerial tiers beyond individual school level have blurred the boundaries of where leadership might begin or end (Ainsworth et al., 2022; de Nobile, 2018; Ehren & Perryman, 2018; Parker, 2017). Discussions of the factors that affect agency in relation to curriculum decision-making in primary history may therefore need to consider multiple sites of decision-making and extend beyond the teacher, the subject leader and the headteacher to encompass whole school systems and the structural, political and policy discourses that surround them (Priestley et al., 2021).

2.11 Conceptual framework of subject leader agency

The following diagram summarises the concepts, and the relationship between these concepts, that may affect subject leader agency to determine the content selection and content sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum.
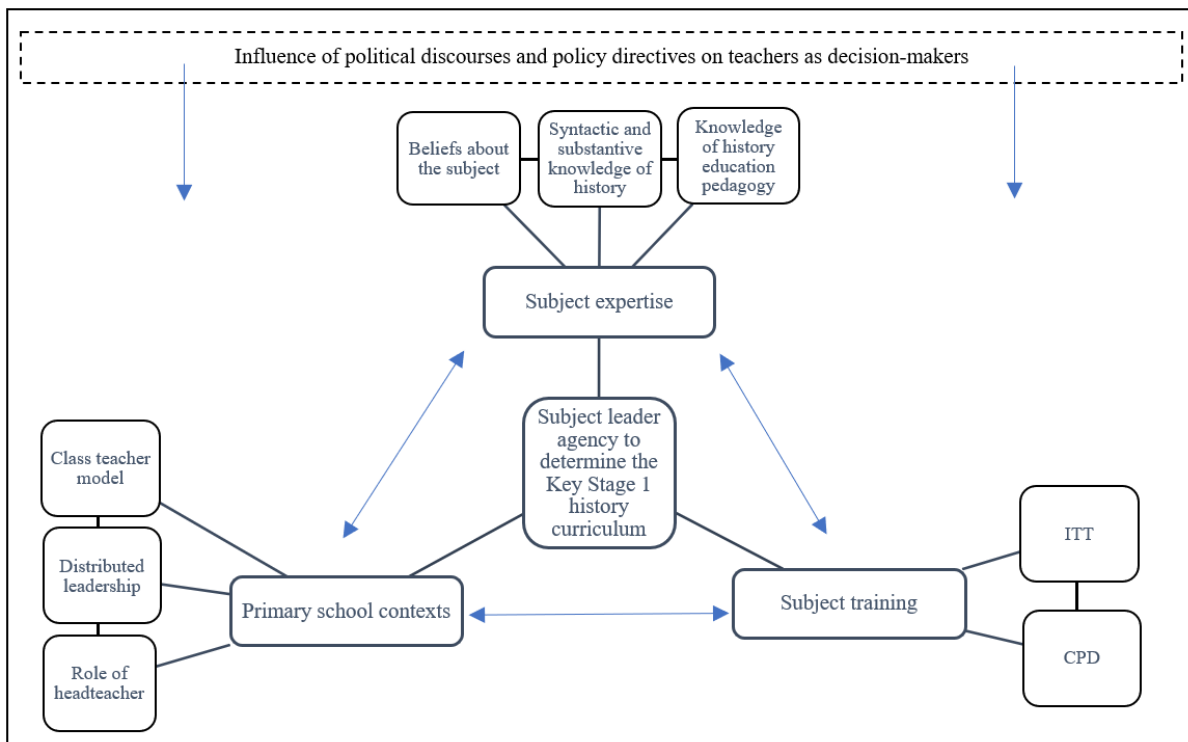
Figure 2.3 Conceptual framework of subject leader agency

Agency is achieved by teachers acting by means of their environment (Biesta et al., 2015). The interplay of factors affecting primary teacher subject expertise, opportunities for subject training and wider primary school contexts can facilitate and/or inhibit subject leaders' capacity to be agentic (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018). These factors are all shaped, directly or indirectly by wider political discourses and policy directives which determine teacher development, subject status and school priorities at primary level.

2.12   Summary and research questions

In a period where schools need to explicitly justify their curriculum intent to the school inspectorate (Ofsted, 2019b), determining a history curriculum for Key Stage 1 poses several issues for decision-makers. Schools, ostensibly, have considerable autonomy over content selection, yet the type of content which may be the most meaningful for learners is dependent

on different understandings of the nature and purpose of history. Curriculum sequencing is equally open-ended, with no established routes for progression in the concepts embedded in substantive knowledge, coupled with no clear content route from EYFS to Key Stage 2. The Key Stage 1 history curriculum may equally be influenced by teachers' perceptions of child maturation and/or their views about the importance of maintaining subject integrity. The little that is known about primary teachers' knowledge of history suggests that many lack expertise in the subject, with subject leadership often a transient role for which many staff are under-prepared. The extent to which subject leaders can exercise agency in respect to curriculum decision-making may also be complicated by the collegiate nature engendered by the class teacher model coupled with 'top-down' directives from senior school leaders.

In brief, in a key stage that has traditionally been under-researched, in a key stage with minimal curriculum guidance and in a context where history subject leaders have to justify their curriculum during high-stakes school inspections, we have a 'problematic' subject coupled with an inexpert professional body. These themes have therefore influenced the following research questions:

In schools considered to demonstrate exemplary provision for Key Stage 1 history,

- What are history subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence decision-making in relation to the content selection of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

- What are history subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence decision-making in relation to content sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

- What are history subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the content and sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

3   Methodology

This chapter begins by outlining my overall research paradigm and methodology, with a justification for an exploratory research design situated within an ontological and epistemological standpoint of constructivism and interpretivism. The second part of this chapter explains my approach to sampling and the criteria for my selection of participant schools. Also explained is my use of semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate method of data collection. The third part of this chapter explores my positionality as a researcher and ethical stance and processes adopted. I then consider my approach to data analysis; this encompasses a rationale for my adoption of an inductive approach to analysis, aimed at theory generation, and based upon constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014).

3.1   Research paradigm

Different assumptions underpin different research paradigms. Any researcher who chooses to research within a particular paradigm makes their selection based upon the knowledge they consider worth knowing and the extent to which they believe this knowledge can be either captured, constructed or contested. Given the complex nature of the social world and human interactions, I agree that educational research can be "messy" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 3) and "the waters are far muddier than suggested" by distinct paradigms (May, 2001, p. 17). However, exploring my ontological positioning and subsequent epistemological stance – whether as a mediator of knowledge (post-positivism), a creator of knowledge (interpretivism), or as a critic of the knowledge base (critical theory) – does bring some conceptual clarity to my overall research approach. It also helps to contextualise and justify my subsequent decision-making in regard to methods of both collecting and analysing data.

My approach to this research study is situated within an ontology of constructivism and an epistemological standpoint of interpretivism. Constructivism is based on the view that

the social world is constructed by people's actions and perceptions (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivism rejects beliefs that knowledge of this world can be an objective reality; rather it views knowledge as nominal and provisional. Research situated within this approach should therefore be concerned with acknowledging subjectivity (Punch & Oancea, 2014) and understanding complex meanings, processes and patterns of human behaviour (Coe et al., 2017).

This paradigm best complemented my research focus. I was not concerned with attempting to ascertain the efficacy of Key Stage 1 history curriculum enactment (this had already been established as a pre-requisite for the sample) but rather with subject leaders' perceptions of the curriculum decision-making process. These perceptions were, *per se,* subjective as they drew upon a range of beliefs about the subject, the child and the Key Stage 1 phase overall. Teachers' views of their agency to contribute to the curriculum decision-making process also drew upon beliefs about their professional role(s) and working environment. Moreover, any interpretation of a prior curriculum decision-making process is retrospective, by definition, and therefore filtered through the lens of the present. Such interpretations were context or time-bound, i.e. dependent upon a teacher's role, position or status in the school. This knowledge was therefore partial and provisional, not least in my own, subjective interpretations of the perceptions that I elicited.

Given my intention to seek the views of history subject leaders, my research necessitated interaction with others. This interaction was not, however, perceived as any "impediment" to the research (May, 2001, p. 15). An interpretivist approach acknowledges that a researcher cannot be independent of the research context in the (co)construction of knowledge (Coe et al., 2017; Denscombe, 2017). Rather, I brought my own theoretical and experiential understandings of history education and Key Stage 1 teaching and learning to the

research contexts, understandings that will be explored in my discussion of researcher positionality. Equally, interpretivism can also be characterised by research participants' exercising agency. A shared construction of knowledge acknowledged that my research participants (in their responses and interpretation of the research focus) were active makers of meaning, rather than passive objects and recipients of research (Cohen et al., 2018). Unlike a (post)-positivist approach to research, I have no claim to establish any correspondence between a presumed 'reality' and my representation of this 'reality'.

Nor did I intend to contest the knowledge base itself. Similar to the interpretivist paradigm, critical theory acknowledges that "realities are social constructed entities" (Scotland, 2012, p. 13). However, it attempts to go beyond this. It aims to critique the structures that have brought the social world into being and to uncover what and whose interests are at play (Cohen et al., 2018). In adopting a critical realist perspective, I would be seeking to question and render explicit the historical, socio-cultural, political hierarchies and frameworks that have shaped the construction of the Key Stage 1 curriculum. My position, however, was to explore curriculum decision-making, not to interrogate the question of the knowledge base itself.

However, in common with approaches to critical theory, I do have some agenda for change (Cohen et al., 2018). I hope my research will shed light on an area of the history curriculum which has been traditionally ignored and in doing so enhance our knowledge in this area. My deliberate focus on schools that have achieved a Gold Quality Mark for history aims to illuminate best practice in relation to Key Stage 1 history curriculum design. I hope therefore that dissemination of my research findings will contribute towards school improvement in the future.

3.2   Research methodology

A research design aims to connect the research questions with the data (Punch & Oancea, 2014). My original intention had been to focus on a case study of different schools. This is because case study is grounded in real-life situations (Yin, 2018) and is therefore appropriate for research centred at individual school level (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). However, while case studies are particularly valuable in instances where the knowledge base is emergent (Punch & Oancea, 2014), I decided that a more general exploratory research design was ultimately more appropriate. This was in line with Flick's (2018, p. 600) view that where "fields or issues are rather new and unfamiliar" there should be attempts to understand them in an open way. Adopting a more exploratory approach enabled me to gain more perspectives from more school contexts. This was beneficial given that there is little extant research in this field. This approach also gave greater latitude for generating analytic generalisations as there was less emphasis on the bounded contexts that characterise case study research (Yin, 2018).

3.3   Sampling

Curriculum construction is complex, and school leadership practices are highly dependent on contexts, such as school type and/or staffing structures (Ainsworth et al., 2022; Ehren & Perryman, 2018). I therefore decided that these potential complexities would be best served by exploring a number of selected school settings. My selection of settings was multiple and instrumental (Stake, 1994): multiple, because the intention was to centre my research with different primary subject leaders; instrumental, because the schools were selected to provide different insights of exemplary leadership and curriculum practice. My focus was therefore to explicitly explore the research questions within and across different settings.

3.3.1 Identifying criteria for the sample

My intention to focus on settings where practice was considered exemplary necessitated identifying a benchmark for school selection. Secondary schools may demonstrate engagement by the number of students choosing history for post-optional study and excellence by outcomes in public examinations; neither criteria are applicable to the primary sector. A range of Standard Assessment Tests are statutory in England for primary pupils, but these are exclusive to the core subjects of English and mathematics. Ofsted school inspection reports may grade a school as 'outstanding', but these reports lack sufficient detail at subject-specific level. Hence my decision to focus on schools which have been awarded the HA Gold Quality Mark award for history. Selecting schools which had attained this benchmark ensured that all participants had been externally assessed as demonstrating outstanding practice in primary history. This selection, based on a particular characteristic, can therefore be categorised as both purposive and homogenous sampling (Creswell, 2012).

3.3.2 The Quality Mark accreditation process

The HA Quality Mark is a criteria-referenced assessment. Upon making an application to the Historical Association, schools have a period of twelve months to produce a portfolio of evidence across four areas: learning and teaching; leadership; curriculum; enrichment (HA, 2018). An assessor, appointed by the Historical Association, reviews the submitted school portfolio and then conducts a half-day school visit. This captures additional evidence through lesson observations, and interviews with pupils, teachers and senior leaders. Based on the evidence submitted and observed, a grade is awarded (either no award, Silver or Gold).

In order for a primary school to achieve a Gold award, they need to demonstrate the highest achievement across a majority of all four areas. Curriculum, the focus for this research, is assessed using the following criteria:

'This quality is concerned with the coherence, logic and appropriateness of the curriculum in the context of the school…

…Gold curriculum: a well-designed, coherent and progressive curriculum that considers knowledge, understanding and processes/methods in a coherent way that is appreciated and enjoyed by different types of pupil across the whole school cohort. Explicit focus is given to the statutory requirements as well as the needs of all pupils and the heritage of the pupils within the school and, more broadly, in the region and nation. A strong focus on inclusivity. A good, balanced coverage of different periods and geographical scales, including local/regional, national, European and global. Pupils make a wide range of links and connections and can draw meaningful similarities and contrasts across different periods, locations and themes they have previously covered.' (HA, 2018).

While these criteria are subjective and reflect a particular interpretation of outstanding curriculum provision, there is currently no other national benchmark for assessing the quality of a primary school's history curriculum. The Historical Association also has processes in place to ensure internal consistency across awards given. All awards are provisional until they have been moderated by a sub-assessor; the team of assessors also attend an annual standardisation meeting to discuss, and ensure parity across, judgments (HA, 2019). All schools selected for the sample had therefore been subject to the same quality assurance mechanisms.

3.3.3   Refining the sample

The register of Quality Mark schools is publicly available on the Historical Association website. The award is valid for three years and the list of schools is updated monthly. This means that the register is in a constant state of flux. At the point of identifying a potential sample (end of 2021), there were 106 primary schools in receipt of a Quality Mark award, of which 51 had been awarded Gold.

In order to set parameters for the study, I decided to focus on those schools that had received the Gold Quality Mark award from January 2020 to December 2021. Although this narrowed the number of eligible schools, leadership of the foundation subjects is often a

stepping stone to leadership of a core subject (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018) and achievement of the HA Quality Mark can, itself, secure staff promotion (Temple & Forrest, 2018). A sample drawn from settings that had more recently been awarded the Quality Mark would attempt to mitigate any issues in relation to staff mobility while also ensuring a more recent focus on best practice in schools.

Narrowing the sample to schools awarded the Quality Mark from January 2020 would also ensure that schools remained on the register not just for the duration of data collection, but also throughout the process of data analysis. However, taking this approach reduced the sample to seventeen schools. Given my focus on the state sector in England, one independent school was removed, reducing the sample to sixteen. An initial scoping exercise which involved exploring the websites of these schools revealed that three settings belonged to the same federation. These schools had an identical curriculum for history, which further reduced the potential sample to fourteen. Of the fourteen schools contacted in April 2022, only four schools initially responded to express an interest in taking part. Of these, only two schools went on to complete the requisite consent forms and participate in the research.

Given the low response rate, I therefore extended the scope of the sample to schools that had been awarded the Gold Quality Mark from January 2022 to July 2022. This added an additional sixteen schools to the sample. Both sample sets of primary schools were contacted in July 2022. Four schools from the additional sample responded, of whom three schools completed the requisite consent forms and went on to participate in the research.

My original intention had been to select six schools which had designed their Key Stage 1 history curriculum in different ways. I envisaged potential differences in terms of content selection, content sequencing and overall curriculum design. Participant recruitment can be difficult in closed settings such as schools (Silverman, 2022) and this difficulty was

potentially exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon school priorities and staff workload. However, a preliminary exercise which involved exploring the websites of prospective participants suggested that a sample population of five schools would provide enough scope to explore differences in Key Stage 1 curriculum enactment and I am reassured by Silverman's (2024) view that, in qualitative research, more data does not necessarily equate to better data.

The five participant schools are listed below with pseudonyms given for the school name and subject leader. As the list of schools in receipt of a Quality Mark award is publicly available on the HA website, other potential identifying characteristics of each school, such as the number of pupils on roll, type of school (maintained or academy) or faith designation have been deliberately withheld. Where a particular school characteristic did emerge as pertinent to the research findings, for example in relation to the pupil demographic, this is discussed within the relevant chapter of the research findings.

Number	School name	Subject leader	Year of QM Gold award
1	Ash school	Alex	2020
2	Beech school	Beth	2021
3	Elm school	Emma	2022
4	Fir school	Freya	2022
5	Maple school	Max	2022

Table 1 List of participant schools

3.3.4   Research gatekeepers

As the research was intended to take place beyond my own workplace, it was necessary to identify two gatekeepers who could facilitate access to the research settings

(Creswell, 2012). The first was the Historical Association, the second, the schools themselves.

I have a long-standing connection to the Historical Association. I am chair of the primary committee, an Honorary Fellow and a trustee of the organisation. More crucially, I am a Quality Mark assessor. I therefore had 'insider' status which gave me the necessary connections to secure support for my research. I was also an 'outsider' as I was not in the employment of the Historical Association nor employed by any of the participant schools.

The support of the Historical Association provided me with access to school settings. For example, as I was a Quality Mark assessor, they were willing to email named subject leaders directly on my behalf. They twice emailed schools to solicit support for my research (for an example email, see Appendix 5). Their actions undoubtedly lent credibility to my research. However, relying upon an intermediary can also prove an impediment for accessing a research setting (Striepe & Cunningham, 2022). I was dependent upon the goodwill of the Historical Association and they took time to ascertain that any data sharing was compliant with their own GDPR policy. This reduced some of my agency as a researcher to act independently which delayed the start of the data collection process.

Given that the list of Quality Mark schools is publicly available, an alternative approach would have been to email schools directly via the general contact details available on school websites. However, as a Quality Mark assessor, it felt appropriate to be transparent to the Historical Association, from the outset, about the focus of my research; it felt equally appropriate to be transparent to potential participant schools, from the outset, about my role as an assessor. Acknowledging the terms upon which a researcher gains the support of gatekeepers is a key aspect of qualitative research (Silverman, 2024) and my 'insider/outsider' positionality will be explored further in the ethics section of this chapter.

3.4   Data collection

Exploratory research is a research strategy, rather than a particular technique (Punch & Oancea, 2014) and data was collected via the use of semi-structured interviews. This method generated data, which was rich, in-depth and contextualised (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2002) and therefore complemented my ontological and epistemological stance.

3.4.1   Pilot studies

The pilot study trialled the use of semi-structured interviews to ensure it was both feasible and desirable as a method of data collection. Two pilot studies were conducted: one in February 2022 and one in April 2022. These pilot studies also helped me to reflect upon and refine my own emerging skills as an interviewer.

The first pilot interview took place online with a primary history subject leader whom I knew through mutual association with the Historical Association, and who had been awarded the Gold Quality Mark in 2019. I asked the interviewee a fairly detailed set of questions which were closely aligned with the Key Stage 1 programme of study for history (DfE, 2013). There is a balance to be struck between questions that are overly prescriptive and overly general (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and this first pilot study taught me that my questions were too weighted towards the former. I felt the interview lacked flexibility and therefore fluency. I also did not share the questions in advance and this approach did not seem to elicit the depth or ease of response I was seeking. I felt that I was putting the subject leader 'on the spot'. It made me consider the potential benefit of sharing the questions in advance of the interviews.

I had also originally envisaged interviewing the subject leader and a member of the school senior leadership team (SLT) to elicit multiple perceptions of the curriculum decision-

making process at each school. The subject leader explained that he was not sure whom best to approach, the Key Stage 1 phase leader or the Assistant Headteacher, and seemed hesitant to approach either. His dilemma confirmed some of the complexity of decision-making in primary schools, drawn from the extant literature (e.g. Hammersley Fletcher et al., 2018). I realised that I could not be sure of eliciting equivalent voices across the sample. Even a presumed simple solution to interview the history subject leader and the Key Stage 1 phase leader would not work if an interviewee held both roles simultaneously or if the school did not have phase leaders as part of their leadership structure. I decided therefore to focus the data collection solely upon the perceptions of the history subject leader. With hindsight, this decision proved sensible given that two of the history subject leaders who went on to participate in the research were also members of their school SLT.

I therefore conducted a second pilot study. Again, this was with a primary history subject leader whom I knew through links with the Historical Association. This subject leader had not engaged with the Quality Mark process but delivered primary history CPD on behalf of a local authority. For the second pilot study, more open-ended and flexible questions were used. This proved more successful as I felt it provided the interviewee with greater ownership of the interview process. This, in turn, seemed to engender a greater sense of balance in the interviewer/interviewee relationship. I also provided the subject leader with a broad set of questions in advance of the interview. As part of a debriefing discussion, the subject leader shared that it had been valuable to think through his potential answers in advance of our meeting and this approach also seemed to provide me with a more thoughtful set of responses. I therefore decided to share the questions in advance for subsequent data collection.

Finally, both subject leaders who took part in the pilot studies were also full-time class teachers. I interviewed them online at the end of a busy day of teaching. They were both still in their classrooms, clearly tired and I felt acutely aware that they had given up their time to speak to me. This awareness of their professional (over)load, particularly during a time when schools and staff were recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, made me mindful of the need to be responsive to interviewees' requests when arranging the interviews. BERA (2018) guidelines are explicit about the requirement for researchers to attempt to minimise the impact of their research on participants. I therefore decided to offer participants the choice of two shorter interviews: one based on their role of the subject leader and the second, based on the school Key Stage 1 curriculum.

3.4.2   Preparation for interviews

There is a statutory requirement for schools in England – both maintained schools and academies – to publish information about the content of the school curriculum on their school websites (DfE, 2023f; DfE, 2023g). While not constituting a formal part of the data collection or analysis, this information was accessed prior to each interview. As this information was situated within each school context, it also further complemented a qualitative, in-depth research design (Charmaz, 2014).

As a stimulus activity, it enabled me to become with familiar with each school context and curriculum outline, which freed up time during the subsequent interviews to focus upon the decision-making intent and processes underlying the curriculum. In brief, by establishing the 'what' of the curriculum beforehand, I had greater time to explore the 'why'. This approach complemented the data I subsequently collected from interviews (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016), by revealing how staff curriculum decision-making processes had been translated or reflected in the designed curriculum. This preparatory work also enabled me to

identify any differences between the published Key Stage 1 curriculum and the information presented during interviews, being mindful of differences between the intended and the lived organisation of the school curriculum (Spillane, 2005). Finally, it enabled me to quickly develop my rapport with each subject leader, as I could, when relevant, identify and draw upon any similarities with my own professional experiences in primary education.

3.4.3   Interviews

Anticipating that different schools and different subject leaders would yield different insights, the interviews were semi-structured. This provided opportunities for flexible, responsive questions (Appendix 6). The use of open-ended questions ensured that participants were not forced into particular "response possibilities" (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). This strategy had been successfully implemented during the second pilot study.

My positionality as researcher in response to each participant is explored later in this chapter, but semi-structured interviews can also establish a greater balance between the researcher and the participant, as they provide space for discussion and clarification (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2002). Aligned within my interpretivist stance, this acknowledged the interrelationship between the construction of knowledge and human interaction (Kvale, 1996). One limitation of interviews as a research method is that knowledge becomes filtered through the views of the participants (Creswell, 2012). However, this was advantageous as it was precisely their perceptions that constituted the knowledge. Overall, the very process of giving participants time and space to articulate and reflect upon their views of curriculum decision-making confirmed the value of interviews as a means of eliciting rich data (Charmaz, 2014).

3.4.4   Data collection process

Data collection from different schools ran parallel to each other, as opposed to being organised sequentially. This was a pragmatic decision based on the need to be flexible in negotiating access to schools alongside conducting my full-time professional role. There was, however, a deliberate intention to be timebound within the same academic year (Punch & Oancea, 2014). This was an attempt to ensure that any external influences, such as national directives, were invariant across all participant schools. In the event, and as a consequence of the delay in beginning data collection, the interviews were conducted over a three month period between 13th June 2022 and 6th September 2022.

The interviews were conducted remotely using a virtual classroom facility (Blackboard Collaborate). The use of an online method of communication perhaps engendered an aspect of artificiality (Flick, 2018). However, more recent critiques of online methods of interviewing tend to refer to the potential limitations of asynchronous data collection (e.g. email exchanges), rather than synchronous verbal exchange (Flick, 2023). Due to technological advances, online methods of data collection have become increasingly common in recent years (Flick, 2018; Punch & Oancea, 2014) and teachers' familiarity and ease with virtual methods of communication have been hastened by the move to remote teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

The use of a virtual classroom also meant that audio/video capture technology was easily available, removing the need for additional software. And conducting online interviews was advantageous in facilitating access to distanced settings, given that the five schools were located across four different regions of England. Three subject leaders chose to be interviewed from their school, both during and at the end of the working day. Two subject leaders chose for interviews to take place during the summer holidays, and joined online from

their homes. The latter served to expedite the data collection and would not have been possible in the workplace due to summer school closures, a further indication of the convenience of a virtual interview.

3.5   Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the Institute of Education, University of Reading (Appendix 1). Participants – the Historical Association, headteachers and subject leaders – were provided with all information regarding the purpose and nature of the study, ensuring that their voluntary consent was informed. They were also informed of their right of withdrawal at any point during the research (Appendices 2-4). This was verbally reiterated to each subject leader at the start of every interview. Following the interviews, written transcripts were shared with each interviewee. This type of member checking not only establishes confidence in the collected data, but also constituted an additional form of good ethical practice (Mero-Jaffe, 2011).

All data collected were anonymised and pseudonyms for each school and interviewee have been used. Data was stored securely using password-protected software and any identifying features for schools or subject leaders removed from all documentation (BERA, 2018). For example, the names of local heritage sites mentioned by interviewees have been redacted from interview transcripts as this may indicate the location of a school. As part of the process of ensuring informed consent, all participants were notified that it may be possible to identify their school given the online register of Quality Mark schools. This potential issue has informed some of my approach to limited data sharing in relation to the characteristics of each school. However, as the award is only valid for three years, any attempt to identify a school via the register is time-bound.

3.5.1 Researcher positionality

Ethical research extends beyond acquiring institutional approval (Floyd & Arthur, 2012; Toy-Cronin, 2018). Any research conducted in its natural setting poses the issue of disturbing or disrupting individuals on site (Creswell, 2012). Preparation for entering a research field, whether face-to face or online, therefore involves being reflective on our own role as researcher and how our social or professional identities might produce or reproduce structural inequalities (BERA, 2018; Chavez, 2008).

At the start of the research, I had not envisaged working with schools or subject leaders with whom I had any pre-existing connections. However, of the five participants, four subject leaders had a prior or current relationship to me. These are outlined in the table below:

School name	Subject leader	Researcher Positionality
Ash school	Alex	The subject leader is a member of the Historical Association primary committee, of which I am chair.
Beech school	Beth	No connection.
Elm school	Emma	I was the Quality Mark assessor for this school. I had conducted a half-day visit to this school as part of the assessment process.
Fir school	Freya	The school is a partnership school for my ITT programme. I had visited this school once as part of a trainee mentoring visit. The subject leader is a former student of my ITT institution, whom I supervised for their undergraduate dissertation.
Maple school	Max	The subject leader had previously written an article for *Primary History* journal which I had reviewed prior to publication.

Table 2 Researcher positionality to participant subject leaders and schools

Silverman (2022, p. 333) suggests the value and convenience of drawing on an "existing circle of contacts" in order for researchers to gain access to closed settings such as schools. I had not set out to work with subject leaders 'known to me'. However, the primary

history community in England is a small one, and perhaps it is not unexpected that some of those who chose to participate in the research did so, perhaps in part, because I was 'known to them'.

These prior connections were dissimilar from one another, but one commonality was that I held a position of higher status, whether as committee chair, assessor, teacher or reviewer. These multiple roles undoubtedly lent me a degree of credibility and status in the eyes of the research participants. However, while acknowledging that any relationship between interviewer and interviewee can never be equal (Kvale, 1996), the interviewees also had credibility and status. This was because my sampling criteria established 'success' as a pre-requisite for participation. To that extent, as both researcher and researched we all shared a degree of expertise in relation to primary history. And the purpose of the research focus – which was made explicit as part of pre-research information sharing – was to explore, collate and disseminate this expertise.

My status as researcher also extended to my choice of data collection, as the very process of selecting questions and conducting an interview is an exercise in power (Kvale, 1996). However, the focus of my research was exploring curriculum intentions, and there was no requirement for any subject leader to have to demonstrate or justify the impact of their Key Stage 1 curriculum on pupil outcomes. This was made transparent to all participants, given my decision to share the questions in advance of the interviews. The choice of semi-structured interviews also attempted to distribute the exercise of 'power' as there was space for participants to shape aspects of the discussion (Silverman, 2022).

While mindful of these power imbalances in conducting the research, my former and current identities did also help to develop rapport with interviewees and facilitated my understanding of their individual contexts, perspectives and experiences (Kvale, 1996; Toy-

Cronin, 2018). Until 2016, I worked in a range of schools as a class teacher, history subject leader, phase leader, and senior leader. As a white female, I fit the demographic of a 'typical' primary educator in England (DfE, 2023h) and I shared the same professional language as my interviewees. I brought to the research a wealth of 'insider' knowledge of primary schools. Sharing common experiences was helpful in building and consolidating relationships during the interviews. For example, during one interview I acknowledged my own previous challenges of organising a cyclical curriculum for mixed-aged primary classes. In another interview, I shared some of my own experiences of working in a school of religious character.

As an 'outsider', I was not embedded within any school setting. Due to my work in ITT primary history education and as a Quality Mark assessor, I regularly encounter different school curricula based on the National Curriculum programmes of study for history. These documents also have a range of authors: for example, school-devised, multi-academy trust authored or commercially produced. I am therefore familiar with different approaches to content selection, content sequencing and overall curriculum design and am not wedded to any particular stance.

Reflexivity, an interrogation of one's own values, assumptions and role in the study, is an important aspect of interpretive qualitative research, given the emphasis placed upon acknowledging the role of the researcher in the co-construction of knowledge (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It is perhaps relatively easy to establish where some aspects of my identity have influenced my actions: a decision to research an aspect of Key Stage 1 history education seems, for example, an obvious corollary for someone who completed an undergraduate degree in history followed by a PGCE in lower primary (3-7 years). The impact of other aspects of my identity, such as age, gender, social class, and professional role(s) are perhaps more difficult to disentangle from my actions or inactions. However, I

acknowledge that I could not avoid bringing myself to the initial choice of data set and to the

data itself (Creswell, 2012). Where I have been able to potentially detect my influence upon

interviewee's response, for example, their comments in reference to the Quality Mark

process, I have acknowledged this in the relevant sections of my research findings.

Ultimately, while a binary distinction between 'insider/outsider' researcher can be

perceived as reductive, I agree with Toy-Cronin (2018) that these labels do provide a

framework within which to reflect and be reflexive on one's position as a researcher in

relation to both the research context and the research participants. I also agree that these

labels or identities are fluid and may change dependent on time, place or context during the

research and subsequent data analysis (Toy-Cronin, 2018). Although ostensibly an

independent researcher, I was conscious of the risk of incurring reputational damage for the

Historical Association, had the research not been conducted appropriately. And in particular

relation to Fir School, a partnership school of my ITT programme, I was also conscious of the

risk of incurring any reputational damage for my workplace. To this extent, some aspects of

my identity were not fixed but could be seen as provisional on successful relationship

building in the execution of the data collection.

3.6   Data analysis

My conceptual framework for data analysis is broadly based on constructivist grounded

theory (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56); this aims to develop "inductive abstract analytic categories

through systematic data analysis". Grounded theory analysis is distinct from grounded theory

as an overall research methodology (Punch, 2014), but they share a common purpose in their

focus on theory generation drawn from empirical phenomena. A constructivist approach

(Charmaz, 2014) has a central premise of acknowledging the role of the researcher in the

process of data generation and analysis, and this complemented my epistemological stance based on knowledge construction.

3.6.1 *Data analysis process*

Data analysis and data collection are not distinct within qualitative research, and data analysis therefore began from the start (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was evident throughout the interview process for as soon as I began to listen, I began to process information (Coleman, 2012). This was evident in the recorded video footage which revealed my use of non-verbal gestures, such as nodding to show affirmation (Silverman, 2022). It was also evident in the transcripts which documented flexible, responsive questions and prompts (for an example, see Appendix 7).

Voice recordings of the interviews were transcribed electronically using a paid-for transcription service. Although a 'perfect' transcript is unattainable, they intentionally included non-verbal communication, such as hesitations, as this can be as revealing as the spoken word (Silverman, 2024). Where data was occasionally inaudible, the use of video footage was invaluable in enabling more accurate transcription. The process of close reading and double-checking the transcripts formed an important part of my analysis as researcher and was therefore not merely an administrative task (Kvale, 1996). This initial reading and rereading of the data not only helped to clarify the particular, but also enabled me to gain a sense of the whole (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Constructivist grounded theory is both an approach and also a process for developing theory through the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2014). Saldana (2016, p. 4) argues that coding is, *per se*, an "interpretative act" on the part of the researcher, which again, supported my epistemological and ontological stance. A three-stage coding process was adopted that moved from low-inference initial codes to high-inference theoretical codes:

a) Initial coding to engage with and define data

b) Focused coding to identify the most significant or salient codes and to develop analytical categories based on conceptual similarity

c) Theoretical coding to develop relationships between analytic categories

(adapted from Charmaz, 2014).

The advantage of this approach was how it enabled me to identify and refine patterns and themes whilst also providing a systematic and clear route through the data. An overview of the relationship between my selection of initial, focused and theoretical coding is provided below:

Initial coding	Focused coding	Theoretical coding
Viewing diversity as positive Moving away from W/B/M curriculum Adapting SOW to make more diverse Choosing to include more women Choosing to include more women (non W) Seeing tension between local and diverse history Using sig indiv for more diversity Choosing more diverse content (ethnicity) Linking diversity to school ethos	Intrinsic purpose for diversity	Future-focused: curriculum as window
Addressing stereotypes (gender) Addressing stereotypes (ethnicity)	Extrinsic purpose for diversity	
Developing source work Developing subst know Developing discp concepts Developing perspectives Developing enquiry	Intrinsic purpose of subject	
Seeing purpose of history - debate Choosing people as role models - dispositions	Extrinsic purpose of subject	
Selecting content familiar to pupil experiences Viewing recent past as more relatable Viewing recent past as more relevant Viewing locality as more relatable Viewing locality as more relevant	Making content accessible for pupils	Present-focused: curriculum as mirror
Selecting content based on pupil interests Selecting content based on pupil engagement	Making content of interest to pupils	
Wanting to link content to pupil demographic Aligning content with pupil demographic Adapting SOW to align with pupil demographic Wanting children to see themselves in the curriculum	Responding to pupil demographic	

Viewing physical experiences as important Using multi-sensory pedagogy Viewing stories as child-friendly pedagogy Viewing some content as fixed Linking pupil age to sensitive content Adapting sensitive content to pupil age	Acknowledging child maturation	
Making links with EYFS pedagogy – story Making links with EYFS pedagogy – child-centred Making links with EYFS – content	Backward connections	Vertical connections: curriculum as staircase
Making links with KS2 – content Making links with KS2 – vocab Making links with KS2 – concepts Making links with KS2 – chronology Aiming for gender balance across KS1/KS2 Trying to achieve balance Avoiding repetition with other subjects	Forward connections	
Viewing xc as positive Viewing xc as negative Maintaining subject integrity	Views on cross-subject connections	Horizontal connections: curriculum as bridge
Exploiting history for other subjects Exploiting other subjects for history Linking to English – story Linking to geog – content Linking to geog – skills Linking to geog - concepts Linking to other subjects	Making cross-subject connections	
Beginning Year 1 with recent past Beginning Year 1 with personal history Beginning Year 1 with local history Moving from recent to distant past Moving from self to family to others Moving from local to distant Linking personal history to others Sequencing based on seasons Seeing mixed age classes as problematic	From known to unknown	Sequencing as a range of scales
Continuing EYFS pedagogy into Y1 aut Continuing EYFS content into Y1 aut Continuing Y2 content into Y3	Sequencing forwards and backwards	Phase transition
Identifying progression in enquiry Identifying progression in discp know Identifying progression in discp know - sources Identifying progression in subs know Identifying progression in subs concepts Viewing local history as more difficult for teachers	Sequencing for subject progression	Progression in history
Viewing content as interchangeable	Viewing content as interchangeable	

Viewing past education as influential + Viewing past education as influential – Identifying passion for history	Educational influences	Past influencing present
Viewing past roles as influential + Viewing past roles as influential –	Professional influences	
Reflecting on need for CPD - capacity Reflecting on need for CPD - knowledge	Identifying limitations	Developing agency through CPD
Valuing generic leadership CPD Valuing external history CPD Valuing bespoke CPD Valuing MAT CPD	Accessing CPD	
Valuing HA Seeing QM as improving Seeing QM as proving	Quality Assuring	
Liaising with class teachers Making decisions collectively Viewing MAT history group positively Seeing school ethos as supportive Valuing pupil voice	Working collaboratively	Workplace collegiality
Wanting curriculum to be best for pupils Wanting curriculum to be best for pupils/teachers Changing wider contexts Seeing content selection as ongoing process	Ongoing curriculum co-construction	
Questioning SL as 'middle management' Negotiating with class teachers Compromising with class teachers Seeing self as decision-maker Asserting authority as SL Viewing HT as facilitator Seeing HT as decision-maker	Navigating school hierarchies	

Table 3 Relationship between initial, focused and theoretical codes

Having considered the use of software packages that can support the process of qualitative data analysis, I made the decision to code the data by hand. As a personal preference, I felt this made the data more 'tangible' and such an approach was also manageable, given the small sample size of participants. The interview transcripts were first coded line by line, a process which reduces key words or phrases into units of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, I agree with Miles et al., (2020, p. 12) in their preference

for the term data "condensation" rather than reduction, as it does not suggest that data is weakened or lost during this process.

A distinct feature of grounded theory analysis is that initial coding, whilst low inference, should attempt to generate theory from the outset (for an example, see Appendix 7). This is because initial coding draws on the use of gerunds which focuses the researcher's attention upon processes, rather than static description (Charmaz, 2014). This process is iterative and is a 'persistent process' of checking and comparing data. This constant comparative method enabled similarities and differences to be drawn within and across the data sets (Harding, 2013). I kept a research journal which documented my thoughts and responses to each subject leaders' responses (for an example, see Appendix 8). Interviewees' responses, based on conceptual similarity, were then compared across the sample (for an example, see Appendix 9).

Theory 'saturation' occurs when a researcher cannot determine any new insights to support their theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). I found it difficult to give myself permission to stop coding; I had to remember that as there was no 'right way', by definition, there must also be no 'wrong way'. Once I had established this confidence in the final stage of theoretical coding, I could then begin to outline and frame my findings which are set out in the next three chapters.

While grounded theory analysis is premised upon theory generation (rather than verification), one can only begin research with an open mind, not a blank one (Denscombe, 2014). When analysing the data I was aware of Blumer's idea of sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1969 cited in Charmaz, 2014), which explains how data analysis will be informed by concepts and theories that have emerged from earlier reading.

For example, through the process of theoretical coding, I established a distinction between curriculum decision-making based upon perceptions of the child's present and curriculum decision-making based upon perceptions of the child's future. This struck me as redolent of Style's (1988) view of curriculum as a reflecting mirror and a revealing window. And it was Style's curriculum model which subsequently formed the basis from which I categorised the factors informing content selection for the Key Stage 1 history curriculum.

Equally, when exploring the processes of subject leader decision-making, the issue of teacher agency became increasingly foregrounded. While other theoretical frameworks associated with curriculum-making – such as distributed leadership or the sites of curriculum decision-making – were helpful, neither of these theories or models seemed to accommodate the importance of past experiences (both positive and negative) which began to emerge from data analysis. Biesta et al.'s (2015) ecological approach to teacher agency, which, in part, acknowledges the temporality of agency, provided therefore a more appropriate way to frame my analysis and subsequent findings.

3.7   Research credibility and dependability

Within qualitative data analysis the issue of validity is a contested term: it can be perceived as an attempt to 'wear the costume' of quantitative research in the search for an objective truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Seeking validity may also be self-defeating, as the more one pursues claims to validity, the more one needs to provide further validation (Kvale, 2008). Credibility, by contrast, rejects claims of an objective validity, and is more concerned with processes which establish confidence in research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This acknowledges the subjectivity inherent to qualitative research and does not claim certainty, but rather seeks consensus (Pring, 2015).

Qualitative research is credible through the use of an appropriate methodology aligned with appropriate methods and sampling, ethical ways of working and a systematic approach to data collection and analysis (Silverman, 2024). Credibility is therefore embedded and threaded throughout the whole study. For example, conducting the two pilot studies justified the use of semi-structured interviews as a feasible approach to data collection. Transcription of interviews was undertaken carefully with the deliberate inclusion of non-verbal features, such as hesitations (Silverman, 2024). The interview transcripts were sent to each interviewee following transcription; no amendments, additions or deletions were requested by any participant, and this further established confidence in the data produced (Creswell, 2012).

Silverman (2024) argues that credibility can also be established by presenting interview data using verbatim accounts, rather than creating an additional tier of a researcher's reconstruction of those accounts. In the following chapters where I outline the research findings, I have made the voices of the participants explicit through the use of italics. Although decontextualized from the interview transcripts, this goes beyond the inclusion of "note-worthy quotes" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 194) as their authentic voices are foregrounded throughout.

Establishing the reliability of research findings is an equally contested notion within qualitative research given the unique conditions of the social world (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). However, I have attempted to establish that my research is dependable by using a systematic and rigorous approach to data analysis based upon constructivist grounded analysis (Charmaz, 2014), an approach which complements my overall research paradigm and methodology. I have made my use of this approach explicit and transparent throughout. This goes beyond outlining the steps taken, as it also includes acknowledging the impact of my

own positionality at all stages of the research process, including my relationship to the five research participants.

3.8   Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined my overall research paradigm and methodology, with a justification for my choice of exploratory research design, approach to sampling, data collection and analysis. Although this chapter has outlined this decision-making process step by step, these decisions were all interconnected to complement my overall qualitative research design and are therefore best understood as a whole.

The next three chapters set out the findings that emerged in response to each research question. Chapter 4 outlines the findings in relation to subject leaders' perceptions of the factors informing the content selection of their Key Stage 1 history curriculum. Chapter 5 outlines the findings in relation to subject leaders' perceptions of the factors informing the content sequencing of their Key Stage 1 history curriculum. Finally, chapter 6 outlines the findings of subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the content selection and content sequencing of their Key Stage 1 history curriculum.

4   Curriculum content selection

This chapter outlines the findings in relation to research question 1: what are history subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence decision-making in relation to the content selection of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

The chapter begins with an overview of each school scheme of work for Key Stage 1 history and is then structured and sequenced around four themes which have been identified from data analysis. Firstly, the themes of present-focused and future-focused decision-making are characterised as *curriculum as mirror* and *curriculum as window* (adopted from Style, 1988). Secondly, decision-making based on vertical connections across key stages and horizontal connections across the curriculum are characterised as *curriculum as staircase* and *curriculum as bridge,* respectively. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the findings: these are discriminated with reference to the National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 1 history and also at individual participant level.

4.1   Overview of school schemes for Key Stage 1 history

Key Stage 1 encompasses two years (Years 1 and 2), each year of which is divided into three terms. The child's journey through the curriculum can be represented as follows:

	Year 1			**Year 2**			
Progression from EYFS	autumn 1	spring 1	summer 1	autumn 2	spring 2	summer 2	Progression into Key Stage 2

Table 4 Key Stage 1 curriculum journey

At four of the schools (Ash, Beech, Fir and Maple), curriculum content is different for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. At Elm school, due to a fluctuating pupil roll, the curriculum is

organised on a two-year cycle (cycle A & cycle B); this means that both Year 1 and Year 2 classes are taught the same curriculum at the same time. Two of the schools (Beech and Maple) use the same commercial scheme as the basis for their curriculum.

Ash School - school-devised scheme of work:

	autumn	spring	summer
Year 1	How has transport changed in our local area?	What are our greatest or most ghastly events?	What was life like for children in the 1960s?
Year 2	What makes someone famous?	What does it take to be a great explorer?	Why were castles so important to the Normans?

Table 5 Ash school Key Stage 1 history curriculum overview

Beech and Maple Schools - commercial scheme of work:

	autumn	spring	summer
Year 1	What was life like when our grandparents were children?	Who were the greatest explorers?	How did the first flight change the world/Why were the Rainhill trials important?
Year 2	Should we still celebrate Bonfire Night?/Did the Great Fire make London a better or worse place?	How have holidays changed over time?	Who are our local heroes?

Table 6 Beech and Maple schools' Key Stage 1 history curriculum overview

Fir School - multi-academy trust (MAT) scheme of work:

	autumn	**spring**	**summer**
Year 1	Stories from history Your community	Your community Rags to Riches	Explorers & Invaders Important documents
Year 2	Rebellion Important women	The Stone Age The Neolithic Revolution	Ancient Egypt

Table 7 Fir school Key Stage 1 history curriculum overview

Elm School - school-devised scheme of work:

	autumn	**spring**	**summer**
Cycle A **(Year 1 & 2)**	How has [village] changed over time?	What happened to London during the fire of 1666?	How helpful were Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole during the Crimean War?
Cycle B **(Year 1 & 2)**	How have toys and games changed over time?	Why should we remember Rosa Parks and Emily Davison?	Was the seaside more fun a hundred years ago?

Table 8 Elm school Key Stage 1 history curriculum overview

4.2   Curriculum as mirror - starting with the child

The first theme that emerged was the notion of starting with the child. This was characterised as curriculum 'as mirror', a means for children to 'see themselves' in the history curriculum. Four categories were identified here: the selection of content that related to pupil demographics, the selection of content that reflected pupil interests and the selection of content that reflected childhood experiences. The final category reflected interviewees' views of child maturation, through the provision of a history curriculum which was designed to draw upon early childhood pedagogical approaches; views of child maturation also

extended to some consideration of what might be 'age-appropriate' substantive content for Key Stage 1 pupils.

4.2.1   *Reflecting pupil demographics*

Content that responded to pupil demographics was identified by three interviewees - these were all schools which served ethnically diverse communities.

Maple School has a high proportion of pupils with Polish heritage and it was important for Max that the history curriculum provided opportunities to respond to this: *"I think if the children see themselves reflected in the curriculum and just see, you know, like the history of like some of these different backgrounds."* This prompted the decision to involve grandparents for source work involving oral history in the Year 1 unit on Family History. Max explained, *"the children were really enthusiastic about seeing people that they're kind of like you."*

Beech School has pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds and 30% pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Beth explained that this awareness of the school pupil demographic, *"builds into our history curriculum to make sure it's bespoke, and what we're teaching is relevant to the children and their families as well."* For example, the Year 1 unit on Explorers was adapted to include a wider range of individuals with the intention that pupils could make links between their own history and the individuals chosen. Beth wanted to include, *"a much broader range for the children and hopefully then all the children will be able to relate to at least one of them [explorers] and bring their own personal history into that as well."*

The demographic of Fir School is equally ethnically diverse. Freya considered it important to reflect pupil heritages in curriculum content as a means of promoting inter-cultural understanding,

we've got quite a lot of different nationalities and religions and whatnot in our school. So by understanding the heritage of a lot of these cultures gives them [pupils] that mutual respect for others that they, you know, come into contact with their peers.

Similar to Max, she explained that a Year 1 unit on My Community was important because it placed a considerable emphasis on "*the history of themselves and their grandparents.*" For Freya, the curriculum seemed to present a mechanism of 'seeing others around you' as well as 'seeing yourself'.

Using the history curriculum to reflect pupil heritage(s) did not present as a feature for either Emma and Alex, both of whom work in schools with a predominantly White British pupil demographic. However, when considering how he might adapt the history curriculum in future, Alex did suggest, "*I'd probably want someone [significant individual] with, um, maybe Gypsy Roma Traveller background in there, because we've, we've had children in school, um, of that background*" suggesting a potentially reactive approach to content decision-making in this regard.

Overall, it appeared that where the pupil demographic was ethnically diverse or predominantly non-White British, there was a desire to provide an opportunity for pupils to see themselves or others similar to them in the curriculum. This seemed to be prompted by an intention to make the curriculum more relatable to pupil backgrounds or to enable pupils to potentially engage better with each other. For those schools with a predominately White British pupil demographic, this was perceived to be less significant.

4.2.2   *Reflecting children's interests*

Two interviewees identified that some curriculum content was chosen to reflect children's interests. For Emma, the selection of the cycle B unit on Toys and Games was chosen because, "*it's something that is relevant to children. They all, they've all got toys and*

games, they can relate to." Beth equally described a focus upon toys within the Year 1 unit on Family History as, "*something they're very familiar with, obviously."*

Beth also explained that specific content within the Year 1 unit on Transport is designed to be open-ended to include some types of vehicles identified by pupils, "*we're going to be building that around the children's interest in that particular cohort."* Emma explained that Rosa Parks and Emily Davison had been chosen as focus for significant individuals in cycle B; as will be discussed later in this chapter, this decision was made with the intention of making the curriculum more diverse. However, its retention would be contingent on whether it captured pupil interests: "*we're going to do that this year, and then re-evaluate, and see how the children find it, and if it's something that interests them."* In Beth's example, content within a unit was designed to be flexible to accommodate the interests of particular cohorts. In the example given by Emma, this flexibility extended to the entire focus of the unit, suggesting that the selection of some specific substantive content may be subordinate to, or contingent upon, pupil responses.

4.2.3   Reflecting children's experiences

Children's experiences also formed an important rationale for content selection. Max explained that the decision to focus on 'schools' and 'homes' within the Year 1 unit on Family History was aligned with familiar pupil experiences: "*so I think we wanted to start with a topic that they could relate to."* Similarly, for Alex, the Year 1 unit on Childhood in the 1960s included a focus on school history, with pupils encouraged to speak to family members and school staff about their lives, "*I think it's relatable in terms of getting them to speak about history, it's something they can go home about and talk about and, um, it's not so I suppose abstract for them in a sense."* His desire to make historical content less "*abstract"* suggests a view that concrete experiences may be more tangible for young children.

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For Emma, the cycle A unit on the Local Area related to pupil experiences of their own locality: *"I think that it's important that the children do something that's relevant to them, that it is their local area."* Alex explained that the Year 1 unit on Transport was appropriate for young children because, "*even if they don't have cars and they walk to school, some of them will have [taken] buses and, or have experienced buses in some form, so it's, it's kind of relating to everybody's kind of experience in some way."*

The desirability of linking curriculum content to childhood experiences also finds resonance in the justification given by both Max and Beth for the Seaside Holidays unit in Year 2. The commercial scheme used by Maple School was adapted to ensure that children could bring their own experiences to the content covered, with Max explaining *"it's a great topic. The children really enjoy it. We link it to their experiences or the holidays that they've been on."* Beth's comment*, "it really sparks engagement with the children. I think because we're very lucky, lots of our children have been able to experience some form of holiday,"* echoed the importance ascribed to curriculum connections between pupils' lives and selected content.

This idea of connecting curriculum content with pupil experiences was mainly linked to the National Curriculum requirement to teach changes within living memory or local history at Key Stage 1. Only Alex made connections to statutory content relating to significant individuals and events beyond living memory. In relation to the former, he suggested that pupils would bring familiarity with hospitals (and the recent Covid-19 pandemic) to a study of Florence Nightingale:

> *I mean, thinking about healthcare and things, it's something the children are familiar with… it's just thinking about relating it back to some of their experiences, isn't it… and it seems quite relevant as well now, given all of what we've had in the last two years.*

And in relation to significant events, Alex suggested that pupils would bring similar experiential knowledge to content relating to The Gunpowder Plot: "*I think, well, with Guy Fawkes, I think that's something all of the children know about in terms of Bonfire Night.*"

This repeated use of language such as "*relatable", "relevant*" and *"familiar"* suggests these vernacular experiences were perceived to make history accessible to pupils, hence their efficacy as selected curriculum content.

4.2.4   *Reflecting perceptions of child maturation*

Curriculum content selection was also justified with reference to the use of pedagogical approaches associated with early childhood. This included continuous provision, socio-dynamic play, sensory integration and story-based teaching and learning.

Beth identified the first Year 1 unit on Family History as an opportunity to promote learning through continuous provision: *"we still have a child-led centre in the corner of the room where they get to go and do role plays and explore their book corner with dressing up and toys."* This type of classroom area, accessed independently by pupils, is a typical feature of an EYFS learning environment and Beth explained that ongoing access to socio-dynamic play was important because *"at that point they've come from a very child-led and child-centred approach."*

An additional pedagogical approach, which also recognised the importance of embodied cognition, related to sensory integration. Emma identified the two autumn units (Local History and Toys & Games) where content made use of multi-sensory approaches to learning. For example, a visit to the local museum was valuable because it has "*got toys and games in there that the children can go and look at, and touch, and hold."* For Emma, this importance of sensory integration also involved making connections with other curriculum subjects: *"they do the toys and games in PE, learning some of the old games. Um, and music*

as well, and the nursery rhymes, and some of the old songs that they used to sing." Max, when explaining the rationale for the Year 1 unit on Transport, also identified the value of a multi-sensory approach:

> *the Rainhill trials, you know, we've got some great books that set the scene it's almost like we have one of those scent things for the train and we have the background music in there. So again, it's kind of making it real and trying to make it quite exciting.*

The use of story as an appropriate pedagogical strategy also formed part of content decision-making. Freya stated that Fir school placed a large emphasis on story-based approaches to teaching history: "*we focus very heavily on telling, um, history through stories for our Key Stage 1 curriculum. Um, the importance of that is because obviously children at that age are so familiar with stories. They hear stories all the time.*" Max reiterated the use of this approach at Maple school, *"we do lots of stories around the different topics"* and identified all three Year 1 units as appropriate content for the use of story as a pedagogical strategy. For the unit on Family history he stated, *"there's lots of stories that we look at as a part of that topic";* for the unit on Explorers, he explained, *"it's really good stories that we use around that [Explorers], that the children kind of really enjoy hearing";* and for the unit on Transport he added, *"even for the first flight , I mean there's some great stories."*

Rationales for the use of early childhood pedagogies seemed to draw upon a belief that active, multi-sensory learning would promote pupil engagement and/or enjoyment. The use of story, again drew on similar assumptions, combined with the view that this type of pedagogy is both familiar and appropriate for pupils of this age. However, considerations of child maturation extended beyond pedagogy. They also included questions of whether selected content may be appropriate or inappropriate for pupils in Key Stage 1.

As part of the Year 2 Local Heroes unit, Max discussed how best to align children's ages with a focus on an anti-slavery campaigner who had lived in the locality: *"we look at William Wilberforce…but I mean, that could be quite a heavy topic, you know, look[ing] at the slavery."* Max explained that this issue was resolved through the use of, *"a nice, simple story that kind of tells the story of his life – there's a picture we use…visits to his house. There's a blue plaque just outside his house that they look at."* As such, an appropriate teaching focus seemed to be based on foregrounding content upon the life of Wilberforce, rather than the experiences of enslaved Africans.

The National Curriculum proposes suffragettes as non-statutory curriculum content (DfE, 2013) but a similar concern was identified by two interviewees in relation to the women's suffrage movement. Alex explained, *"how people have been treated differently in the past … kind of touches on some of those more sensitive areas."* However, he justified the focus on Emmeline Pankhurst by stating, *"I didn't want to avoid things for them [pupils] just because they were little, but obviously keeping it age appropriate."* For Alex, this was resolved through inviting the local (female) MP to speak to children, *"I thought actually it would be quite nice to have somebody in Key Stage 1, er, to come in and do that and speak to the children as a, as a local person that could talk about that."* Emma equally queried whether the selection of Emily Davison, a suffragette killed by a horse at the 1913 Derby, was an appropriate significant individual for Key Stage 1 pupils: *"my worry about, um, Emily Davison, it's quite vi- it's quite violent isn't it?"* This unit had yet to be delivered to pupils and Emma explained that pupil responses to this subject matter would form part of content review by Key Stage 1 teachers after the unit had been taught.

In these instances, interviewees did not appear to necessarily reject or avoid potential curriculum content that may be deemed sensitive or challenging. However, there was consideration of how this content could be made more palatable to pupils of a young age,

suggesting that their curriculum decision-making aligned with some assumptions made about child maturation.

However, none of the interviewees problematised the inclusion of Guy Fawkes on the curriculum, despite the fact that similar to the suffragettes, he also sought out violent means to effect change and, like Davison, also suffered a violent death. This may be due to potential curriculum inertia as Alex remarked, "*I don't think they'd [staff] forgive me if Guy Fawkes wasn't there,*" and Freya commented, "*we stuck with that [Guy Fawkes] so that we weren't making as much change to that curriculum I suppose.*" It suggests that some curriculum content is perceived suitable for pupils based in part, on long-standing practice.

4.3   Curriculum as window - moving beyond the child

A contrasting theme that emerged from data analysis was content selected to go beyond children's starting points. This theme is categorised as curriculum 'as window', content that extended beyond perceptions of a pupil's present and is more future-focused. Two main strands emerged in relation to this theme: content to introduce pupils to the subject of history, for both intrinsic and extrinsic purposes, and content aimed to expose pupils to a more diverse curriculum. The latter also involved both an intrinsic and extrinsic dimension.

4.3.1   Learning history for intrinsic purposes

The first strand was the selection of content aimed to introduce and open up the subject of history as a distinct discipline. In these instances, content was often justified with respect to aspects of disciplinary knowledge, particularly the opportunity for pupils to engage in source work, although some content also aimed to develop pupils' understanding of different historical perspectives. Interviewees' responses here often drew upon their beliefs about the value and purpose of primary history education.

For Freya, the Year 1 unit on Important Documents was deliberately designed to introduce pupils to a range of historical sources: *"some documents come in the form of like Magna Carta, like a stone or might be an object and things like that, so learning actually we can tell a lot of history through objects as well."* The unit focused on a comparison of Magna Carta and the epic of Gilgamesh – two very different texts both temporally and culturally – which were explicitly chosen to show the different ways that written sources have been created and encoded.

Emma viewed the cycle A unit on The Great Fire of London as an opportunity for pupils to engage with source work: *"we do have somewhere local that we can go to visit, and for them [pupils] to experience artefacts and things like that as well."* A similar explanation was given by Max, again, in relation to The Great Fire of London. A key part of this unit centred around giving pupils opportunities to work with sources, in particular to engage first-hand with artefacts: "*we did trips to the Museum of London and there's so many artefacts to do with the Great Fire of London. And what they [pupils] do is they walk along to the Monument."* For Max, this type of activity distilled some of the essence of the subject:

> *I think we, we try to kind of get our our kind of children to think like historians. So we've been doing lots more of using sources, photos, kind of objects in the classroom. Yeah. So I mean really that's, that's the thing that we feel kind of defined history so much is kind of that enquiry approach almost, of using different sources and kind of interpreting different things.*

Both Alex and Max discussed the value of the National Curriculum specification to teach changes within living memory, as this focus on the recent past provided opportunities for pupils to engage in inter-generational communication. Alex gave the following rationale for the Year 1 unit on Childhood in the 1960s: *"a lot of the p- grandparents have been around [in school], they've got people they can talk to, so it's kind of generating conversations and, you know, getting people in."* Max was more explicit about the

disciplinary value of this type of activity; he explained that the Year 1 unit on Family History was beneficial because, *"it's that oral history. And I think again, involving grandparents and then I think you just learned so much from that oral history and just talking to people and I think it's great for the children."*

Some curriculum content was also selected to develop pupils' understanding of different historical perspectives. Freya explained that much of the Key Stage 1 curriculum at Fir School was centred around asking pupils to compare different figures or events within and across different periods. For example, the Year 1 unit (Explorers and Invaders) focused on comparing two historical figures, the aim of which was for pupils to consider how and why perspectives of invasion and settlement might differ: "*we look at Christopher Columbus and Montezuma. Um, so kind of looking at that story of going to a, um, the Americas and looking at from both perspectives."* This was also similar to the rationale suggested by Beth in relation to the Explorers unit taught at Beech School: *"we're going to be talking about the reason why different explorers chose to do certain parts of the world and people who [were] already there and how did they feel."* In these examples, the focus seemed to be on providing pupils with opportunities to develop their historical understanding through exploring the different contexts that have shaped peoples' beliefs, views and actions in the past.

4.3.2   *Learning history for extrinsic purposes*

Some content selection which aimed to introduce the subject of history as a distinct discipline was for more extrinsic purposes. In these instances, content selection was often justified as an opportunity to use history as a conduit to develop pupils' skills or promote the formation of a particular set of values. Again, interviewees' responses often drew upon their beliefs about the value and purpose of history education.

The choice of specific individuals provided Elm School with an opportunity to explore how, and why, historical significance has been attributed. Emma explained that a comparison of Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole (cycle A unit) lent itself to a study of "*how famous Florence Nightingale is and the lack of that for Mary Seacole, and why [is] that, you know, how things have changed over time.*" For Emma, this type of study loosely aligned with her purpose for history as a subject:

> *I think that also it's important that they, they learn not just the knowledge of the subject, but also the discipline of the subject. So, the critical thinking, the evaluation, all those sorts of things because that will help them grow into, um, people that can function in society. And they can use those skills, not only in history, but across the curriculum, and across their life.*

Her comments here resonate with ideas about using the study of the past, both to navigate the present and to prepare for the future. The desire to turn children into *"people that can function in society,"* also aligns with perceptions about how history might contribute towards citizenship formation. In Emma's view, citizenship can be viewed as possessing skills that help to facilitate understandings about the way that the past and the present have been constructed.

Similar justifications were given by three interviewees in their decision to teach The Gunpowder Plot as a significant event beyond living memory. Alex suggested that Guy Fawkes is "*quite good for sort of, um, throwing up discussions,*" particularly in relation to religious diversity. Beth related how pupils in Year 2 were asked to consider, *"should we celebrate, you know, Guy Fawkes Day, the way we do, wasn't he err a bit of a villain rather than a hero?*" Beth explained the importance of this type of learning in history:

> *…and having that debate and discussion because obviously, when they become older and they get, come into that real world, they're gonna need that level of debate and*

discussion around history to be able to be those, you know, citizens that we would like in society.

Again, this idea of creating citizens that *"we would like"* is suggestive of an agreed tradition of values, albeit one which accommodates disagreement, and can be associated with traditional and exemplary models of historical consciousness. And it is perhaps telling that her association of the *"real world"* is future-focused, rather than centred on pupils' present experiences.

This idea that content on Guy Fawkes provides a forum for discussion was also used by Freya:

you get a debate between the children, 'cause you have some that are like, yeah, he is a really good person and others are like, no, he is not. And they've, because they've been given all this information, they're able to argue their sides.

Similar to Beth, her rationale for this type of content again seemed to link to the formation of a desired set of values or behaviours: *"so it's that idea of preparing them to accept that people might not agree with it [parliament], but there are ways to go about it."* Freya's view of the good citizen seemed to be one who was open to dissent within society, yet remained law abiding.

4.3.3   Developing awareness of diversity

The idea of a curriculum window which moves beyond the child also involved selecting content aimed to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity. In particular, the selection of significant individuals - one of the four areas of the Key Stage 1 programme of study (DfE, 2013) - was often cited as a way to include broader presentations of the past, although content selection was predominantly limited to gender and/or ethnicity.

Several of the interviewees explained that curriculum decision-making involved a deliberate intention to move away from a white and/or British and/or male perspective. For Emma, content within the cycle A and B units was specifically chosen to go beyond the school's White British demographic: *"we chose Florence and Mary Seacole because we are predominantly a very, a white British, um, school, so we wanted to make sure we've got that ethnic minority in there."* She outlined similar reasoning for the selection of Emily Davison and Rosa Parks, *"again, um, there was the ethnic minority, um, reason for that."* In this instance a deliberate decision was also made away from male representation: "*we did think about Neil Armstrong, um, but ruled that out, because we particularly wanted to focus on women.*" As will be discussed later in this chapter, Emma considered the Key Stage 2 history curriculum at Elm School to be too male-focused, and there was an attempt to rectify this by embedding more women within Key Stage 1 content. However, her repetitive use of the phrase *"that/the ethnic minority"* perhaps suggests a tokenistic approach to diversity.

This idea of moving beyond a white male perspective was also an important consideration for Max in his decision to adapt the Year 2 unit on Explorers, *"It's pretty much male kind of yeah. White. Yeah. British people, a lot of it. So we kind of tried to change it quite a bit just to make that topic more diverse."* The commercial scheme had been reviewed and adapted to ensure a greater range of historical figures were represented: "*we look at Helen Sharman, um, Neil Armstrong. Again, they look at different explorers like Scott and Edmondson, Ibn Battuta they look at, so again, I mean, it's, it's, it's a topic that you can make quite diverse as well.*" Beech school used the same commercial scheme and Beth was also in the process of making similar adaptations to this unit to, *"have the opportunity to explore a wider range of explorers, men, women, different members of society."* Both Max and Beth brought a degree of critical awareness to the selection of historical figures represented in the scheme and sought to broaden, what they perceived to be, a limited or narrow offering.

Moving beyond a white male perspective was equally a similar curriculum driver for Alex. Content within four out of the six units (Year 1: Transport; Events; Year 2: Individuals; Explorers) was selected to explicitly consider different representations of the past. For example, he stated that, "[Emmeline Pankhurst] *just highlights some of that differences in gender, you know"* and "[Walter Tull] *I chose him really…when I was kind of diversifying the curriculum."* However, Alex explained his dilemma in trying to promote local history while trying to ensure greater representation in terms of gender and ethnic diversity:

> [The Cadbury brothers] *they've been in and out of the curriculum a couple of times, so I've took them out a few times and put them back in… they've got the local links, but I, I suppose there's always this thing that, um, I don't want too many white British men… it's just having a balance of getting the local right.*

His dilemma seemed to stem from a perception that local and diverse histories could not be complementary.

Several interviewees also explained how they used their history curriculum to challenge gender and/or cultural stereotypes. This idea of disrupting norms was particularly important for Alex who justified his selection of Grace O'Malley/Gráinne Ní Mháille as follows: *"I just think it would be interesting to look at someone and think, actually, what was a typical pirate like? You know, was it a bearded man with a hook?... it just gives them [pupils] a different perspective."* He also made a deliberate decision for teachers to teach about the astronaut Helen Sharman before introducing Neil Armstrong: *"you probably think it's mad thinking, but I thought the first person then they can encounter as a, as an astronaut, would be a woman, because typically they just think it's a man."*

At Fir School, geographical and cultural diversity was considered to be an additional consideration in challenging gender stereotypes. Freya explained that Queen Nzinga Mbande

had been added to the Year 2 unit on Important Women to show that powerful women were not just a European phenomenon:

> *we wanted someone who was powerful from another culture, particularly like an African culture… so we thought that was really important that actually, um, you know, to express that women can be powerful no matter where they are in the world.*

Overall, all interviewees considered that teaching diverse histories was of importance. This was both to challenge perceptions of a white and/or male and/or British hegemony in the curriculum but also to challenge or prevent the formation of stereotypes. The former seems to relate to an intrinsic purpose in relation to history and the latter to a more extrinsic purpose, hence mirroring the earlier findings in this chapter. However, their curriculum choices tended to be limited to ethnicity and/or gender, with little consideration of how other under-represented groups might also find representation in the curriculum. The National Curriculum programme of study states that individuals selected should be chosen on the basis of their contribution to "national and international achievements" (DfE, 2013, p. 189). And in the content selected there was little deviation from the DfE suggested types of individual, such as explorers, pioneers, agitators or those who exercised power.

4.4   Curriculum as staircase - making vertical connections

The third theme emerging from data analysis is categorised as curriculum 'as staircase', a vertical process of making backward and forward connections to prior and future learning. Interviewees made explicit connections between Key Stage 1 content selection and the prior EYFS framework and the future Key Stage 2 history curriculum. Links were made to the development of pupils' use of historical language, their conceptual understanding and substantive content, although it was the latter which was most manifest in interviewee responses.

Max, Beth and Alex all used the word *"build"* to describe substantive content connections from EYFS to Key Stage 1. Max explained, *"they look at toys in Early Years and again, that's almost like toys from the past. So I think we saw it as a good way of building on some [of that] as well."* Beth's response typified these vertical links:

> *…in terms of Transport and Explorers… I know this year they've [Reception] had the fire brigade in and we tried to get people with different jobs … so when they move into Year 1 …it means that they can build upon that.*

For Alex, connections in EYFS were evident across a range of units, *"there are kind of a lot of links going around."* For example, children's learning about pirates in Reception supported the focus on Grace O'Malley/Gráinne Ní Mháille as part of the Significant Individuals unit in Year 2. Content related to learning about different occupations and roles in society also supported the teaching of other individuals within this unit: *"[EYFS] do the people that help us … so that kind of mixes in with the nurses [Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora]."* An EYFS topic on castles also related to the local history unit in Year 2 which was based on a nearby castle.

Freya explained that pupils in EYFS learned about the concept of power. This then prepared pupils for understanding the nature of leadership or governance in Key Stage 1 across a wider range of contexts:

> *in Reception, they look at important people within the country so [they] look at the queen, they look at the prime minister, the fact that a lot of countries have somebody that kind of rules or is in charge. Um, so because they've done that, that then helps them understand a lot of what is spoken about in, you know, Year 1, Year 2.*

Perhaps not surprisingly, content in EYFS was introduced at a more basic or entry level for pupils. Emma explained that children in EYFS learnt about toys within living memory as part of a focus on families. This was then developed in Key Stage 1 with a focus

on Victorian toys and games: *"it's not as in-depth as it is in Key Stage 1. Um, so they'll compare, like, grandparents' games and things like that, but for, for Key Stage 1, it'll be much more in-depth, particularly looking at the Victorian period."*

The examples given above seemed to relate to a sense of expanding scale (socially, chronologically and spatially) from EYFS to Key Stage 1. This is a theme that is explored in greater depth, albeit from Year 1 to Year 2, in the next chapter. However, it was less clear how content selection had been navigated between the EYFS framework and the National Curriculum. Alex explained that decision-making in Year 1 had responded to the EYFS framework: "*I think we kind of introduced Transport… because they do, it builds on knowledge from Reception."* For Max, it was the reverse scenario: *"transport was something we added in [to EYFS] …because we thought it would help going into Year 1."* He outlined how the review of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2020) had provided an opportunity to change some content in Reception to align more with Key Stage 1 content. The sites of curriculum decision-making were therefore varied, although the intention to align some curriculum content between the two phases was consistent.

4.4.2   *Vertical connections with the Key Stage 2 curriculum*

In relation to connections with Key Stage 2, vertical connections were future-focused. This was encapsulated by Alex who stated, *"it's giving them a little bit of context before they go into Key Stage 2, like a bit of a foundation or a bit of a taster."*

Some of these connections related to the use of historical terms. For example, Max suggested that the Key Stage 1 curriculum was an opportunity to introduce temporal language which would contribute towards chronological understanding in Key Stage 2, *"it's almost those foundations, you know, like they're building up a basic chronology…it's building up basic vocabulary of time. It's set those foundations for the rest of the school."* Freya made a

similar comment, although her emphasis was on the development of historical vocabulary: *"so we very heavily focus on vocabulary in Key Stage 1 so that they've got that foundation to them when they go on to Key Stage 2. They're, you know, they're not being hindered by the lack of vocabulary."*

Progression in first order concepts was referred to by two interviewees. Max summarised the value of tracking these connections: *"it's looking at those substantive abstract concepts."* He explained, *"sometimes that might make it easier for when you know, they get older and kind of like progressing into something else later on in different year groups."* He suggested, for example, that the Year 2 unit on The Gunpowder Plot gave pupils an early encounter with the term 'parliament': *"I mean, it's such a, kind of a hard concept for them [pupils] to get around head around. So I think we kind of saw it as introducing it in Year 2."* Beth explained that the Year 1 unit on Transport acted as a foundation for future learning about trade routes (in relation to Roman Britain): *"we can talk about trade because that will link beautifully into Key Stage 2 and we think about the Romans. So it's building that wider picture of what England used to look like."*

Vertical links between content selection emerged as a much greater theme. For Alex, these connections constituted a deliberate part of his rationale for curriculum decision-making: *"I kind of try to select things in Key Stage 1 that I felt would kind of make some link to Key Stage 2 somewhere."* Links to substantive content in the Key Stage 2 curriculum were evident across both Year 1 and Year 2 units: pupil learning on the Cadbury brothers, Pompeii and the Olympic Games related to Key Stage 2 content on the Maya, Rome and Ancient Greece respectively. In the case of the latter, part of the rationale to include the Olympic Games in Key Stage 1 was also to 'free up' space for different substantive content in the later phase: *"that's something that we, we don't do in Year 5 then, because they can spend some time on something else."* Alex repeatedly used the words, *'taster', 'foundation',*

'links' and *'background'* to explain the importance of these vertical links, and the importance of using Key Stage 1 as precursor for Key Stage 2: "*you know, thinking about when they're coming into Key Stage 2, they [pupils] kind of think back to that and remember that now, so it's quite good they've got some of that knowledge.*"

Selecting content in Key Stage 1 as a foundation for Key Stage 2 was also a key part of Freya's rationale for curriculum decision-making. Links to substantive content in the Key Stage 2 curriculum at Fir School were evident across a range of units. For example, the Year 1 unit on Stories from History included a focus on Romulus and Remus; Freya explained this was intended to prepare pupils for content on Ancient Rome in Year 4. Similarly, the story of Sheng Tang prepared pupils for future learning in Year 3:

> *...the reason we do that is because in Year 3, we look at the Shang, um, and the idea of how did the Shang Dynasty come about. And then they've already seen that story when they did Rebellion in Year 2.*

Finally, the story of Mohammed in the Year 1 unit Rags to Riches was designed to lay the foundations for a unit in lower Key Stage 2:

> *...later on in our, in our curriculum, if we go to Year 4, they do the Islamic civilization. Um, so then they'll look at Mohammed again, but they've already got that kind of foundation of who he is from when they studied him in Year 1.*

Given the remit of this research relates to curriculum intent rather than curriculum impact, the extent to which these vertical links did result in better pupil engagement and/or outcomes in Key Stage 2 was not discussed. However, it was apparent that this did appear to be an explicit intention for these interviewees as part of their decision-making process.

On occasions the nature of Key Stage 2 curriculum content resulted in changes being made at Key Stage 1. Alex described the decision-making process which resulted in content being removed from Key Stage 1:

> *I know we did Mary Anning before, but actually she was being covered in the science curriculum in Key Stage 2 as well, um, so then I took her out of Key Stage 1 history because she was just being covered twice.*

Alex went on to explain*, "although she wouldn't be covered necessarily in the history perspective in science, it's, you know, it's just thinking about having a spread and a balance."* This idea of a spread seemed to be based on maximising the opportunities for more content across the curriculum, an issue that was important for Alex: *"I just think there's so many interesting people that you just want children to know about, um, you know."*

This desire to achieve balance across the whole school curriculum was a theme also described by Emma: *"we have tried to make sure that in Key Stage 2, there are more [women], but it was more difficult."* Prioritising women in Key Stage 1 was therefore seen to be a way of achieving better gender representation across the whole school history curriculum:

> *we wanted to particularly focus on famous women [in Key Stage 1], because throughout our whole curriculum, a lot of what we do is about famous men. So, we wanted to make sure that there was a balance of famous women and famous men.*

To this extent, the Key Stage 1 curriculum was utilized to address a perceived deficit in Key Stage 2.

Overall, the nature of connections between both primary key stages tended to have a substantive focus (both in regard to content and concepts) rather than a focus upon the processes of historical enquiry and disciplinary knowledge. The rationale for these connections tended to draw upon providing pupils with 'taster' knowledge that would be further developed in Key Stage 2. Alternatively, awareness of the Key Stage 2 curriculum resulted in some modifications to Key Stage 1 content, with the aim of achieving a more balanced or broad curriculum.

4.5   Curriculum as bridge - making horizontal connections

One of the key differences between being a teacher of history at primary level and a secondary history teacher is the requirement for primary class teachers to be responsible for pupil learning across the whole curriculum. All interviewees made explicit, horizontal, links between content selection in history and other subjects represented in the primary curriculum. The rationales for these links were both pedagogical and pragmatic. In some instances, history was used to support learning in other subjects, while other subjects were also used as a conduit to maximise learning in history. Some interviewees' perspectives of the extent to which history should be a bridge across the curriculum were drawn, in part, from their previous school-based experiences; these experiences were both positive and negative.

4.5.1   Connections across the primary curriculum

Cumulatively, the interviewees made links to all eleven subjects of the Key Stage 1 primary curriculum: art & design, computing, design & technology, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE, RE, relationships, (sex) & health education (often referred to as PSHE) and science. The only link not made was to foreign languages, a subject which is statutory only for pupils in Key Stage 2 (DfE, 2013). For Beth, this ability to make connections was self-evident, *"obviously, lots of learning is very cross-curricular… it's that holistic view of the subject."*

In some instances, the other subject was exploited to develop pupil learning in history. For example, Emma recounted a design & technology lesson where,

> *they built houses for the Great Fire of London, and then they burnt them down…because they put a gap between the houses when they burnt them down, so it only burnt the ones before the gap, so they could really understand how that [firebreaks] worked.*

However, Emma was eager to reinforce that this happened beyond the parameters of history, *"they [staff] didn't do that in their history lesson"* suggesting her view that while cross-subject connections have value, the teaching and learning focus in each subject should remain distinct.

However, there were also instances where the history unit was used to develop knowledge and understanding in other subjects. Emma described, *"we're covering a lot of PSHE with equality and diversity, um, with our ethnic minority groups, and the, um, focus on women as well, and equality, with, uh, Rosa Parks."* And Max explained, *"so when they look at local heroes, they look at local artists, they kind of like do sketches and paintings in the local area."* In these instances, history seemed to act as a stimulus for other subjects or as an opportunity to embed or reinforce teaching points from other areas of the primary curriculum.

4.5.2   Connections with geography

All interviewees made connections with geography. Both Beth and Max explained that the Year 2 unit on The Great Fire of London and The Gunpowder Plot developed pupil knowledge of London as a capital city, an outcome which is statutory in the Key Stage 1 programme of study for geography (DfE, 2013). Beth explained how this unit, *"links in with our geography curriculum where we look at London in more detail. So we felt that exploring them both together would be beneficial for the children."*

Emma explained that teaching and learning in history involved map work in geography: *'we use Digimap a lot for the local area, for London, for the seaside…using the old map, and the new map, and comparing the two."* Freya explained that when pupils studied the history of their local community, *"they're also doing my community, but from a geographical perspective."*

These horizontal connections did not just centre around substantive content. Ash school has designed abstract knowledge categories, to signal to pupils when a concept is revisited in another subject. Alex explained, *"we wanted twelve [categories] that would link the whole curriculum together, er, and then that way you can go across different things."* Alex gave an example of how the concept of settlement would be signposted to pupils in both history and geography lessons, where relevant.

These connections were presented by interviewees as an opportunity to address multiple aspects of the primary geography curriculum, ranging from procedural knowledge (map work), place knowledge (London), local area studies (Your Community) and the development of conceptual understanding (settlements). The fact that all interviewees made links with geography, and across multiple aspects of the geography curriculum, is suggestive of potentially permeable boundaries between these humanities.

4.5.3   Connections with English

Connections with English drew upon both the pedagogical and the practical. Freya explained that the emphasis at Fir School on using story as a method of content delivery in Key Stage 1 resulted in strong connections between history and reading texts, *"a story in history, they might touch upon that again in their reading unit or they might have that as a story that's for their 'talk for writing' model text. Um, so that they've got those links there."*

Emma felt that the use of story was a way to develop pupils' understanding of the past, *"I think, for all of the children, not just the younger children, but telling the history through a story makes, makes a big difference to their understanding. You know, they can, they can really put themselves into that, that situation."* She went on to specify that embedding history content within English also ensured that pupils received more frequent encounters with substantive content: *"the knowledge that they picked up from studying the*

book makes a massive difference. And I don't think we can underestimate that. Um, they definitely wouldn't have that depth without it." This was a theme echoed by Max, *"if you do it in English, it makes it [history] so much easier. And I think every class, whenever we teach those topics that you always have like a reading corner with all of those books on display."*

However, Emma also explained that English was deliberately used to maximise curriculum time for history: *"I knew that I needed to get more time in the curriculum. Um, so that's why we linked it to English, and that then raised the profile of history across school."* Emma drew on a previous school experience as her rationale for this:

> *I have taught in previous school a, um, topic approach, so I know that that works quite well in terms of, um, giving the children more time, um, because when it's a weekly subject, you get an hour a week, if you're lucky, and if something needs dropping, it will be one of those foundation subjects.*

In her exploitation of a core subject to provide greater curriculum exposure for history, Emma demonstrated a more pragmatic rationale for cross-subject connections.

4.5.4 Curriculum as a purposeful bridge

A common theme that emerged in relation to curriculum connections was the importance of ensuring that any cross-subject links must be mutually purposeful. Freya explained, *"we do make those links where it is appropriate. So we don't just make them because we need to."* Max twice emphasised during the interview that any connections between history and other subjects should not be forced, stating for example, *"we do like a curriculum overview and then we try link as much as we can. I mean, without putting links in for the sake of it."* And Emma's exploitation of the English curriculum to make more time for history content also involved *"making sure that they weren't tenuous links."*

Of all the interviewees, Alex was the most emphatic about this issue, in particular ensuring that subject boundaries were maintained:

we really looked at how we could make it really explicit the children are learning history. That's been one of the key drivers for us. You know making the purposeful links but actually always making sure that the focus is on the history teaching'...[what] we didn't want is, um, any sort of themes where we were kind of mushing things together and the subjects were getting lost.

A previous school experience as an early career teacher had made him cautious of how thematic approaches can have a negative impact on subject integrity: *"so I remember teaching for example, in my NQT year, I've taught topic on chocolate, but really at that point I didn't really understand that was actually teaching the ancient Maya as well because things were just so mushed together."*

This tendency to emphasize that connections should not be *"tenuous"*, avoiding subjects *"getting lost"* or links made for "*the sake of it"*, seem to demonstrate a belief that curriculum connections, whilst beneficial, should be mutually purposeful.

4.6 Summary of chapter findings in relation to the Key Stage 1 programme of study

This section views the research findings through the lens of the National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 1 history (DfE, 2013). The table below presents a summary of the key themes identified from data analysis in relation to the four statutory areas of the curriculum. The letters used in the table correspond to the first letter of each school: A – Ash; B – Beech; E – Elm; F- Fir; M- Maple and indicate where an interviewee made an association between a theme and an aspect of the programme of study.

The heading 'Generic Link' refers to where some interviewees discussed their Key Stage 1 curriculum as a whole, without specific exemplification. The heading 'Other content' refers to instances where Fir School chose to deliver aspects of the Key Stage 2 programme of study in Key Stage 1 or other content not aligned with the Key Stage 1 programme of study.

Main theme	Sub-theme	National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 1				Generic link	Other content
		Changes within living memory	*Significant individuals*	*Significant events beyond living memory*	*Local history*	*General reference to the school KS1 history curriculum*	*Beyond the KS1 programme of study*
Curriculum as mirror	*Reflecting pupil demographics*	FM	B				
	Reflecting pupil interests	BE	E	B			
	Reflecting pupil experiences	ABM	A	A	AE		
	Reflecting perceptions of child maturation	BEM	AEM	M	EM	F	
Curriculum as window	*Learning history for intrinsic purposes*	AM	BEF	EM	B		F
	Learning history for extrinsic purposes		E	ABF			
	Developing awareness of diversity	A	ABEFM	A			
Curriculum as staircase	*Vertical connections with the EYFS framework*	EM	AB	B	A	F	
	Vertical connections with the Key Stage 2 curriculum		AEF	ABM		FM	F
Curriculum as bridge	*Connections with English*	M	M	EM		EFM	
	Connections with geography	E	A	BEM	EF	A	
	Other connections across the Key Stage 1 curriculum	BE	E	ABE	M		

Table 9 Relationship between the factors influencing content selection and the National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 1 history

In presenting the data in a way that could be easily analysed, a number of compromises were made. The data only shows the incidence of an occurrence rather than the frequency of an occurrence. As an example, within the section *'other connections across the Key Stage 1 curriculum'*, Emma linked two subjects (PE and music) to *'changes within living memory';* this has only been recorded as one occurrence. It also proved difficult to decide where to allocate some data as the programme of study has boundaries that are porous. For example, local history can encompass events, individuals and the recent past (within living memory). This may account for the lower incidence of data within this aspect of the curriculum. Similarly, three interviewees discussed how a study of Guy Fawkes can develop pupils' understanding of multiple perspectives of the past. Given that his actions are best understood within the context of The Gunpowder Plot, I made a decision to ascribe this to a *'significant event'* rather than as a *'significant individual'*. The findings presented in the table are therefore provisional rather than substantive. However, the exercise has a degree of efficacy as some interesting patterns have emerged, particularly in the way that some themes and sub-themes appear to be more closely aligned with certain areas of the Key Stage 1 programme of study.

For example, the sub-theme of *'child maturation'* was associated with the entirety of the Key Stage 1 programme of study. This prevalence may suggest its importance as a factor influencing decision-making. *'Changes within living memory'* and *'Local history'* are most closely aligned with the theme *'curriculum as mirror'*, indicating that these areas of the curriculum are more present-focused and centred around the child. By contrast, the two areas of study which are more future-focused and aligned more with the study of history are *'significant events'* and *'significant individuals'*. Interestingly the latter was considered by every interviewee as an opportunity to develop pupils' awareness of diversity. This may

suggest a perception that diversity in history is easier ascribed to individual figures rather than themes, locations or events.

Cumulatively, interviewees made connections between the EYFS framework and all four areas of the Key Stage 1 programme of study. It is perhaps the flexibility of content selection in both curricula that enables these type of broad and symbiotic connections to be made. Conversely, links with the Key Stage 2 curriculum were only directly associated with *'significant events'* and *'significant individuals'*. The Key Stage 2 programme of study prioritises the more distant past, in particular, periods of history before 1066, which may account for the lesser emphasis on *'changes within living memory'.*

It was noted in the findings that horizontal connections were made between history and the entirety of the Key Stage 1 curriculum. The data presented here also shows how these connections were made across each of the four areas of the programme of study. This may further suggest the ease with which teachers can make cross-subject links and how this is a distinctive feature of professional practice in the primary phase.

4.7   Summary of chapter findings in relation to each interviewee

The table below presents a summary of the key themes identified in this chapter and shows how these themes correspond to the interviewee responses for each school:

Main theme	Sub-theme	Ash	Beech	Elm	Fir	Maple
Curriculum as mirror	*Reflecting pupil demographics*		x		x	x
	Reflecting pupil interests		x	x		
	Reflecting pupil experiences	x	x	x		x
	Reflecting perceptions of child maturation	x	x	x	x	x
Curriculum as window	*Learning history for intrinsic purposes*	x	x	x	x	x
	Learning history for extrinsic purposes	x	x	x	x	
	Awareness of diversity	x	x	x	x	x
Curriculum as staircase	*Vertical connections with the EYFS framework*	x	x	x	x	x
	Vertical connections with the KS2 curriculum	x	x	x	x	x
Curriculum as bridge	*Horizontal connections across the KS1 curriculum*	x	x	x	x	x
	Connections with geography	x	x	x	x	x
	Connections with English			x	x	x
	Curriculum as a purposeful bridge	x		x	x	x

Table 10 Relationship between the factors influencing content selection and individual interviewee responses

This type of categorisation exercise has some efficacy as it has enabled patterns to be identified within each data set and also connections to be drawn across the different data sets. Overall, there was generally a high degree of congruence across all interviewees in respect to the four main themes. All interviewees were both present-focused and future-focused in curriculum decision-making. All interviewees made vertical links with both the EYFS

framework and Key Stage 2 curriculum. And all made horizontal links to the other subjects of the primary curriculum.

Perhaps the most nuanced theme relates to *'curriculum as mirror'*. While a sub-theme common to all interviewees was decision-making based on perceptions of *'child maturation'*, other sub-themes were less prevalent. Decision-making based on *'pupil demographics'* was a characteristic common only to those schools with a pupil roll which is ethnically diverse or predominantly non-White British. *'Children's experiences'* emerged as a more dominant theme than '*children's interests'*. The latter may differ from one cohort to the next and there are perhaps more constraints for this kind of flexible decision-making, especially if schools are also basing content selection on other factors.

When comparing the themes by interviewee, it is interesting to note that while Beth and Max used the same commercial scheme, there does not appear to be a higher correlation between their responses and those of the other three interviewees. This perhaps indicates how any generic curriculum will be subject to different interpretation at school level. Both interviewees also explained how they tried to adapt the scheme to their school context, in Beth's words to make it *"bespoke."* Their differences, in this regard, may therefore reveal a commonality, as it may suggest that a feature of good curriculum decision-making is this type of active or critical engagement with given content.

One of the limitations of this kind of categorisation exercise is how it fails to show the significance given to particular themes (Berg & Lune, 2014). The following diagrams are therefore accompanied by a summary of the dominant themes that emerged for each interviewee (highlighted in grey), which attempts to draw out key emphases.

Alex – Ash School:

curriculum as staircase: vertical connections
EYFS - KS2

Curriculum as mirror:
present-focused factors that start with the child
pupil demographics
pupil interests
pupil experiences
child maturation

Curriculum as window:
future-focused factors that move beyond the child
studying history for intrinsic purposes
studying history for extrinsic purposes
awareness of diversity

curriculum as bridge: horizontal connections
art & design, computing, D&T, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE, RE, RSHE, science

Figure 4.1 Summary of key themes influencing content selection at Ash School

For Alex, there was a strong emphasis on decision-making based on pupils' experiences but he also placed an emphasis on the importance of including diverse representations of the past. Of all the interviewees, he seemed to be most cognisant of the dilemmas of negotiating decision-making based on different factors. Alex strongly advocated for vertical links both backwards to EYFS and forwards to Key Stage 2. However, he was less focused on horizontal connections and gave the strongest critique of how subject integrity might be compromised by potentially extraneous cross-subject links.
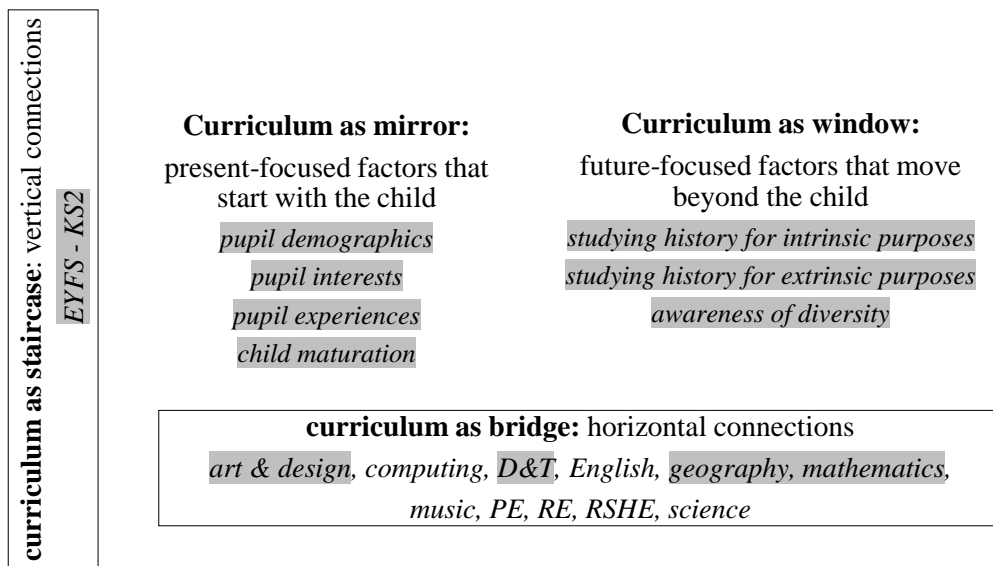
Beth – Beech School:

Figure 4.2 Summary of key themes influencing content selection at Beech School

For Beth, the strongest emphasis tended to be upon *'curriculum as mirror'* and *'curriculum as window'*. For the former, her rationale for content selection seemed to be strongly influenced by beliefs about child maturation and the need to respond to children's interests. For the latter, there was a strong sense of how history should be utilised for extrinsic purposes to develop a set of desirable behaviours or skills that might equip pupils for the future. *'Curriculum as bridge'* and *'curriculum as staircase'* emerged as less dominant themes.

Emma – Elm School:

curriculum as staircase: vertical connections
EYFS - KS2

Curriculum as mirror:
present-focused factors that start with the child
pupil demographics
pupil interests
pupil experiences
child maturation

Curriculum as window:
future-focused factors that move beyond the child
studying history for intrinsic purposes
studying history for extrinsic purposes
awareness of diversity

curriculum as bridge: horizontal connections
art & design, computing, D&T, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE, RE, RSHE, science

Figure 4.3 Summary of key themes influencing content selection at Elm School

Emma's curriculum rationale emerged as the most present-focused and the most child-centred. She often spoke about the importance of considering how the child would 'experience' the history curriculum, perhaps a consequence of negotiating how the same content could be translated for pupils of different year groups. Emma made the most connections to the other subjects of the Key Stage 1 curriculum and was also the most positive of all the interviewees about the value of such links.

Freya – Fir School:

curriculum as staircase: vertical connections
EYFS - KS2

Curriculum as mirror:
present-focused factors that
start with the child
pupil demographics
pupil interests
pupil experiences
child maturation

Curriculum as window:
future-focused factors that move
beyond the child
studying history for intrinsic purposes
studying history for extrinsic purposes
awareness of diversity

curriculum as bridge: horizontal connections
*art & design, computing, D&T, English, geography, mathematics,
music, PE, RE, RSHE, science*

Figure 4.4 Summary of key themes influencing content selection at Fir School

A future-focused curriculum emerged as the most dominant theme for Freya. There was a stronger association with *'curriculum as window'*, rather than '*curriculum as mirror'*. This sense of looking forward was also evident within the theme of *'curriculum as staircase'*. Freya made more direct associations with Key Stage 2 content than with the EYFS framework. And while she did make some horizontal links to other areas of the curriculum, they were less apparent than for other interviewees. Overall, there emerged a strong sense of a Key Stage 1 history curriculum designed to prepare pupils for content in Key Stage 2.

Max – Maple School:

Curriculum as staircase: vertical connections
EYFS - KS2

Curriculum as mirror:
present-focused factors that start with the child
pupil demographics
pupil interests
pupil experiences
child maturation

Curriculum as window:
future-focused factors that move beyond the child
studying history for intrinsic purposes
studying history for extrinsic purposes
awareness of diversity

curriculum as bridge: horizontal connections
art & design, computing, D&T, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE, RE, RSHE, science

Figure 4.5 Summary of key themes influencing content selection at Maple School

Max strongly emphasised the locality of his school. Much of his rationale was focused upon how the commercial curriculum adopted by Maple school had been adjusted or reframed to reflect pupil or local contexts. Within the theme of *'curriculum as window'*, there was a stronger emphasis upon the value of the intrinsic study of history and the importance of including diverse representations of the past, rather than the use of history as a conduit or vehicle for extrinsic purposes.

4.8   Chapter summary

This chapter has explored four themes which emerged as factors influencing curriculum content decision-making: *curriculum as mirror* and *curriculum as window* (adopted from Style, 1988), and *curriculum as staircase* and *curriculum as bridge*. While there existed different perceptions about which factors were emphasised at individual school level, the four themes were resonant across all five interviewees. It therefore suggests that interviewees are both present-focused and future-focused in their decision-making and that they also consider both vertical and horizontal content connections. This may be understandable given that all schools had been awarded the Gold Quality Mark for history, which requires schools to have a coherent and connected curriculum, to be inclusive and to be responsive to pupil needs (HA, 2018). But it is perhaps in the consideration of pupil needs that a particular rationale for this phase of primary schooling emerged: in their present-focused decision-making, interviewees showed keen awareness of Key Stage 1 learners as young children and as beginning learners of history.

Overall, however, my findings suggest that there is no prescribed template for successful curriculum-decision making in Key Stage 1 history but rather there is a range of common factors that subject leaders draw upon when formulating their rationale for content selection. These themes did not tend to present as conflicting but seemed to coexist as part of an overall curriculum rationale for each school.

5   Curriculum content sequencing

This chapter outlines the findings in relation to research question 2: what are history subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence decision-making in relation to the content sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

This chapter is structured around three themes which have been identified from data analysis. The first theme to emerge was curriculum sequencing based on an increasing range of scales in relation to personal/social, geographical and chronological dimensions. The second theme to emerge was content sequencing as a response to phase transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1 and, to a lesser extent, from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. A final theme to emerge was sequencing based upon perceptions of pupil progression in history.

5.1   Curriculum sequencing as a range of scales

The first theme was the idea of children working at an increasing range of scales. These scales can be categorised as personal/social, geographical and chronological. In relation to a personal/social scale, some interviewees stated that the earliest content in Year 1 prioritised topics that relate to the child's own history or interests (such as family narratives or experiences) before content that extended beyond the child's known social sphere. An expanding geographical scale was apparent in responses that suggested it was appropriate for pupils to learn about settings closer to their own experiences (e.g. local history) before studying about places beyond their own experience, whether national or international. However, this sense of expanding geographical scale was not entirely consistent across curriculum sequences as some interviewees chose to position local history in the summer term to align with opportunities for learning outside the classroom (LOtC). Finally, an expanding scale could also be seen in relation to chronology. Curriculum sequences tended

to position content within living memory (the last hundred years) before content beyond living memory.

5.1.1 *Beginning with the 'known'*

All five interviewees explained how the first Year 1 units were premised on beginning with the 'known' based on varying intersections of personal/social, geography and/or chronological dimensions. The programme of study for Key Stage 1 history only specifies two time periods: these are general, described as 'within living memory' and 'beyond living memory' (DfE, 2013). Four of the interviewees chose 'changes within living memory' as their starting point for the curriculum.

For example, Alex provided a chronological rationale when justifying his decision to begin Year 1 with a unit on Transport in the local area, *"I think it's just something that they can really relate to, um, you know, in terms of it wasn't too far in the past."* This idea that the recent past is more relatable to children and should therefore be foregrounded in curriculum sequencing was also echoed by Max. He gave a very similar justification for the first Year 1 focus on Family History, *"we tried to start with units, you know, that we kind of almost, in living memory, possibly ones, you know, the children could relate to."* This relatability was based on perceptions of younger pupils' emergent sense of time, *"a simple timeline that's quite easy for the children to understand."*

Max also explained that this first Year 1 unit was structured to move outwards from the child to the parent and then to grandparents, referencing not only chronological, but also social scales: *"we were almost doing where they were, where their parents were and then when their grandparents were, and that was almost like our simple timeline that we started with."* Beth's school has adopted the same commercial scheme as Max, and she used a similar familial hierarchy to explain the importance of beginning with the most familiar:

they[pupils] look more about their personal history, which then gives 'em a sense of what history is. We then move onto toys, which is the Victorian period. But we bring it back to, "Okay, your toys, mum's toys, grandparents' toys, then Victorian toys." So, that small progression.

Beth stated that Year 1 content was mainly based on the more recent past (within last two hundred years):

it's all within quite a relatively short space of time and we don't want to go further than that, at that stage, purely because we want the children to understand the immediate history before we go into further down the chronological periods.

This idea of 'immediate history' was also considered an appropriate factor for Freya. The Year 1 unit (autumn/spring - Your Community) was structured to move outwards, again intersecting both social and chronological scales:

a lot of the first sort of units in Year 1, they start looking at their own history. So like my community is a, a unit that we do. So they look at, um, you know, the history of themselves and their grandparents.

Given that Elm School has a two-year rolling curriculum (cycle A and cycle B), Emma explained that content sequencing presented a particular challenge: "*we tried to then look at how well, how can we possibly get this in the right order with mixed age classes? Um, and we quickly realised we can't.*" However, in spite of this perceived issue, Emma explained that it was important that both of the beginning units in the autumn term began with the near and familiar. This influenced the sequencing of the Local History unit in the autumn term of cycle A and the unit on Toys & Games in the autumn term of cycle B. Cycle B had originally started with The Great Fire of London, but this was moved to the spring term because Emma felt it was too far chronologically from pupil experiences, and too far geographically from the school locality, for children to be able to relate to:

I did have the Great Fire of London before that [unit on local history], but we quickly realized that that's a very abstract concept to those children, London is s- so far away

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from us, you know, it's not a fe- place that we could realistically visit very easily. Um, and it's also quite far back in time. Um, so we, we swapped them, because we felt it [local history unit] was more relevant to the children.

Interviewees' explanations seem to draw on the view that the positioning of the earliest Year 1 content should draw upon relevance and relatability for children, manifested through close or known proximities. However, for both Freya and Beth this focus on beginning with 'concrete' contexts went beyond making content accessible for pupils. It also seemed to be a mechanism for equipping pupils to be able to make sense of the 'abstract' in the later history curriculum. For example, Beth suggested that pupils' engagement with their own history in Key Stage 1 was beneficial because,

> *it's placing themself in the world. I think they need to know who they are, where they fit into society, where they fit into family and the school, and the wider context because if they can't grasp where they fit in and who their grandparents are, and who a sibling is, then they're not going to have empathy for different cultures, different traditions, different lines of enquiry.*

This idea that the personal would lead to a greater empathy or ability to understand the perspectives of others, was also echoed in Freya's comment: "*when they then go on to do, you know, topics that they've not got a personal connection to, they can still make that sort of relation.*"

History is primarily about people and there seemed for Beth and Freya a belief that children might understand the beliefs and behaviours of people in the past better, if they develop this understanding in relation to themselves and their family first. In brief, beginning with the 'known' would better equip pupils to make sense of the 'unknown' later in their learning.

5.1.2 *From the 'known' to the 'unknown'*

Having begun with the known, some curriculum content was then justified by interviewees as being sequenced to go beyond the child's immediate spheres, again intersecting personal/social, geographical and chronological dimensions.

Max explained that the spring and summer units in Year 1 focused on individuals beyond the 'known' in the selection of explorers or pioneers in transport: *"and then I think we, we tried to add kind of like some of those other ones later on, you know, looking at significant people from a wider times span of history."* The focus on Explorers (Year 1, spring) was, for example, justified as extending pupils' locational and social knowledge within a longer chronological time frame:

> *we wanted one [unit] that kind of went further afield and kind of extended that timeline further back and we thought explorers was a good topic to do… just trying to look at lots of different people that we could kind of look at from different backgrounds.*

Beth presented a similar rationale, although her comment was in relation to a different unit: Transport at the end of Year 1. This was justified as extending pupils' geographical knowledge at a wider scale, with a period situated in the more distant past: *"then in the summer term, we then move on to transport because that's gonna now take their understanding from the current, to events beyond that living memory. So that's nationally and globally."*

Emma suggested that children would be better able to understand content which was geographically distant if it was sequenced later in the school year, hence the decision to position The Great Fire of London after the Local History unit (cycle B):

> *so, we, we looked at how the child will experience that [the curriculum], and things like the Great Fire of London, making sure that it came after a local experience, so*

> *that they're able to understand it in a greater depth than they would be able to, uh, as a younger Year 1 child.*

Her comment about how pupils will *"experience"* the curriculum seems to suggest a decision-making process that draws on ideas of child maturation, and therefore starts with the child (rather than the subject).

Freya also presented a rationale for expanding scales as pupils move through the Key Stage 1 curriculum,

> *actually if they've just looked at their community and their own history for two years, when they go on to Year 3 and they start looking at civilizations, I feel like they would be a little bit lost as to understanding, you know, where in the world that might be, who those characters are, the sort of concepts of like rebellion and you know, important documents that we look at.*

Freya identified the potential limitations of a Key Stage 1 curriculum which focused too much on the familiar and 'known', identifying an expanding scale as one way to prepare pupils for the content covered in the Key Stage 2 history curriculum. Research question 1 identified that some curriculum content can be described as *'curriculum as window'* and is future-focused. Freya's comment here seems to resonate with this idea and shows how being future-focused applies not only to content selection, but also content sequencing.

5.1.3 *Geographical scale and learning outside the classroom*

The idea that sequencing may be based, in part, on a curriculum journey from the geographically near to the more distant is, however, complicated by the positioning of those units that afforded opportunities for learning outside the classroom (LOtC). All four interviewees (Max, Emma, Alex, Beth) who referred to LOtC explained that school trips tended to take place in the summer term in order to capitalise on the expectation for better weather. Alex explained how, *"it [Castles - Year 2 summer] involves a visit, er, which ideally you want in the summer, not January."* And a similar rationale was given by Max:

we always make sure that we kind of get out and walk around the local area [Who are our Local Heroes? – Year 2 summer] and the weather's so much better… so yeah, I think it's reasonable. Sometimes it is just logistics of how it works best.

This desire to sequence curriculum content to align with seasonality could, as Max alluded to, be seen as a logistical decision. However, it may also reflect a belief that good teaching and learning in history should not be confined solely to classroom-based experiences. It may also resonate with themes identified in research question 1 about the pedagogical importance of providing children with physical experiences. Emma explained how,

> *the seaside in the summer term [cycle B – summer] was chosen obviously, because it's in the summer, so that we can hopefully have a longer, a, a trip that's a little bit further away, and take the children to the seaside, so they can experience that for themselves.*

And this value of concrete experiences was also commented upon by Beth:

> *I think that Local Heroes [Year 2 summer] we felt fitted nicely into the summer term because we could then, with the weather, go and explore our local area a bit more and be able to go and physically go to the museum.*

The idea that children should encounter the 'known' before the 'unknown' is therefore perhaps overly simplistic. As discussed in the previous chapter, '*curriculum as mirror*' involves content that reflects children's experiences. However, it also involves content that reflects beliefs about pedagogies associated with child maturation. In this instance, the need for children to *"physically go"* (Beth) and *"experience that for themselves"* (Emma) suggests that curriculum sequencing based on geographical scale is perhaps complicated by considerations of providing opportunities for the type of multi-sensory learning which is often associated with early childhood pedagogies.

5.2 Curriculum sequencing and phase transition

The second theme to emerge from data analysis was content sequencing as a response to phase transition. Decision-making included selecting content at the start of Year 1 which built upon learning experiences within the Reception year of EYFS, as well as selecting content at the end of Year 2 which aimed to prepare pupils for Key Stage 2. Overall, this decision-making involved consideration of pupils' prior and future curriculum experiences as well as consideration of overall curriculum coherence across the school.

5.2.1 *Phase transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1*

For all five interviewees, the beginning of Year 1 (autumn) presented as the term where there was the most consideration of content sequencing. Decision-making here seemed to be predicated on mitigating any issues associated with transition from the EYFS framework to the National Curriculum.

Beth was the most vocal about the potential issues associated with this transition phase: *"they [children starting Year 1] haven't yet grasped the understanding of, "what is history?" And then suddenly, we're saying, "Okay. Now, you're going to learn about five hundred years here, there, or everywhere… it's just completely out of context."*

One way to ease the path to transition was to select a curriculum focus which directly built upon content previously introduced in the Reception year. Mirroring findings from the previous chapter, the use of the term 'built' is deliberate here as this language was used by three interviewees, Alex, Max and Emma, as part of their rationales for content sequencing at the very start of Year 1. For instance, Alex explained that the first Year 1 unit on Transport focused on a continuation of content from EYFS, *"then I think we kind of introduced transport… because they do, it builds on knowledge from Reception."* Similar language

formed part of Max's explanation in his rationale for beginning Year 1 with the unit on Family History:

> *so I think we wanted to start with a topic that they could relate to… they look at toys in Early Years and again, that's almost like toys from the past. So I think we saw it as a good way of building on some [of that] as well.*

And the same language was used by Emma who stated, *"we wanted to build on what they've previously learnt,"* when justifying content selection for the autumn term of cycle B. Emma went on to explain, *"I [the child] would start with Victorian toys and games - which would already be familiar to me, because I've done it [toys] already in Early Years…I've got that experience of my own toys and games."*

An additional reason given by several interviewees was sequencing content at the start of Year 1 because it could be delivered using pedagogies typically associated with early childhood. Beth explained that the first Year 1 unit on Family History provided pupils with ongoing access to socio-dynamic play, *"… so the reason why we put it there [Year 1-autumn] is it fits in quite nicely to their role play area."*

Two other interviewees made reference to the use of story. Story formed the entire rationale for the sequencing of the first unit at Fir School. Freya explained, *"in Year 1, the first, uh, topic that they do, first unit, is called stories from history… um, the importance of that is because obviously children at that age are so familiar with stories. They hear stories all the time."* This was a theme echoed by Max as part of his explanation for beginning Year 1 with the unit on Family History: *"it's built on some of the stories that they've used in Early Years."*

While the EYFS framework does not constitute a curriculum, it is apparent that children's experiences in Reception were perceived by all interviewees as a factor that influenced the first history unit in Year 1. All interviewees made reference to either the

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content and/or the pedagogies associated with Early Years provision in their specific settings as forming part of their school approach to phase transition. Aspects of the present-focused decision-making that emerged as a finding in relation to curriculum content selection (such as child maturation) were therefore often situated at the very beginning of Key Stage 1.

5.2.2   *Phase transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2*

In contrast, content sequencing informed by phase transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was notably absent from most interviewee responses. Freya was the only subject leader who made a direct connection between the sequencing of content in the summer term of Year 2 and preparation for the Year 3 programmes of study.

Unlike the other schools in the sample, part of the Year 2 curriculum at Fir School includes content from the Key Stage 2 programme of study for history. Freya explained that placing some Key Stage 2 content at the end of Year 2 was seen to be a way of improving future pupil outcomes, *"because they have that foundation, when they go to Year 3 and you know, etcetera, you can start challenging them on more."* Freya explained that the spring and summer Year 2 units were therefore deliberately positioned as an introductory focus to early civilisations:

> *the end of Year 2, we start looking at, we do the Stone Age and then we do two terms on Ancient Egypt. Um, and obviously that then is giving them that sort of beginning of understanding of looking at civilizations because then for the whole of Year 3 and 4 is every unit is a different civilization.*

In the previous chapter, all interviewees made links between content decision-making in Key Stage 1 and future content covered in Key Stage 2. However, there was very little discussion about how that content might be sequenced and, in particular, sequenced from the end of Year 2 to the beginning of Year 3. Any potential continuity or discontinuity between

these key stages did not seem to present as a particular consideration for the other four subject leaders.

5.3 Curriculum sequencing and progression in history

The final theme to emerge was curriculum sequencing based upon perceived progression in history. Although interviewees' views varied about what might make the history 'harder', two overall strands emerged: progression in enquiry and progression in disciplinary and substantive knowledge. Two additional points for discussion also emerged, one related to the interchangeability of some in-year content sequencing, the other to teacher confidence.

5.3.1 *Progression in enquiry*

Two interviewees mentioned that content was sequenced in a way to make the process of historical enquiry progressively more challenging for pupils.

At Fir school, the enquiry question was presented as an end of unit assessment task. Freya explained,

> *as you get further up the school, the more challenging [enquiry questions] that they become, the more sort of like historical, uh, you know, disciplinary knowledge, they need to answer those questions… so you can see kind of how those questions evolve from Year 1, looking at how has your community changed [Year 1 autumn/spring], right to Year 2, looking at like, you know, impact and things like that.*

Historical enquiry also emerged as a key curriculum driver for Beth and had formed the focus of her final year undergraduate research project. She had completed a BA (hons) in Primary Education and recalled the history component of this course as, "*really focused on the use of enquiry and the use of artifacts within that enquiry approach. And that was where I found my real passion.*" Beth explained her understanding that progression in the subject was based on the presumed complexity embedded within the enquiry question: *"our plan is by the*

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end of Year 1, they've got that understanding of themselves, that enquiry. So now when you're Year 2, we can really build upon some of those more deeper enquiry questions." For example, she explained that the first Year 2 unit which included the question, 'should we still celebrate Bonfire Night?' required pupils to be able to debate the different ways Guy Fawkes has been represented – something she identified as more complex than planned Year 1 content, *"we can start to now they're a little bit older have those more in depth questions with them."* And the final Year 2 unit based on the enquiry question, 'Who are our local heroes? was deemed by Beth to be the most challenging: *"we felt it was really important for the children at the end of Year 2 to think about actually a hero means different things to different people. Where's the evidence? Where's the impact?"*

Although there is a statutory expectation in the National Curriculum for pupils to understand the methods of historical enquiry, at phase level it is only directly referenced in relation to Key Stage 3 (DfE, 2013). At Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum states that pupils should "regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions", whereas at Key Stage 1 pupils should simply "ask and answer questions" (DfE, 2013, p. 189). The choice of language here appears to suggest a difference in pupil expectations, but what constitutes progression in enquiry is not simple to delineate. In her comparison of the two enquiry questions, Freya refers to the disciplinary concepts of change and consequence, seeming to suggest that the latter poses more of a challenge than the former. Increasing challenge for Beth also seemed, in part, to focus on pupil understandings of impact or legacy. However, attempting to disassociate the concept from the substance forming the enquiry question, or to rank concepts by perceived complexity, is complicated by the cumulative and non-hierarchical nature of history – an issue which will be explored in the subsequent discussion of these findings.

5.3.2 *Progression in disciplinary and substantive knowledge*

The idea that some types of historical knowledge might be intrinsically more difficult than others also emerged from several interviewees. Although these responses were often not fully explained, they drew on a range of substantive and disciplinary knowledge bases.

In the previous chapter, opportunities for pupils to engage with different sources emerged as a factor influencing some content selection; this did not, however, present as a common theme in content sequencing. Freya was the only interviewee who explicitly referred to sources in this regard. She explained that the unit entitled 'Important Documents' was positioned at the end of Year 1 to prepare pupils for content later in the key stage:

> *but the reason we do this unit at the end of Year 1 is because of that importance of looking that we learn history through like documentation, like sources, because as they go into Year 2, the idea of sources is brought up a lot more.*

However, her comment refers to more source work rather than necessarily more difficult source work (however that may be perceived).

Freya also explained that some of the substantive concepts embedded in content were progressively more difficult for pupils to grasp. When justifying the sequencing of Year 1 spring and summer units she explained,

> *I think the main reason we decided to do a lot of them, the way we did, we looked… like how complex the topic was. Um, so the idea of like 'Rags to Riches' [a unit that focuses on leadership] is even though it's, there's still some challenges in there, it's not as complex as the idea of, um, you know, 'Invaders and Explorers' gets a little bit harder each unit that they do.*

Freya explained that pupils would need to understand that the concepts of 'invader' and 'explorer' might be subject to different viewpoints, depending on whether perspectives were insider or outsider in a particular period.

Alex explained how the autumn Year 2 unit 'What makes someone famous?' introduced pupils to the concept of historical significance; this was then consolidated in the subsequent unit on Explorers [spring]:

I think with kind of establishing the famous p[eople], the concept of being significant at the beginning the, the Year 2 there for them, that kind of then feed, feeds in a little bit to the explorers then, because then they've kind of al- already studied significance.

When reflecting on his Key Stage 1 curriculum sequence overall, Alex commented:

when you kind of look at where they've gone from quite, being quite simple with the Transport [Year 1 autumn], to then really looking at some of the themes in the Castles unit [Year 2 summer], it's quite, um, you can kind of see that progress, um, that castles wouldn't really work at the beginning of Year 1. You know, you couldn't put it there, it would just be too, too heavy.

When prompted, Alex explained this unit was 'heavy' for a number of reasons:

I mean, they get to the end of Year 2, and we really look at things like the, um, why William, Duke of Normandy, invaded England in 1066... they look at things like the Bayeux Tapestry, um, they look at, um, the design of castles. I think it's quite rigorous for them, um, how castles changed as well, over time...And then they kind of look at why, why people are still visiting castles today, really, as sort of an endpoint.

For Alex, 'harder' history seemed to draw on an inter-play of different factors; these ranged from the selection of substantive knowledge, source work, second order concepts of causation and change as well as how and why the past is remembered.

5.3.3 *Interchangeability of in-year content sequencing*

A contrasting view emerged from data analysis which can be categorised as content interchangeability. Several interviewees suggested that some particular units within Year 1 or within Year 2 could be taught in any order, with no perceived adverse impact on pupil outcomes.

For example, Freya suggested that the units on Rebellion and Important Women (Year 2 – autumn 1 and 2) could potentially be reversed*: "the reason why we do Rebellion before Important Women? That one I'm not sure is why we do, which I dunno if it would make any difference if we switch those two round."* Max produced a similar response in relation to the Explorers and Transport units (Year 1 – spring and summer). When questioned as to why one preceded the other, he commented, "*to be honest, those two topics we probably could have put either order."* He went on to explain that sequencing in Key Stage 1 presented a different challenge to content sequencing in Key Stage 2: *"I think it's more difficult…Year 3 upwards to Year 6, the topics are in chronological order."*

Alex, at an earlier point in the interview had justified positioning the unit on Castles at the end of Year 2 because it was 'heavy'. However, he later reflected on the overall curriculum sequence in Year 2 with the comment:

> *Um, there is no particular reason actually, um, Um, so, yeah, so that, there's kind of perhaps no deep think about where they've [units] gone, but I think you could switch them around and I don't think it would make a massive difference.*

This was similar to an earlier comment he made in relation to the units on Greatest and ghastliest events and Childhood in the sixties (Year 1 – spring and summer): *"it was kind of like, well, it can work anywhere, so, um, as long as the, kind of the skills and the things that are being taught are developed. Um, so, yeah, so there's no particular reason."* Although what constituted the components of "*skills"* or *"things"* was not expanded upon, Alex's comments suggest his understanding that one unit or period in history is not, *per se*, any more difficult than another. Challenge and complexity are not integral to the unit but are determined by the selection of the substantive and/or disciplinary knowledge ascribed to that unit.

However, it is interesting to note that none of the interviewees who did refer to the interchangeability of content sequencing made these comments in reference to the first unit (autumn) in Year 1. As discussed earlier, this unit seems to be pivotal both in its focus on 'known' scales and on ensuring effective pupil transition from EYFS. Where units could be put in *"either order"* (Max) or *"work anywhere"* (Alex), this was content that was taught in the subsequent terms of Key Stage 1.

5.3.4 *Progression in teacher confidence*

Max was the only interviewee who identified teacher confidence as a contributary factor for content sequencing. The final Year 2 unit on Local Heroes was deemed to be more challenging, *"that's why we put it as the third topic, to be honest…It takes a while to build up to it."* However, this was justified in terms of challenge for teachers, rather than for pupils.

Beth had associated the challenge of the Year 2 Local Heroes unit with pupil learning, but for Max it was more associated with teacher subject knowledge. He explained that local history was potentially more difficult for teachers as it required specific knowledge of the local area. Hence, it was left until the end of the school year:

> *those local history ones, they do take an awful lot of planning. I think even, you know, like with teachers, I think they're the units they find the hardest. … so we got the plans in place, but even then, you know, it's working with teachers and kind of giving them a bit more help, but yeah, local history definitely takes a lot more planning and a lot more help.*

His comment mirrors the guidance given by the publishers of the commercial scheme (Company A, 2021). This guidance advises schools to begin planning 'Who are our local heroes?' earlier in the school year, given the requirement to conduct the type of local research which is unlikely to be commercially published.

5.4   Summary of chapter findings in relation to each interviewee

The table below presents a summary of the key themes identified in this chapter and shows how these themes correspond to the interviewee responses for each school:

Main theme	Sub-theme		Ash	Beech	Elm	Fir	Maple
Curriculum sequencing as a range of scales	*Beginning with the known*	*personal/social*		x		x	x
		geographical			x		
		chronological	x	x	x	x	x
	From the known to the unknown	*personal/social*				x	x
		geographical			x	x	x
		chronological		x	x		x
	Geographical scale and learning outside the classroom		x	x	x		x
Curriculum sequencing and phase transition	*Transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1*	*content*	x		x		x
		pedagogy		x		x	x
	Transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2	*content*				x	
		pedagogy					
Curriculum sequencing and progression in history	*Progression in enquiry*			x		x	
	Progression in disciplinary and substantive knowledge		x			x	
	Interchangeability of in-year content		x			x	x
	Progression in teacher confidence						x

Table 11 Relationship between the factors influencing content sequencing and individual interviewee responses

Of the three factors affecting curriculum sequencing, the most dominant theme was sequencing at a range of scales and a child's journey from known to unknown contexts. Although personal/social, geographical and chronological scales emerged within this theme, it was the latter which presented as the most common factor. All interviewees discussed how

curriculum sequencing began with a focus on the recent past, more specifically within living memory. By contrast, a familiar geographical scale was considered less of a contributing factor. As discussed, this was due to decision-making that sequenced some units (often local history) later in the summer term, based on the expectation of better weather for learning outside the classroom.

The emphasis upon beginning with a known scale aligns with sequencing that is based on phase transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1; this was the only other theme which consistently emerged from all interviewee data. As discussed, the two themes are inter-related, as interviewees believed that beginning with content or pedagogical approaches considered familiar or accessible to the child would best facilitate effective transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1. There was, by contrast, less emphasis placed on transition to Key Stage 2. The exception was Fir School which deliberately segued the teaching of some of the Key Stage 2 programmes of study from Year 2 to Year 3. The focus here was upon content continuation, rather than upon forms of pedagogy.

Sequencing based on progression in history has emerged as a subservient factor. As discussed previously, progression in history is not integral to a particular unit or period but is determined by the choice of substantive and/or disciplinary knowledge ascribed to the study. This can be seen, albeit tacitly, in the way that three interviewees felt that in-year content could be interchangeable. An interesting finding is how Emma was the one interviewee who did not mention progression in history at all. As subject leader in a school with a cyclical curriculum, her silence is revealing; it is perhaps more problematic to justify a progressive route through the history curriculum when both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are in receipt of the same content.

It is also interesting to compare the data for Beech school and Maple school given their use of the same commercial curriculum. Neither Beth nor Max chose to deviate from the suggested sequence of this curriculum and yet the themes elicited from data analysis are, in many places, dissimilar. This is particularly evident in their responses to the potential relationship between curriculum sequencing and progression in history. Beth believed that the enquiry questions became progressively more difficult, Max did not refer to this. Max believed the local history unit was best placed in the summer term in order to develop teachers' confidence, Beth did not identify this as a factor. Max felt that some content sequencing could be interchangeable, Beth did not comment upon this. The different meanings Beth and Max brought to their sequencing rationales are perhaps redolent of this type of interpretivist research, where participants are active makers of meaning (Cohen et al., 2018).

5.5   Chapter summary

This chapter has explored three themes which emerged as factors influencing content sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum: an increasing range of scales, phase transition and progression in history. The most dominant theme was curriculum sequencing at a range of scales, intended to map a child's journey from the concrete to the abstract. The first term in Year 1 seemed to particularly elicit the most confident rationales for content sequencing; these drew upon attempts to ensure effective transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1 coupled with a desire to begin with contexts 'known' to the child. Other factors, such as transition from Year 2 to Year 3 and progression in history emerged as less dominant themes. Overall, it appeared that interviewees were more confident when discussing how their curriculum sequence enables children to access the curriculum, with less consensus manifested in their explanations about how the history 'gets harder'.

6   Subject leaders' agency to determine the curriculum

This chapter outlines the findings in relation to research question 3: what are history subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the content and sequencing of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum?

This chapter is broadly structured to align with the ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015) which is premised upon the view that teacher agency is not static in relation to school structures. Rather, it is relational, temporal and based on an interplay which is facilitated by material, cultural and structural influences. Action (or inaction) emerges as a response to environment(s) (Priestley et al., 2015), what Parker refers to as "actors-in-transaction-with-context" (2017, p. 35).

The chapter explores the extent to which primary subject leaders act as curriculum decision-makers and is structured around three themes identified from data analysis. The first theme to emerge was how past, iterational experiences had shaped subject leaders' views and behaviours towards their role as history subject leader. The second theme to emerge was subject leaders' use of material resources through CPD to both inform and validate their curriculum. The third theme to emerge was curriculum decision-making as a collegiate activity, influenced by both the cultural and structural norms of primary school contexts.

As this chapter make some reference to the biography of each subject leader, a brief outline of their ITT pathway is outlined below:

School	Subject Leader	ITT route
Ash	Alex	BA (hons) Special Needs and Inclusion PGCE primary education (5-11 years)
Beech	Beth	BA (hons) Primary Education QTS - *three year programme with final year research focus on history*
Elm	Emma	BA (hons) Social Studies PGCE primary education (3-7 years)
Fir	Freya	BA (hons) Primary Education QTS - *three year programme with history specialism*
Maple	Max	BA (hons) Primary Education QTS - *four year programme with final year research focus on history/geography*

Table 12 Overview of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) route for each interviewee

6.1   Iterational influences: past experiences informing present role(s)

The first theme to emerge was the extent to which previous experiences shaped interviewees' attitudes and behaviours towards their role as history subject leader. Interviewees drew upon a range of prior influences, both positive and negative. These ranged from their attitudes towards history (both as learner and as teacher) as well as prior experiences of subject leadership.

6.1.1   *Attitudes towards history and history subject leadership*

For two interviewees, Beth and Freya, the role of history subject leader was actively sought. Beth described her journey to subject leadership as follows: "*I approached my head teacher and I said, "Look." I said, "p- my passion is history. So, if ever that availability does come up for me to be able to take on that role, I'd love to.''* She then explained,

the opportunity arose because the lady who was already doing the history subject leadership, she was retiring. My head [teacher] knew my passion 'cause I had expressed it in interview, but also I think I had my nose in history already. So, she approached me and then I said, "Absolutely, I'd love to do that."

Freya's route to subject leadership was similar:

it was halfway through my NQT [Newly Qualified Teacher] year. So about three years ago now…our head teacher sent out an email saying that she had a few subject lead positions that are available…and that if we were interested to send her an email with our kind of like rationale behind why we thought we would be good for that role.

Freya was initially hesitant about applying due to her inexperience:

I always knew I wanted to be a history subject lead. I didn't know whether that was gonna be too early in my career, but I thought, you know what? It doesn't hurt to, you know, put in my sort of, you know, she doesn't have to go for that. So I just thought I'd go for it… it was something I was really passionate about …yeah, she [headteacher], she decided to give it to me.

For both Beth and Freya, it was their first leadership role in the school. Both had followed an undergraduate ITT programme with a route that offered the option to focus or specialise in history and both were proactive in seeking out the role, due to their *'passion'* for the subject.

Max had also chosen to specialise in history as part of his ITT programme and had held the role of history and geography leader at an earlier point in his career. Now a deputy headteacher, he had recently resumed the role of humanities leader: *"I think with like the new curriculum, the change in Ofsted. I mean I got asked to take history, geography on again three years ago."* Although his use of the passive voice, *"got asked",* suggests he was less proactive than Beth and Freya, Max felt similarly positive about the role: *"I was keen to develop it [history]."*

Alex had not chosen to focus on history. He had completed an undergraduate degree in Special Needs and Inclusion and then a one year primary PGCE. He explained that his

interest in becoming the subject leader stemmed from his enjoyment of teaching the subject: *"I've always enjoyed it. I've really enjoyed teaching it."* This positive prior experience influenced his recruitment to the role of history subject leader:

*s**o when I came [for interview], they needed a history sort of, or a DT [design & technology] leader. And I went for the history cause that's what I wanted… they just asked me to express an interest in what I'd like… I just got the history and just went from there.*

Emma was the one subject leader who did not express a pre-existing interest or passion for history. Despite not actively seeking out the role of subject leader, she stated, *"I've really enjoyed it, actually. Um, I didn't think I was going to at the start - it's not anything I've ever led before, and it's not something that I had a good knowledge of…"* The use of the word *"actually"* suggests that Emma was surprised at her positive experience of history subject leadership. Unlike the other four interviewees, her positive feelings towards history and history education could be viewed as a consequence, rather than a cause, of becoming subject leader.

6.1.2   *Previous experiences of subject leadership*

Three interviewees identified how previous experiences of subject leadership were influential or instrumental in their perceptions of what ought to constitute the role and behaviours of a subject leader.

Max's return to the role of history subject leader was a direct consequence of his earlier experiences:

I mean I was coordinating English. I got asked to change from English to history and geography … I think it, I mean, it was almost a joint decision amongst our SMT [senior management team] really. And I think we realized it needed to be developed heavily…40% of schools are getting deep dives [Ofsted inspection focus] for history.

His move from leadership of a core subject to foundation subjects was explicitly in order to satisfy an external performative agenda, requiring a need for competency in the role. Max was explicit about why he had been chosen: "*it was basically 'cause of my background and what I've done before.*"

Emma also had prior experience of leading core subjects (mathematics and English) and had held SLT roles, having previously been an assistant head at her current school and deputy headteacher at another school. Emma drew on these previous experiences when seeking to develop history at Elm school:

> *My first leadership role was in a school that was in special nee- uh, special measures, um, and I was English Leader, and we had a HMI [Her Majesty's Inspector] who was quite renowned for, you know, she wanted every, every letter crossed, and every... you know. So, it was difficult, and it was very rigorous, but that experience, I approach everything in that way now, so-...I am quite rigorous in every subject that I lead, so I'm used to that.*

Later in the interview she said, "*I'm also somebody that I can't sit back and coast, so if, if there's a job to be done, I'm going to do it, and I'm gonna do it well.*" Although Emma was new to history subject leadership, it was evident that she brought to the role her prior experiences as well as a belief (borne out of these experiences) about what successful subject leadership should look like.

Although prior experience may not necessarily, in itself, translate to future competence, it appeared that for both Max and Emma, their positive perceptions of these prior experiences gave them a sense of self-efficacy in relation to the history subject leadership role.

Alex, by contrast, was influenced by a less positive past experience. At a previous school he had held the role of Art and Design & Technology subject leader for one year. He spoke negatively of this former experience which he felt was limited in scope to budget

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holder: *"sort of ordering the Christmas stock, tidying the art store out and, you know, replenishing any resources, rather than actually doing any sort of curriculum work."* Alex made the decision to move to his current school because he felt it offered greater opportunities for career progression: "*they have a massive emphasis on leadership and developing subject leaders."* Alex therefore pivoted an earlier negative experience of constrained agency to effect change into a potentially positive one, as it informed his understanding of what he did and/or did not want in any future subject leadership role.

Using a previous successful or negative template for subject leadership therefore shaped attitudes towards how interviewees approached their role as subject leader. These past experiences ensured they either were able to secure the role of history subject leader or, having been given the role, were able to draw on previous experiences in their enaction of the role.

6.2   Material influences: developing agency through CPD

The second theme to emerge was interviewees' use of external, material resources to develop the curriculum, in particular through access to CPD. This was justified as a response to perceived deficits in subject expertise, lack of experience or lack of capacity to execute the role. CPD included generic leadership training, generic subject-specific training and bespoke subject-specific training. CPD was regarded both as a process to develop the curriculum, and as a means of quality assuring the curriculum. The latter particularly applied to engagement with the Historical Association and the rationale for applying for the Quality Mark award.

6.2.1   *Subject leaders' perceptions of the need for CPD*

Two interviewees justified the importance of accessing external support by making reference to perceived gaps in their own subject and pedagogical knowledge. Emma was the most explicit about this. She had completed an undergraduate degree in Social Studies, *"so*

none of that included any teaching of history at all," and then a one year postgraduate route to QTS: *"the PGCE was so fast, I don't even remember having any input on teaching history."* Although an experienced primary practitioner, she explained feeling daunted by the task of curriculum development:

> *the history curriculum, the National Curriculum, to me, and somebody that doesn't, didn't have the experience is very woolly…it's not prescriptive enough. So- it tells you what you need to teach, but it doesn't tell you how, or how to go about that… I remember feeling quite overwhelmed by, "okay, where do I go with this?"*

Similarly, Max justified his choice to purchase a commercial scheme of work because, *"I didn't feel that I could write a scheme from scratch because I didn't have enough background to do it."* This was in spite of his many years' experience as a primary teacher, his earlier role as a history subject leader and his focus on humanities education in the fourth year of his undergraduate degree programme. This may suggest his agency to develop the curriculum himself was curtailed by his perception of the knowledge that would be required to execute this task.

Two interviewees felt the need to draw on external resources due to limited capacity at school level. Alex explained that the school had developed their own schemes of work for history, but he liaised with an external consultant for supplementary subject resources because, *"he does have access to s- sources, which I think sometimes can be quite tricky to get hold of when you're kind of full-time teaching and having to do all of these other things."* And Beth explained that one rationale for selecting the commercial scheme that her school relied upon for humanities and science was that previously, *"we were having to put an awful lot of background work to make sure it was constantly up-to-date, whereas [commercial scheme] had the resources available."* Both of these comments indicate a view that the school history curriculum should be well-resourced. Unlike Emma and Max, however, their

rationale for seeking support seemed to draw upon a lack of time, rather than a lack of knowledge, to execute their role as subject leader.

Freya was a member of the multi-academy trust (MAT) history group. She identified her position in this group as follows:

> *I am the youngest there and the, the least experienced of them all…because I've worked quite closely with them [history subject leaders] from other schools that was a really, really like invaluable experience 'cause I've managed to pull like on their knowledge and their experiences. Um, which then helped me not only as a subject leader, but also as a teacher as well.*

Her reference to both knowledge and experience combined with reference to both leadership and teaching practice suggests her perception that all elements were areas for personal and professional development.

6.2.2 *Developing agency through non subject-specific CPD*

Two interviewees, Alex and Freya, identified the benefits of completing nationally accredited courses in leadership. Both had accessed National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), a series of non-subject specific qualifications devised by the DfE to support the professional development of teachers. Freya explained,

> *I'm currently undergoing the NPQLT [NPQ in Leading Teaching]. Um, so obviously that's a big part of being a subject leader. Um, and it's helped, you know, quite a lot in making those decisions as a subject leader and how I, how I am as a subject leader.*

Alex also referred to the impact of a generic leadership qualification,

> *I decided in the second year that actually the curriculum needed to be really designed and a bit more appropriate in areas. And then I started my NPQSL [NPQ in Senior Leadership] and I think really that's where I kinda took off, understanding some of the leadership behind things and how to really get people on board and think more strategically about the changes I wanted and the impact really.*

Alex went on to say, "*I think that's one of the key things I find really very difficult for primary teachers because having that balance of subject specialism, but also that leadership capacity to deliver what you want.*"

Alex's notion of *"balance"* suggests his view that his capacity to effect change was not solely dependent on subject knowledge but also upon how that knowledge could be transacted into meaningful outcomes. It complements Freya's idea of *"how I am as a subject leader",* suggesting that leadership behaviours, however they may be defined, might be considered an important component of the role.

6.2.3   *Developing agency through generic subject-specific CPD*

Externally delivered subject-specific CPD was accessed by several interviewees. Support drew upon a range of bases including knowledge development (both subject and pedagogical) as well as signposting to resources. Overall, subject-specific training was delivered by those external to the immediate school community. The sites of a primary history community were to be found beyond the school: at trust level, at conferences, or at courses and workshops.

Alex had accessed subject-specific locally based training:

> *the school invests a lot in subject leaders in terms of CPD. I've had a lot of training, as I said, so I've been on a lot of the [redacted] courses, um, so usually just regional training. I found this training quite inspiring in terms of developing enquiries. I felt like I really understood a lot from that, and actually being quite rigorous with children in Key Stage 1.*

Alex explained that this rigour included a greater focus on disciplinary processes in history: *"people can just lift things off some commercial website and it can be a bit cartoony and things, whereas this is more about looking at real sources and really actually not dumbing it down for the children."*

Beth stated that she had also benefited from training at a local level:

> I went on a [history] subject leadership course. It was a few years ago now, and but they've then directed me, so through them and their blogs, I'm able to then access what I need through the website… we went through a few areas where they knew there were minimal resources out there.

Beth's view of the course was positive, although her recollection seemed to relate more to resource signposting, rather than developing her understanding of the subject and how to lead it.

Freya belonged to the MAT history group: *"I'm part of the history community for the trust. Um, so there's a small group of us. I think there's four of us, um, that work with, um, the lead for the curriculum."* Freya felt that membership of this group was pivotal in her development as a subject leader: *"I'd say the biggest part of training I've had though, and it not necessarily would come across as training, but is being part of that history community and being able to write the curriculum."* Freya clearly valued the opportunity to work with others at subject, rather than school level, which was evidenced by her repeated use of the term *"history community"*.

Training provided by the Historical Association, was positively regarded by several interviewees. However, my known connection with the Historical Association probably influenced these comments (or at the very least precluded any negative remarks). Emma described how, *"I've had a lot of support from the History [sic] Association. Um, I've done quite a lot of the courses. Um, and the staff have done a couple themselves as well. And I've found that invaluable, if I'm honest."* Beth echoed this, commenting, *"we became members [of the HA] because I found the CPD was really good. And I found the resources were really helpful as well online."*

Alex discussed the impact of attending the Historical Association annual conference: "*I've been obviously to the HA conference and things like going to the workshops, things like [name redacted] workshop really inspired me to really rethink, actually, where are we off?"* As an example, Alex had been considering the importance of broadening the curriculum: *"I'd already kind of had an idea of what I was going to do anyway, so then I came back and sort of thought about the idea and discussed it with senior leaders."* To this extent, Alex used his access to CPD as form of leverage to justify or confirm his decision-making to the school leadership team.

6.2.4 *Developing agency through bespoke subject-specific CPD*

Several interviewees also arranged for CPD which was bespoke. This type of CPD was highly specific to each interviewees' local contexts, their school/trust curriculum or their own professional development. This type of CPD, again, made use of knowledgeable others who were sourced beyond the immediate school community.

Max had begun the process of curriculum development by researching a number of commercial schemes. He then approached the author of the selected scheme to deliver school-based training:

> *so I, I got in contact with her and said, "we love the planning, but we just wanna make it more relevant for our area and the context we've got the children coming in". So she did initial kind of training with all staff and then she worked individually with people and me and we just looked at kind of like adapting the plan and making it more relevant for us.*

In later training, he sought advice about making the school curriculum more diverse: *"...and again, it was like [external advisor] that helped us do that."*

The MAT history subject group to which Freya belonged also drew upon the advice of an external history specialist: "*we met on Teams [software] and we just kind of went through our curriculum and she [external adviser] just kind of gave us pointers here and there where we could take things.*" For example, it was the external advisor who suggested that pupils should be given greater opportunities to compare a range of diverse people from the past: "*... and it was from there really, we went away and said actually, "yeah, that makes sense." So we started making those changes from then.*"

Similar to Max's example, the focus was upon diversifying the curriculum; however, Max had deliberately sought out support in this area whereas in the example of Fir school, it was the consultant who suggested this as an area for improvement. Equally, Max was able to exercise autonomy in approaching an external advisor of his choice. Freya, on the other hand, explained that the MAT external advisor was already contracted to support the history group prior to her appointment as subject leader, suggesting that her agency to initiate CPD of her choosing was bounded by the decision-making of others.

Emma arranged for an external CPD provider to deliver staff training: "*he also came in, um, and spoke to the staff, um, we did some chronology, and, um, enquiry.*" However, she felt that one of the most important outcomes was the opportunity to develop her own professional knowledge as a subject leader:

> *the, um, disciplinary, um- and the substantive, the substantive concepts, it took me ages to my head round that... I still hadn't quite got it until I sat down with [external provider]. So, I had that opportunity to say, "Well I don't, I don't understand what, what is it I'm not getting here?" And then that's when it sort of hit home really...and then, then I thought, "Right, okay, now I understand it." But I think it was because it was a one to one.*

Max was one of two interviewees who drew upon specific local expertise to develop the school curriculum. He explained,

it was a lot of research. I mean, I've, I've always grown up in the area and kind of read a lot of local history bits and things like that, but we're quite lucky. So we've got like a heritage group based at [redacted] library and what they do is they do workshops with the children. And what I did was I spoke to him and asked him about some of the best people [significant individuals] to do…there's a local historian as well. He's kind of written lots of book about [redacted]. So I spoke to him as well about different people that we could use.

Beth made a similar comment, explaining, *"we've been able to work very closely with the [redacted] Heritage Foundation and build upon that local history,"* stating, "*I organise all of that."* In both instances, interviewees clearly valued access to local heritage experts and community networks, but were also proactive about forging these connections in order to develop their curriculum.

6.2.5 *Using the Historical Association as a mechanism for quality assurance*

Max explained that he had selected the commercial scheme based on two dimensions of quality assurance: the profile of the author and external validation of the scheme:

for somebody like [name redacted] to write a scheme, you know, you know, you not going on the wrong lines and if it's based on a clear progression map, that's been approved by Historical Association and yeah. You know, you're getting along right, along the right lines, really.

Emma explained her rationale for the choice of external CPD provider as follows: "*when I realised he was linked to the History [sic] Association, it gave that validation then that, you know… he would be a good source."* Beth used similar language to justify her use of the subject association for CPD, *"I think the Historical Association really helped alongside that [curriculum development] … it was very good once everything was up and running just to confirm for peace of mind, actually, we were doing the right thing."*

Several interviewees identified how the process of applying for the Quality Mark constituted, itself, a form of CPD. Emma, explained*:*

> *I knew I needed some sort of training…I googled history subject leadership training, and then, the History [sic] Association came up, and then that's where I saw the Quality Mark, and I thought, "Oh, okay, what's this about?" … it did give me something to, um, to hang my hat on, and to give me a structure to move forward, um, and to know that what I was doing was the right thing.*

Alex made a similar comment: *"the Quality Mark in a sense, really kind of, um, going through that process and thinking about the different elements of the criteria sort of supported with that [curriculum development]."* And this strategy was also adopted by Max,

> *we knew we wanted to develop history and I think we saw that [Quality Mark] as the best way to do it… we've been using it [Quality Mark self-assessment audit] for our action plans, that school development plan. Yeah. It was great. Like say it was really, really helpful and kind of helping us like what our targets were, what we wanted to develop.*

For these three interviewees, the Quality Mark was viewed as a trusted means to develop the curriculum.

Beth and Freya both explained that the process of applying for the Quality Mark was based on having external verification of subject 'success'. Beth stated,

> *I thought, "actually, I would like to make sure we are doing everything we can for these children in terms of history." … it's all very well in your own bubble. But sometimes, someone outside of the bubble has a completely different view, don't they? … having that outside person [Quality Mark assessor] come in and us to be able to justify what we're doing.*

This notion of a *"bubble"* perhaps suggests a perception of lack of confidence in expertise at school level, hence the need to draw on support and knowledge from elsewhere. A similar comment was made by Freya:

> *there's always kind of the, not the fear, but that you're not sure whether it [the curriculum] is as good as you want it to be because you've written it from scratch. So it was, we wanted to get that quality assurance.*

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Both Beth and Freya were ambitious for their curriculum; this desire to do *"everything we can for these children"* and for the curriculum to be *"as good as you want it to be"* reveals their purpose in engaging with the Quality Mark award.

For the other three interviewees, the motivation for demonstrating achievement in history drew on external performativity, in particular the Ofsted inspection process. Max explained, "*I think we saw it [Quality Mark] as like almost good practice for a deep dive if we're gonna be honest. And I think maybe if it wasn't for that Ofsted thing, maybe we might never have gone for it."* Emma echoed this comment, *"the other thing is we- o- Ofsted are due, as well, so that was another reason for choosing the Quality Mark."* And Alex also referred to an imminent school inspection:

> *we were due an Ofsted inspection as well. It was also something that, that for us, you know, when you, you, I suppose speaking to an inspector, you can say as well, actually, you know, we've been assessed by the Historical Association for our Quality Mark.*

The Quality Mark seemed to serve a dual function in both developing interviewees' capacity as subject leaders whilst equally acting as a mechanism to demonstrate their capacity as subject leaders. In comparing interviewees' responses, it is interesting to note the similarity in phrases such as *"justify what we are doing"*, *"validation"*, *"the right lines"*, *"the best way"*, *"the right thing"*. This notion of a "*right thing*" suggests, by definition, the belief in a 'wrong thing'. The way that interviewees chose to associate legitimacy with the Historical Association and the Quality Mark criteria may suggest a lack of confidence in their own understandings of what might constitute proficiency in primary history education. This may be drawn from their earlier perceptions of a lack of capacity as subject leaders and/or deficits in their subject-specific pedagogical and knowledge bases.

The acquisition of the Gold Quality Mark award and my known association as a Quality Mark assessor probably mitigated against any negative comments in this area. Interviewees were unlikely to reflect negatively on an award they had recently been given, especially to someone who formed part of that awarding body. However, what was common across responses was the assumptions made about the integrity of the Quality Mark, the Historical Association, and those associated with it. In a culture of performativity engendered by high stakes school inspections, there seemed to be no awareness of the irony of using one set of external criteria as preparation for, or even as defence against, another set of external criteria.

6.3 Cultural and structural influences: decision-making as collegiate activity

The final theme to emerge was subject leaders' perceptions that history curriculum decision-making should be a social and ongoing process involving other staff members. This seemed to be predicated on views of a workplace norm based around collegiality, which intertwined knowledge of Key Stage 1 learners alongside knowledge of the subject. However, associating agency with the formal, positional role of subject leader was complicated by school staffing structures and hierarchies. Navigating these hierarchies involved acknowledging the multiple roles (both past and present) held by teachers at primary level; they also involved particular consideration of the role of the headteacher in curriculum formation.

6.3.1 *Decision-making as collaborative practice*

All the interviewees described their workplace culture as one based around collaborative practice. This collegiality seemed be based on an understanding that those who will be delivering the curriculum should be part of the conversation about what should constitute the curriculum. The process of decision-making was fluid, consisting of social

interactions that were both informal (e.g. ad hoc conversations with individual colleagues) as well as formal (e.g. planned staff meetings).

Having been signposted to a potentially suitable commercial scheme for history by her headteacher, Beth explained the subsequent decision-making process: "*I then took it to people in key stage meetings first. Said, "quick overview. Be honest with me. Will this work?" They went, "yeah." And then we sat down in a whole staff meeting.*" Beth explained the importance of working as a whole staff team: "*we're very open with each other… that's the way we always work here.*" For Beth, the underlying rationale for this was a view of distributed expertise: "*I think the reason why we do [curriculum decision-making] all together is because a lot of the time expertise comes from everywhere. So actually let's build upon that altogether.*" Beth gave the example of a teacher being able to signpost another colleague to support for teaching about the Romans based on prior experience of this unit. This sharing of expertise, in Beth's comment, seemed to relate to information sharing drawn from practical experience, indicated by her question to staff *"will this work?"*

Max's school had chosen to use the same commercial scheme as Beth. However, he had selected this himself and had then subsequently gained the approval of the headteacher:

> *once we decided on the scheme, like I say, we adapted it heavily. So that, that was working with class teachers to look at what topics we could change, what we would have to develop, which bits we could add in, but really, I mean, that consultation has gone across three years.*

Beth tested out the potential scheme with staff before committing to its purchase, while at Max's school, the scheme was *"decided"* with the headteacher, then feedback was sought from staff about how to adapt it to the school context. In both instances, however, it was felt necessary to work with teachers as part of a curriculum consultation process.

Emma had worked with a member of the school SLT to map out a draft history curriculum, which was then approved by the headteacher. She then explained how this was shared with staff,

> *there was a staff meeting, um, at the end of the summer term, where I talked to them about, where I told them this is the new curriculum, basically. But what I had done, prior to that, was taken it to each key stage, and had a conversation with them about it. So, I didn't just say, "This is what I want, and this is what you'll, what you'll do".*

In this example, Emma seemed to draw on both formal meetings, as well as informal conversations, as a mechanism for curriculum construction. The staff meeting acted, in effect, as a formal 'rubber-stamping' of a curriculum which had already been informally negotiated.

Emma was the only subject leader who had prior experience as a Key Stage 1 class teacher. This was a factor that she considered to be of importance,

> *I have got a lot of experience in Key Stage 1, and I have taught those units, so, you know, I've lived it, whereas I think sometimes if you haven't, and you're making that decision for other people - it can sometimes be the wrong decision.*

However, in spite of this experience, she still considered it important to consult and negotiate with staff, *"cause I don't think it's a decision that I could make on me own, I think it should be something that we should collectively consider."*

Similar to Emma, Alex devised a provisional history curriculum and then sought feedback from Key Stage 1 colleagues: *"I met with the, the phase leader at the time, and I did have a lot of discussions, informal discussions, with the year group teachers."* Unlike Emma, Alex had not taught in Key Stage 1 before and this lack of phase experience formed part of his rationale for consulting with Key Stage 1 teachers: *"obviously there are things where I've discussed with, like, the, the Key Stage 1 staff, because obviously I've nev- I've never taught Year 1 or, so then I would've liaised with them for and asked for their perspectives."* His repeated use of the word *"obviously"* suggests his view that seeking the

advice of those with phase expertise or experience should form a necessary component of the curriculum-making process.

As Fir school belonged to a MAT, Freya worked collegiately with two communities: one was the history community of the trust and the other was her own school community. She explained her role in the MAT as follows: "*so we meet every term to discuss, you know, the curriculum, whether any changes need to be made, things like that.*" Freya then sought feedback from school colleagues at the point of curriculum delivery and implementation:

> *obviously when we have like CPD sessions and I go on learning walks and things like that, I get a feel for what teachers are thinking about the curriculum…and I, I quite blatantly just ask them "what [do]you think about this?"*

Freya went on to explain, *"we are quite open as a school that we wouldn't be offended if someone said it [the curriculum] wasn't what we thought it would be."* Freya explained that this feedback would then be relayed back to the MAT history group. This suggests that Freya's role in curriculum decision-making could be seen as two-way, acting as a 'curriculum go-between' who mediates between each group. As an early career teacher with her first experience of subject leadership, this type of internal/external collective decision-making was Freya's professional norm. She did not perceive decision-making at MAT level to be a deficit to her agency or autonomy, perhaps because she had never had any autonomy to lose.

6.3.2   *Ongoing curriculum co-construction*

A theme that emerged from all interviewees was how curriculum construction was a constant cycle of review, revision and refinement. This cycle seemed also to be based on a degree of collaborative, rather than unilateral, decision-making.

This process of evaluation was often formalised through staff meetings. At Beech school this was an iterative process. Beth explained,

we host, um, weekly key stage meetings as well as staff meetings. So, everyone's able to have the opportunity, including me as history subject leader, to feed back any research, anything we need to think about, curriculum based… because I think it's important for the curriculum to make sure that we're constantly looking back at it and making sure what we're delivering is the best for the children.

At Fir School a similar review took place at MAT level. Freya explained how the history subject leader team,

meet at the start of every year and um, we kind of discuss, is there any kind of changes that we want to make? Uh, what are they going to be? When are we going to make those changes, et cetera, et cetera, who's going to do it?

The idea of making ongoing refinements was also mentioned by the other three interviewees. Max explained, "*I think we're still trying to make it more diverse and I think every year we tweak it slightly and change it.*" Emma used the same language to make a similar point:

it's not that we've said, "This is the curriculum, it's set in stone," 'cause it's not. We will evaluate next year what's gone well, and what hasn't gone well, and then tweak it and make sure that, you know, it's the best it possibly can be for staff and children.

And Alex explained how Key Stage 1 teachers,

they would have had inputs in there, and I would have said, "well, do you think this would work or that would work?" Or you know, and they've come back to me with different things, so it's never been set in stone.

His remark, *"do you think this would work?"* resonates with Beth's earlier comments about seeking teacher's empirical knowledge to ascertain how curriculum intentions might translate into classroom practice.

What is noticeable across all interviewee comments is the use of similar language: *"never been set in stone"* or *"then tweak it"*. At the heart of this constant cycle of review and refinement is a projective intention to produce a curriculum that is the "*best it possibly can*

be". What is also striking is the consistent use of the plural pronoun 'we' rather than the singular 'I' to describe this iterative, fluid process. And while it seems that the subject leader seems to be the protagonist of these conversations, they are, nevertheless, conversations.

6.3.3 *Navigating school hierarchies*

Subject leadership of the foundation subjects has traditionally been seen as a middle management role. However, primary teachers often hold multiple roles in a school (DfE, 2023e). Most of the subject leaders were also class teachers; two of the subject leaders were also members of their school SLT. The following diagram shows the interplay between the key roles held by each interviewee:
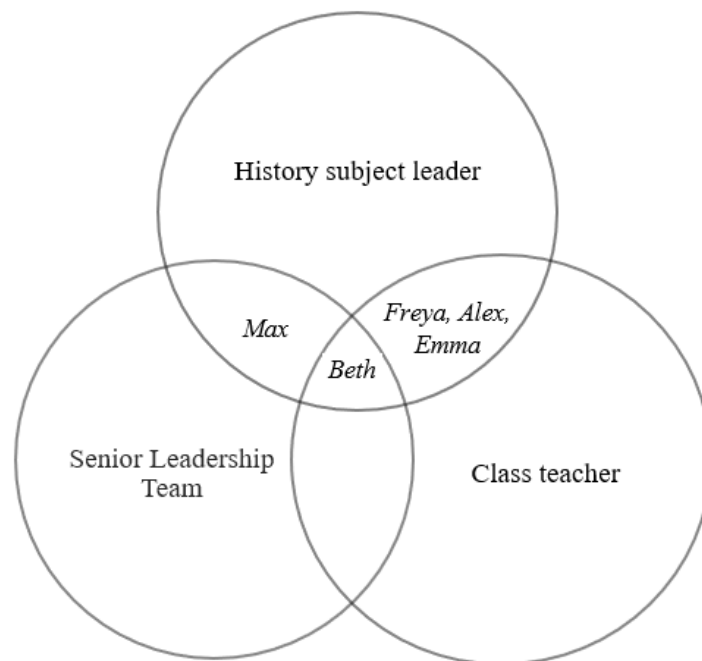

Figure 6.1 Key roles held in school by each interviewee

However, this diagram does not show the complexity of leadership structures at individual school level. Attempts to delineate any interplay between any presumed lines of authority and subsequent agency for decision-making were therefore problematic, a factor acknowledged by most of the subject leaders themselves.

Beth as both subject leader and assistant headteacher explained, *"I would personally report now, as assistant head, um, to my head teacher… but then we have other members of staff with different foundation subjects, who would report to myself and the head teacher."* Beth used phrases such as, "*I'm kind of merging between them both there"* and *"they're linked, but they're not,"* when trying to explain the intersections between the different positions she held, suggesting that attempts to make an artificial distinction between her work as subject leader and as assistant headteacher did not reflect the more complicated reality of her everyday professional practice.

Max was in similar position as both deputy headteacher and history subject leader:

it's yeah [pause] it's, it's difficult 'cause it comes, I suppose it [history] sits under that subject leadership role, which really, I suppose when if we're plan it out would be under middle leadership, but it makes it more complicated. I've got the deputy head role. Yeah. I, I don't really know [pause] it's difficult. I mean, we haven't got a plan like that, but I mean, I suppose you could say it sits under middle leadership, but I've got a senior leadership role, so it's yeah. It's difficult.

His hesitant response shows his discomfort with trying to marry a theoretical 'middle leadership' role with his actual 'senior leadership' position as deputy headteacher.

Alex was not sure how to position history within the leadership hierarchy at Ash school, *"I suppose it's like middle management or middle management team."* However, he had an additional school-wide responsibility:

I'm also whole school curriculum leader as well. So I oversee all of the, the subject leaders… it [history subject leader] has just stayed with me cause it's always been the one thing that, you know, that I've wanted to keep and they've known I've done well.

Alex's use of the phrase "*just stayed with me"* could perhaps suggest that he felt he had outgrown this role, and so to position Alex as 'just' history subject leader does not therefore capture his perception of his additional status in the school. Although this additional position

as curriculum lead did not confer membership of the school leadership team, Alex described how he felt part of a wider school leadership team, stating that, *"obviously the curriculum role forms that leadership role as well."*

Fir School also had a member of staff with responsibility for the overall curriculum at school level. This was a role that Freya did not have. Freya explained,

> *we have a curriculum lead, um, who oversees the whole curriculum, but she relies quite heavily on the subject leads to kind of go out, do their part and then feedback to her. Um, so she is a member of SLT.*

This staff member was also overall history lead for the MAT, further complicating any presumed lines of hierarchy. This meant that Freya was accountable for history both at school level and at wider trust level to the same member of staff.

Emma had previously been an assistant head at her school:

> *I left with a- being on SLT, and then came back not being on SLT, so for me, that balance was quite difficult, because I'm used to having that, you know, that input, and that understanding of what's going on in the background. And obviously, that's different now.*

However, Emma felt she retained some of the influence she had acquired from this previous role:

> *but because of my background, I do think that's given me a little bit of more, um, clout, is that the right word? I think, um, because, because they [SLT] know I've got experience, they respect my, um, decisions, you know, and, and usually, if I ask for something to be done, they back me up on that, and, um, I have had the support of SLT, so that's made a big difference.*

Emma's past experiences in the school context therefore influenced her present perception of her agency to fulfil her role. Irrespective of whether Emma was still perceived as a figure of authority in the school, this was how she saw herself. This suggests that a single lens focus on current job roles or titles may be insufficient when attempting to ascertain agency.

Attempts to align the agency of history subject leadership as a middle management role are therefore potentially problematic, as they may not capture the multiple roles (both past and present) held by subject leaders at any given time.

6.3.4 *Negotiating with Key Stage 1 class teachers*

Interviewees described any tensions or adaptations related to curriculum content or sequencing as a series of informal negotiations or compromises with Key Stage 1 class teachers. These discussions seemed to draw on tacit acknowledgement of the interplay between knowledge of the subject, phase and learner. However, these discussions also involved some exercise of authority as subject leader.

Alex gave an example of negotiating the substantive knowledge covered within a unit [Childhood in the 1960s – Year 1 summer] with Year 1 teachers:

> *just a couple of weeks ago, the Year 1…came around and said, "We're doing the 1960s," um, "We don't feel this is working, could we, we do more on the toys of the 1960s and extend a little bit on that?" I was like, "yeah, that's fine," er, that wasn't an issue.*

Alex explained that the unit was intended to focus on a range of aspects of childhood, including schooling and domestic life, as well as toys and games. The teachers wanted to focus more in depth on fewer aspects, which Alex suggested was a consequence of missed learning due to impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Freya provided a similar scenario of acceding to Year 1 staff requests for less content, covered in greater detail. The Year 1 autumn unit on Stories from history had originally been planned to focus on a different story every lesson, but this was adapted in response to teacher feedback:

> *I went into the Year 1 earlier on last year and the Year 1 teacher said to me, "look, it's just not working. They're not, you know, really getting a full understanding of the*

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story. They're asking questions that, you know, we're never gonna be able to answer because they've only looked at it for a lesson, you know, is there any chance I can look at a story for a couple of lessons?"

Freya explained, "*so I gave her permission to do that for that year cause I knew that that would work for that class.*"

Beth's negotiation with teachers was for greater breadth (not depth). She explained how the Year 1 unit on Explorers was broadened in response to teacher feedback:

the Year 1 teachers were talking to me and they were saying that "we understand exactly why we're teaching the explorers but we feel that we could expand. We feel that it's all very prescribed and we feel that we want to talk about [a] wider range of people, not just these two notable people in history, but we want to go into a bit more detail with it." So what we've done is, we're still going to talk about those people we've mentioned. But we've also built that in.

While class teacher voice led to a compromise of the planned curriculum in all three instances, it is noticeable that approval-seeking was sought from the three subject leaders first. Freya's use of the term *"I gave her permission"* further emphasises her formal positionality as subject leader. In two instances, staff used similar language such as, *"we don't feel this is working*" and *"it's just not working"*, suggesting that these negotiations about curriculum implementation draw mainly upon experiences of Key Stage 1 classroom practice.

Emma compromised on the inclusion of an entire unit. As previously discussed in Chapter 5, she was hesitant about the inclusion of the Great Fire of London in the curriculum; this was due to the distance of London from the school location, and also because she considered events from the more distant past to be less developmentally appropriate for younger pupils. However, attempts to remove this unit from the curriculum had encountered resistance from class teachers:

the staff love that unit, they really enjoy doing it, so that's why it's in there, um, because when I spoke to them, that was one of the first, you know, "We'd le- we really wanna do that, the children love it." It was just the Great Fire of London they particularly wanted to keep, um, so we did keep that.

From Emma's recount, the unit seemed to be retained on the basis of both staff and pupil engagement, rather than potential learning outcomes. The compromise for Emma (as discussed in the previous chapter) was her decision to position this unit later in the school year when pupils would be slightly more mature.

However, not all teacher requests were granted. Emma explained, "*staff at the moment, are saying that everything is very in depth, and it is taking them a long time to deliver [the curriculum]. ... Um, and I've made them stick with it [laughs].*" She explained that raising the status of history was competing with the demands of the other subjects in the curriculum. Alex explained that class teachers sometimes try to alter the curriculum as they move in and out of different year groups: "*I'm always careful of not just going along with teacher preferences... Yeah. So, it is, sometimes you just have to say, "well, no, that just can't happen" [laughs].*" Alex felt that phase experience was not, in itself, sufficient to drive curriculum decision-making:

> *I mean, I think the, the difficulty I think with this [negotiating with staff] is sometimes with... not everybody's necessarily always thinking from the same, um, will think from a history perspective because not everybody's going to be a history specialist, are they?*

From the examples given by interviewees, there does not appear to be a consistent theme underpinning these negotiations. Compromises ranged from teachers wanting to teach in more depth or conversely in more breadth, to requests for retaining units traditionally considered 'popular' in Key Stage 1. What is consistent is the compromise effected between the intended curriculum and the actual curriculum, based on assumptions or experiences

about 'what will work'. The second consistency is the subject leader being consulted and exerting their authority over the curriculum in allowing these changes to come into effect. The positional role of the subject leader is clear in all these examples, both in acceding to teacher requests and also in denying them. It is interesting to note, however, that both Emma and Alex laughed at the point where they could be seen to be enforcing, rather than negotiating, the curriculum. This may suggest a potential discomfort when, as subject leaders, they move beyond a collegiate norm and assert their agency based on their formal role.

6.3.5   *The active role of the headteacher*

The final theme to emerge was the role of the headteacher, who was deemed by all interviewees as being actively involved in the process of curriculum construction. This involved a range of dimensions including curriculum signposting, involvement in decision-making processes and a formal 'rubber stamping' of the curriculum.

At Birch school it was the headteacher who had originally suggested the commercial scheme that was adopted. Beth explained,

> *she [headteacher] was very heavily involved, actually. So she was the person who, so, when we were using [commercial scheme for another subject], she actually said, "oh, look, there's a history and geography one, let's have a look at those in more detail" and then brought it down to me... so it did come from the top.*

Beth felt very positively about the involvement of her headteacher in school curriculum development, "*our headteacher's very good as well. So she's got a look at the curriculum from a sequence and progression point of view.*"

At Freya's school, the principal was actively involved in the process of decision-making: *"when we were making lots of decisions and lots of changes, she would attend [meetings] because she was a big, you know, focal point."* However, these meetings took

place with other history subject leaders at MAT level. Freya explained this process as follows:

> *our principal is still in charge of, she oversees all three subjects, so she oversees history, science, geography… so any changes that are made or any decisions made, they still have to go through my principal for the trust because she oversees all three of them.*

The dual role of Freya's headteacher is complicated here and perhaps reflects the changing structures in schools that belong to multi-academy trusts. It seems that her headteacher's oversight and involvement in decision-making processes was more a function of their wider trust role, than their role as school headteacher.

At Elm school, Emma had originally mapped out a provisional history curriculum with the school assistant head and then "*we did run it through SLT.*" Having provisionally agreed the curriculum content and sequencing, Emma explained, "*then the head just checked everything, and oversaw to make sure that everything we'd got matched the National Curriculum, and that we were covering what we needed to.*" In this example, the role of the headteacher seems to be one of curriculum oversight and monitoring. However, Emma went on to say, "*so, it was, it was very much a team effort,*" suggesting she held a positive view of this oversight. More importantly, she seemed to view the headteacher as forming part of the team.

Both Max and Alex began by stating that they had decided on the curriculum, before then acknowledging the involvement of their headteachers. Alex first stated, "*I kind of have been the driving force in everything, really, and I suppose for me I've had the main say in what's done.*" However, he then went on to say*, "Um, I think I've always, I suppose I <u>have</u> [emphasis] collaborated in a sense because I've always worked closely with the headteacher.*" Alex seemed to hold a positive view of these interactions, "*so she's... so, if I've*

had ideas, she's kind of always, um, then coached me through in a way, kind of my thinking,"
suggesting he perceived his headteacher to occupy a supportive role.

Max presented a seemingly unilateral decision to go ahead with his choice of commercial scheme:

> *to be honest, I, I decided on the scheme, I mean, I, I went, I did the research. I had to go back to the head teacher and just say, "I've done my research. I've looked at these" kind of, almost spoke about each scheme. And it was, I think it was decided from there that we do it.*

However, his references to *"had to go back to the headteacher"* and *"it was decided from there"* still suggest a process of approval or permission-seeking, albeit more tacit.

Headteachers' actions therefore differed in relation to curriculum decision-making. This involvement ranged from suggesting the adoption of a commercial scheme, to actively being involved in content decision-making, to coaching through ideas, and to ultimately curriculum 'rubber-stamping'. However, in spite of these differences, two commonalties are present across all schools. The first commonality is that all the headteachers were involved. The subject leaders may have been the locus of action but the headteacher seemed to act as the locus of control. The second commonality is this involvement was presented as a 'natural' part of curriculum development, suggesting this is a workplace norm in primary settings. There was no indication that any of the subject leaders perceived the need to communicate, consult or 'check in' with their headteacher as an impediment to the exercise of their role. Rather, it was seen to be a mechanism for developing, facilitating or confirming their agency as subject leaders.

6.4   Summary of chapter findings in relation to each interviewee

The table below presents a summary of the key themes identified in this chapter and shows how these themes correspond to the interviewee responses for each school:

Main theme	Sub-theme	Alex	Beth	Emma	Freya	Max
Previous experiences	*Positive view of history*	x	x		x	x
	Prior experience of subject leadership	x		x		x
Developing agency through CPD	*Constrained capacity*	x	x	x	x	x
	Non subject-specific CPD	x			x	
	Generic subject-specific CPD	x	x	x	x	
	Bespoke subject-specific CPD		x	x	x	x
	Using the Historical Association for quality assurance	x	x	x	x	x
Curriculum decision-making as a collegiate activity	*Decision-making as collaborative practice*	x	x	x	x	x
	Ongoing curriculum co-construction	x	x	x	x	x
Navigating school hierarchies	*Negotiating with Key Stage 1 teachers*	x	x	x	x	
	The active role of the head teacher	x	x	x	x	x

Table 13 Relationship between the themes affecting perceptions of agency and individual interviewee responses

What is most apparent in analysing this data is the high occurrence of each theme for all interviewees. This is interesting given how the research sample was based only upon acquisition of the Gold Quality Mark award, rather than any other characteristics such as interviewees' history education, career experiences, positional roles held in school, or school type.

At first glance, there seems to be little to differentiate each interviewee. A common theme is recognition of some degree of constrained capacity to develop the curriculum at individual and/or school level. This is compensated by access to CPD: generic and/or subject-specific and/or bespoke. The use of the subject association as a means of quality assurance (either to improve practice and/or to prove good practice) is also consistent across all interviewees, although this is perhaps unsurprising given their successful engagement with the HA Quality Mark award process.

On the surface, there also appears to be consensus across all interviewees related to collaborative and ongoing curriculum construction. This does not appear to be differentiated by role(s) held in school. For example, Max and Beth both held senior leadership positions in their schools, but their agency as decision-makers does not appear distinctive from the three interviewees who were not members of their school SLT. However, as discussed in the findings, this may be difficult to delineate given the complexity of leadership models in primary schools and the multiplicity of roles held, both past and present.

A more nuanced understanding of the decision-making process can be seen in the following diagrams which sequence the steps by each school. This attempt to formalise fixed points does not perhaps fully reflect the iterative process of decision-making, which also emerged as a consistent theme from the research findings. However, it does provide further insight into areas where the schools converge or diverge from one another.

Specific stages identified are the involvement of the headteacher (numbered 1), class teacher collaboration (numbered 2) and the point of curriculum implementation (numbered 3).
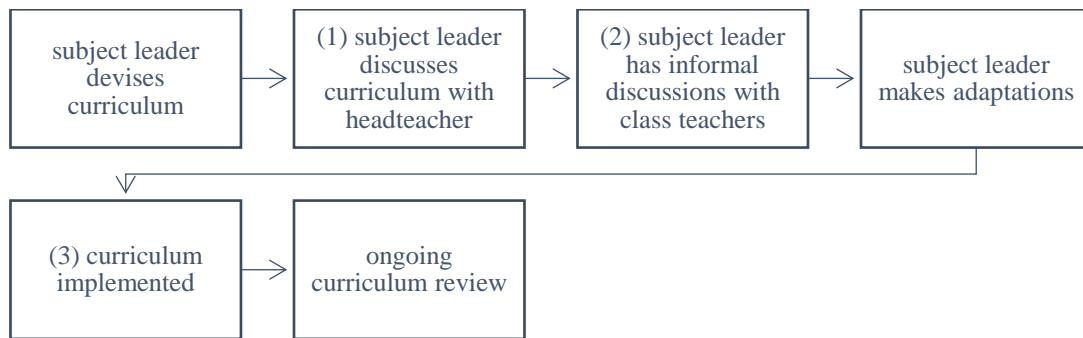
Figure 6.2 Ash school curriculum decision-making process
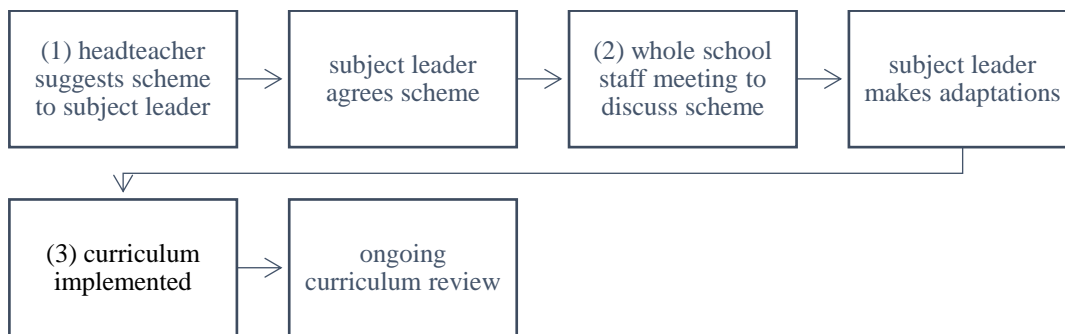
Figure 6.3 Beech school curriculum decision-making process
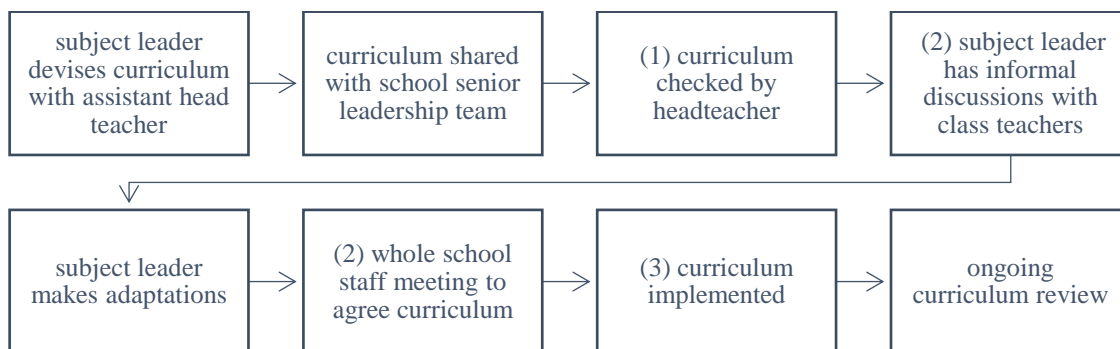
Figure 6.4 Elm school curriculum decision-making process
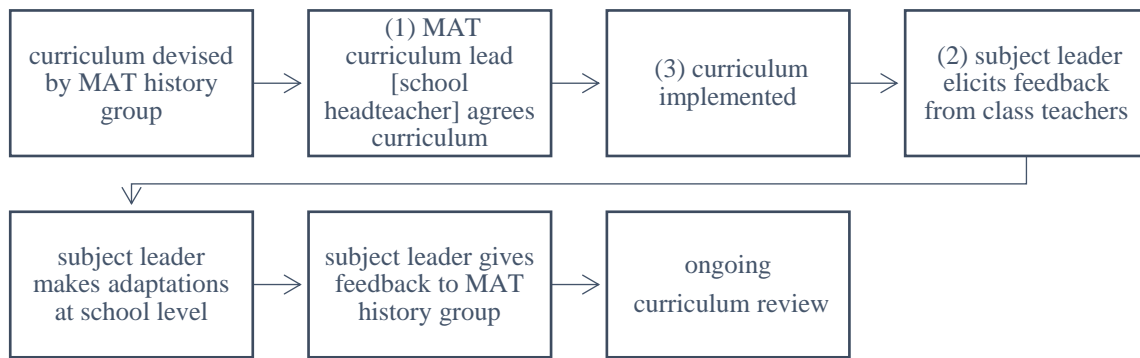
Figure 6.5 Fir school curriculum decision-making process
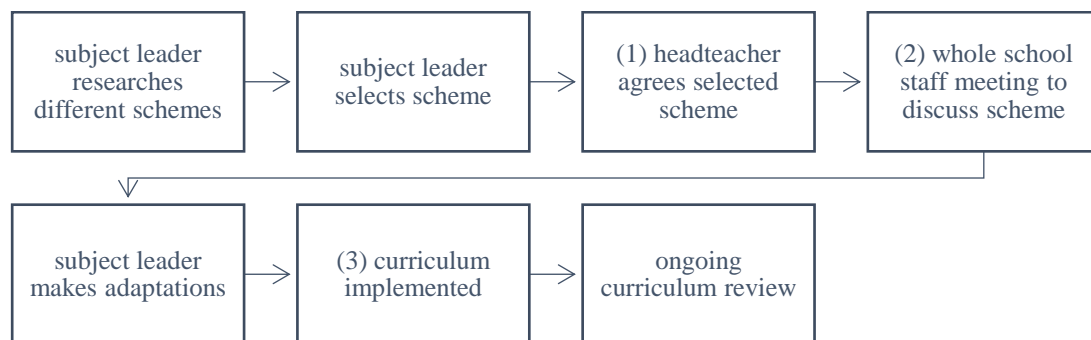
Figure 6.6 Maple school curriculum decision-making process

Overall, while the journey of curriculum decision-making was different in each school, commonalities can be drawn in both the type of actors involved and the process of adaptations made as a result of this involvement.

One noticeable difference, however, can be observed between Fir school and the other schools. At Fir School, consultation with class teachers happened *after* the curriculum was implemented. In the other four schools, class teacher input into the curriculum was sought *prior* to curriculum implementation. A tentative explanation for this difference may be the different sites and actors involved. At Fir School the curriculum was initially constructed by a primary history community drawn from a range of schools in the MAT, at the other schools the curriculum was initially constructed with a class teacher community situated in one

school. It is perhaps the complexity and number of stakeholders involved in a MAT-devised curriculum which results in class teacher input at school level being devolved to a later stage in the decision-making process. A potential consequence may be less initial 'ownership' at class teacher level at the point of curriculum implementation.

Common to all schools is, however, the role of the headteacher (numbered 1) in provisionally agreeing the curriculum *before* it was presented to and/or negotiated with staff. A curriculum that has been tacitly approved by the headteacher before being presented to class teachers for consultation may have lent the subject leader a greater degree of authority. This approval may also aim to pre-empt any subsequent barriers to implementation at a later stage as well as engendering a higher degree of compliance from class teachers. These points did not emerge in any of the interviews, although it would present an interesting avenue for any further research which explores the interplay between headteachers, subject leaders and class teachers in the primary phase.

6.5   Chapter Summary

The findings presented in this chapter have been loosely based upon an ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015). The temporal dimension of agency has been explored in relation to the importance ascribed by interviewees to past experiences as well as their perceptions of how they have navigated curriculum decision-making in their present school contexts. Their future aspirations were boundaried and/or unboundaried: the former by a need to satisfy the school inspectorate at a given point in time and the latter by a belief that curriculum decision-making is an ongoing process. These aspirations were met by access to CPD, both to improve and prove the curriculum, the repository for which seemed to lie external to the immediate school community. The formal positional role of the subject leader is apparent as a locus of action. However, due the multiple roles held within primary schools

(both past and present), subject leaders' perceptions of their agency cannot be solely ascribed to this positional role. Overall, primary history curriculum decision-making has emerged as a collegiate activity, where subject leader consultation with both class teachers and the headteacher is perceived to be a cultural and structural professional norm.

7 Discussion

This chapter discusses the main findings which emerged from the research and is structured around the three research questions. The first section discusses the factors that influenced subject leaders' content selection of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum. The second section explores the factors that influenced content sequencing. The final section discusses subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to determine the content and sequencing of the curriculum.

7.1 Subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence content selection

The recent Ofsted history subject survey (Ofsted, 2023b) states that content selection in Key Stage 1 is usually informed by access to resources or existing school practice. While this does provide some insight into current practice in primary schools in England, the review was drawn from a sample of schools (n=25) based upon pupil numbers, school location, levels of deprivation and overall inspection rating. It does not therefore provide particular insight into schools where primary history is considered to be of best practice. My research focus upon five schools that have achieved the HA Gold Quality Mark award provides a different perspective on curriculum content selection. My findings suggest that, where history has been externally assessed to be of high quality, the range of factors that influence content choice are more considered than existing practice or resource access. These factors are represented in the diagram below:

curriculum as staircase: vertical connections
EYFS - KS2

Curriculum as mirror:
present-focused factors that start with the child

pupil demographics
pupil interests
pupil experiences
child maturation

Curriculum as window:
future-focused factors that move beyond the child

studying history for intrinsic purposes
studying history for extrinsic purposes
awareness of diversity

curriculum as bridge: horizontal connections
art & design, computing, D&T, English, geography, mathematics, music, PE, RE, RSHE, science

Figure 7.1 Factors influencing content selection of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum

This model took its starting point from Style's (1988) view of curriculum as both a reflecting mirror and a revealing window, and was based on her view that, "knowledge of both types of framing is basic to a balanced education" (Style, 1988, no page). Expanding the model to include *'curriculum as bridge'* refers to the distinctiveness of the primary class teacher model, where teachers are responsible for delivering content across the other subjects of the curriculum. The theme *'curriculum as staircase'* refers to the positionality of the Key Stage 1 phase, where pupils are situated between two very different phases of education: EYFS and Key Stage 2. These themes are interrelated and respond to beliefs about the child, the subject and the phase which were delineated in the conceptual framework for curriculum construction that underpins this study.

7.1.1 Curriculum as mirror

The present-focused theme of 'curriculum as mirror' drew upon responses to pupils' heritages, interests and experiences. It also drew upon perceptions of child maturation, with some consideration of what might constitute 'age-appropriate' content and the most appropriate way to deliver teaching and learning materials. These present-focused factors emerged as a curriculum content rationale for all interviewees and seemed to be based upon empirical class-based experiences.

Eaude has argued that "learning is likely to be deeper and more meaningful if this takes account of children's own experience and cultural background" (Eaude, 2017, p. 349). The subject leaders who were responsive to pupil heritages in their curriculum were in schools where the pupil demographic was multi-ethnic or predominately non white-British. Research conducted in the secondary phase by Harris and Reynolds (2014) found that students from British minority ethnic backgrounds may feel less connected to the past if they cannot see themselves in the curriculum. My research, situated within the primary phase, suggests that primary subject leaders show an awareness of the importance of making connections between pupil demographics and historical content. In turn, responding to pupils' heritages did not emerge as a priority in schools with a predominately white-British demographic, perhaps indicating a view that these pupils could already 'see themselves' in the history curriculum. These schools did consider diverse histories to be important, but this constituted more of a revealing window than a reflecting mirror.

Present-focused decision-making that reflects pupil needs, interests and experiences is a responsive curriculum-building approach, which is perhaps more reminiscent of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2023b). My findings suggest that some subject leaders are exploiting the lack of specificity in the Key Stage 1 history programme of study to construct a curriculum that is responsive to their understanding of child maturation, one which is more aligned with

early childhood models of education. This may also account for the use of early childhood

pedagogies such as play, embodied cognition (e.g. multi-sensory learning) and story to

deliver the curriculum. The use of the latter has long been associated with effective Key

Stage 1 practice (e.g. HMI, 1960; HMI, 1988). Using stories to teach historical content also

emerged as a feature of good practice in the recent inspectorate findings (Ofsted, 2023b),

although - distinct from my findings - this was not directly associated with appropriate

pedagogy for Key Stage 1 pupils.

Considerations of child maturation were also apparent in relation to content that might

be deemed sensitive or controversial. Research by Stow (2023) indicates that teachers may be

more hesitant about the inclusion of this type of content in the Key Stage 1 curriculum. While

my findings suggest that subject leaders did critique the inclusion of some topics (for

example, the suffragettes), they tended to carefully facilitate rather than avoid the selection of

this content on the curriculum.

The focus that the five subject leaders placed upon the 'personal' and the 'everyday'

aligns with earlier research in this field (e.g. Cooper, 2002; Levstik & Barton, 2011;

Waldron, 2003). There seemed to be an acute awareness of Key Stage 1 learners of history

as *young* learners of history in the emphasis given to pupils' interests, experiences and

maturation. While the overall purpose and aims of the National Curriculum for history for

both primary and secondary education are the same (DfE, 2013), how these are translated and

enacted at phase level may therefore warrant further discrimination on the basis of pupil age

and key stage.

This point is of relevance given that the concept of powerful knowledge has become a

dominant discourse in history education in England in recent years, most particularly within

the secondary phase (Chapman, 2021). The concept has been critiqued for taking a

reductionist view of knowledge, one which does not pay attention to how young children learn (Eaude, 2017; Wrigley, 2018) and which starts from a conceptual position of child deficit (Catling & Martin, 2011). Powerful knowledge can be characterised, in part, by a distinction between specialised knowledge and everyday knowledge (Young, 2008), yet such a distinction does not seem to resonate with the value placed upon children's vernacular experiences that emerged from my findings. This, again, may suggest the importance of acknowledging the distinctiveness of the early primary phase when both theorising and/or enacting the history curriculum.

7.1.2   Curriculum as window

Young has argued that "if schools do no more than validate the experience of pupils, they can only leave them there" (Young, 2008, p. 15). The contrasting theme of *'curriculum as window'* identifies that subject leaders were also future-focused in decision-making designed to introduce pupils to the study of history. Longstanding debates about the purpose of history education (e.g. Lee, 1992; Slater, 1995) have often been framed upon whether this purpose should be intrinsic or extrinsic to the subject. Research within this area has not been conducted in relation to Key Stage 1 before and my findings suggest that both purposes find resonance in the early primary phase.

Content was selected that afforded the opportunity for children to work first-hand with sources, and to consider multiple perspectives of the past. In the words of Max, this provided pupils with the chance to *"think like historians"* and can be associated with the development of disciplinary knowledge in history. This type of intrinsic purpose seemed to provide the disciplinary "apparatus" (Lee, 2004, p. 10) to enable pupils to use the past as a meaning-maker for their present and future selves.

However, some content, particularly associated with significant individuals and events, was selected to provoke debate and discussion and is more closely associated with an extrinsic purpose for the study of history (Slater, 1995). In these instances, subject leaders justified content that could be used to model positive social behaviours, an approach which seems to align with an exemplary notion of historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2004). This type of justification can also be viewed through the lens of citizenship formation (Levstik & Barton, 2011). In the words of Emma, the study of history can be harnessed to create *"people that can function in society."* While it was not made explicit what type of citizens could or should be created, the focus that subject leaders placed on opportunities for discussion and debate suggests one who is (pro)active rather than passive.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic purposes could also be seen in the way that history was used as a mechanism for diversifying the curriculum and as a means to challenge stereotypes in society. Again, the latter seemed to accord loosely with a model of historical consciousness that may be considered exemplary, with its emphasis upon using the past to shape pupils' perceptions of the present.

All subject leaders were aware of a need for greater diversity in the curriculum, beyond a white and/or British and/or male perspective. They tended to fall back upon the curriculum requirement to teach significant individuals as a means to effect this, which may suggest a perception that diversity in history is easier ascribed to individuals rather than wider themes or events. Subject leaders also showed little deviation from the non-statutory guidance in the National Curriculum in their focus upon rulers, explorers, pioneers or agitators, although this may be a consequence of adhering to the curriculum requirement to focus upon "achievement" (DfE, 2013, p. 189).

Interestingly, none of the subject leaders articulated why they considered a more diverse curriculum to be an important element of their history curriculum, perhaps indicating this has now become a curriculum norm. However, their narrow focus on gender and/or ethnicity does reflect similar findings of the most recent HA survey (HA, 2023), which reported that other aspects of diversity, such as disability or LGBTQ+ histories, are less represented in the primary curriculum. The teaching of diversity within the school curriculum is often tokenistic (Chapman & Ní Cassaithe, 2023) and this absence of other under-represented groups may reflect research by Fidler (2023) who found that primary teachers can lack confidence to teach diverse histories. My findings suggest that a commitment to teaching diversity at primary level may not yet be fully translated into broader curriculum enactment, particularly given that my research sample was drawn from schools awarded for their best practice in history.

7.1.3   Curriculum as staircase

The recent history subject survey (Ofsted, 2023b) states that in most schools there has been little consideration of how content in EYFS aligns with Key Stage 1, or how content in Key Stage 1 aligns with pupils' later study in Key Stage 2. However, an expected feature of the HA Gold Quality Mark is that "pupils make a wide range of links and connections and can draw meaningful similarities and contrasts across different periods, locations and themes they have previously covered" (HA, 2018, no page). The third theme of *'curriculum as staircase'* was based on the vertical connections made between content in these primary phases.

Most of the research on the lack of continuity between the EYFS framework and the National Curriculum has tended to focus on pedagogy (e.g. Fisher, 2022; Selezynov, 2020), but substantive content connections also emerged as an additional feature in my research findings. Negotiating the interplay between the actors and sites of decision-making in EYFS

and Key Stage 1 was beyond the remit of this study, but content connections were made by all subject leaders in relation to transition from Reception to Year 1. And the frequency of the term '*build*' used by subject leaders does suggest a deliberate intention to construct curriculum coherence between these phases – a theme which has been explored in greater depth in relation to research question 2. Connections were made between the EYFS framework and all four areas of the Key Stage 1 programme of study, which is perhaps indicative of the flexibility of content in both curricula.

This intention to build curriculum coherence was also evident in the vertical links made between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In these instances, the flexibility of content selection in the former was harnessed to the more prescriptive content in the latter. Overall, the nature of connections between both primary key stages tended to have a substantive focus (both in regard to content and concepts) rather than a focus upon the processes of historical enquiry and disciplinary knowledge. Subject leader rationales tended to draw upon providing pupils with 'taster' knowledge that would be further developed in Key Stage 2. Alternatively, awareness of the Key Stage 2 curriculum resulted in some modifications to Key Stage 1 content, with the aim of achieving a more balanced or broad curriculum. However, links with the Key Stage 2 curriculum were only directly associated with the Key Stage 1 requirement to teach *'significant events'* and *'significant individuals'*. This suggests that, even for subject leaders with a Gold Quality Mark award, it may be difficult for primary schools to achieve coherence between all aspects of the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 programmes of study.

7.1.4   Curriculum as bridge

Part of the Gold criteria for the primary HA Quality Mark award is a requirement that "history is explicitly taught in a coherent way across a number of subject areas and cross-curricular themes" (HA, 2018, no page). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that horizontal links, *'curriculum as bridge'*, emerged as theme for all interviewees. However, it is

interesting to see how these connections were made to every subject of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, and across the entirety of the history programme of study. Subject leaders were clearly able to draw on these types of horizontal connections, irrespective of subject or historical focus. This may be a distinctive feature of professional practice in the primary phase, revealing differences between class teacher and subject teacher models in regard to the teaching of history.

The greatest connections were made with geography and English, which mirror the findings from the two most recent Historical Association primary surveys (HA 2020; HA, 2023). Disciplinary boundaries between the humanities are perceived to have low insulation from one another (Bernstein, 2000) and this did seem to resonate in the consistent connections made between history and geography. In relation to English, thematic approaches to curriculum planning have been informed by maximising the time available to deliver core subjects (Hoodless, 2009; Rowley & Cooper, 2009). However, in the response of one subject leader, the reverse seemed to happen: English, particularly the use of story, was used to maximise the time available to cover historical content, a deliberate mechanism to mitigate the marginalisation of the foundation subjects in the curriculum (Barnes & Scoffham, 2017).

Ineffective cross-curricular approaches have been characterised by tenuous links between subjects (Caldwell et al., 2020). Subject leaders seemed intent on justifying how any curriculum connections were mutually purposeful or beneficial. While the National Curriculum in England ostensibly advocates flexibility and freedom in curriculum enactment, the recent focus on both forms and bodies of knowledge, which can be viewed at school level through the subject lens focus of the current inspection framework (Ofsted, 2018), may have resulted in a tentative shift away from advocating more thematic approaches to curriculum design. Both the recent Ofsted history subject survey (2023) and HA primary survey (2023)

have identified fewer 'topic' approaches to the teaching of history. Such a trend may, however, be difficult to delineate given that terms such as topic, theme or cross-curricular are often used interchangeably (Barnes, 2015; HA, 2023). Subject leaders' understandings of these terms were not explored during the interviews. Nevertheless, the idea of *'curriculum as bridge'* seemed to be centred upon retaining history's integrity as a discrete subject, while making meaningful links across the curriculum, reinforcing the findings from UK school inspectorates (Catling, 2017b). This importance of ensuring the clarity of a specific subject focus in the early primary phase contributes therefore to our understandings of how the subject specificity of the National Curriculum in England is enacted within a model of delivery based upon the class teacher.

7.1.5   *Summary of discussion in relation to content selection*

The findings that have emerged in relation to content selection seem to challenge the recent Ofsted (2023b) view that the Key Stage 1 curriculum is usually informed by access to resources or existing school practice. In the best primary schools, decision-making is both present-focused and future-focused, and includes both vertical and horizontal content connections. There is potentially a tension between a history curriculum that has the flexibility to respond to children's interests and experiences and yet also has sufficient agreed content to introduce pupils to the study of history, provide a 'staircase' from one primary phase to another and also a 'bridge' to other subjects. However, these themes did not tend to present as conflicting but rather it seemed possible for them to coexist, albeit with different emphases in different schools, as part of an overall curriculum rationale. This may explain why the process of curriculum construction is an iterative and ongoing professional conversation, a theme which emerged in relation to research question 3.

7.2 Subject leaders' perceptions of the factors that influence content sequencing

Given the flexibility of the National Curriculum for history, particularly at Key Stage 1, schools need to consciously make decisions, not just about content selection, but also about how to sequence this selected content. In a recent research review, Ofsted (2021) emphasised the importance of schools establishing a 'planned route' for their history curriculum. Yet, there has been no prior research specifically conducted within this area in relation to the Key Stage 1 phase. The research findings have identified three themes: sequencing as a range of scales, sequencing informed by phase transition and sequencing informed by progression in history, which inform the 'planned route' in Gold Quality Mark schools. Again, these themes respond to beliefs about the child, the phase and the subject which formed the basis of my conceptual framework.

7.2.1 Curriculum sequencing as a range of scales

Of the three factors affecting curriculum sequencing, the most dominant theme was curriculum sequencing at a range of scales and the child's journey from known to unknown contexts. Irrespective of whether the school curriculum was internally or externally devised and irrespective of differences in content, all subject leaders drew on similar dimensions relating to geographical, personal/social and chronological scale to explain their sequencing rationales. This beginning focus on near or recent or known contexts seems to resonate with ideas of child maturation, of moving from the concrete to the abstract. Decisions to start with pupils' own knowledge of the world may also indicate a form of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as this, in part, involves knowledge of how to represent the subject in ways that make content most understandable to learners (Shulman, 2013). And it is particularly interesting to see how subject leaders justified sequencing based upon such scales, given that this guidance has not featured in the National Curriculum for nearly thirty years (HMI, 1995).

The idea that primary children make sense of the past by drawing first upon an understanding of their own contexts is supported by earlier research in this area (e.g. Cooper, 2002; Waldron, 2003; Vella, 2010) and it is also evident from my findings that foregrounding children's own contexts did inform curriculum sequencing. Teaching and learning experiences that help children become explicitly aware of themselves may also subsequently make them more positively attuned to the different identities of others (Siraj-Blatchford, 2014). Such a rationale for beginning with the 'personal' was important for two interviewees, Freya and Beth, and can therefore be seen as both present-focused and future-focused. The shift from the 'known' to 'unknown' contexts seems to show a journey from 'curriculum as mirror' to 'curriculum as window', two themes that were established earlier as influencing content selection.

Chronological scale emerged as the most common factor. All subject leaders discussed how curriculum sequencing began with a focus on the recent past, more specifically periods within living memory. Research suggests that children's understanding of historical time tends to be more dependent on their learning than their maturation (e.g. de Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2014). However, there does appear to be consideration of child development in the decisions made by subject leaders to foreground recent history on the basis that it is more accessible, relatable or relevant to pupils.

Research in the secondary phase found that schools often base their history curriculum around a chronological framework (Harris & Reynolds, 2018) and the proposed DfE model history curriculum from Year 1 to Year 9 also intends to follow a "chronological approach" (DfE, 2022, p. 2). Any such 'chronological approach' did not emerge, however, in my research findings. The five subject leaders did pay attention to chronology in their sequencing of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, but it was a reverse chronology, a deliberate choice to position the recent past before the distant. This suggests that approaches to history

curriculum sequencing should not be generic variables, but may benefit from, or at least warrant, further consideration at specific phase level.

7.2.2   *Curriculum sequencing informed by phase transition*

In relation to the second theme of phase transition, transition from EYFS seems considerably more of a factor in determining content sequencing than transition into Key Stage 2. The discord between a thematic EYFS framework and a subject-based curriculum in Key Stage 1 has long been identified as an area of tension for effective pupil transition (e.g. Crowther et al., 2022; Taylor-Jones, 2021). My findings provide a further contribution to knowledge in this field at specific subject level. The autumn of Year 1 seems to be a pivotal term, a liminal space where subject leaders attempt to navigate how best to fit the child to the curriculum as well as how to fit the curriculum to the child.

Transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 did not present as an equivalent issue. It is perhaps telling that the only subject leader who explicitly made reference to phase transition was a curriculum 'outlier' as the school introduced Key Stage 2 content in the spring and summer terms of Year 2. One of the findings that emerged from research question 1 was a theme of 'curriculum as staircase'*,* a vertical process of making backward and forward connections to prior and future learning. While subject leaders made clear content links between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, sequencing based on these forward connections did not receive an equivalent emphasis. Perhaps given the continuation of the subject-based National Curriculum from Year 2 to Year 3, there was no perceived problem to be addressed. Overall, the focus for successful phase transition seemed to be upon Key Stage 1 entry, rather than exit.

7.2.3 Curriculum sequencing and progression in history

The final theme to emerge was progression in history. There is little research about what it means to get better at history, particularly for Key Stage 1 which is a phase that has been significantly under-researched. The current inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019b) places an emphasis on children knowing more and remembering more, but this stance seems to equate progress with knowledge retrieval. Several empirical studies have found that progression in history for pupils aged above seven years is not necessarily synchronous with age maturation (e.g. Lee & Shelmit, 2003; Perikleous, 2019). My research findings do little to address this gap in the evidence base. However, they do provide some new insight into subject leaders' perceptions of the extent to which curriculum sequencing is based upon assumptions about progression in history.

Subject leaders stated, in some instances, that the history was getting progressively 'harder' as pupils moved through the key stage. Their rationales ranged from progression in the perceived complexity of the unit enquiry question to progression in the types of substantive content and/or types of disciplinary knowledge embedded with units. However, there was no clear pattern or consensus in their responses. For example, Freya explained that the disciplinary concept of change was less challenging than the concept of consequence. Yet, other subject leaders who also chose to begin Year 1 with a unit based on 'changes within living memory' chose to justify this sequencing in relation to 'known' contexts, rather than with reference to disciplinary progression. This lack of consensus was also apparent in the different responses elicited from the two subject leaders who drew upon the same commercial curriculum sequence. Three subject leaders suggested that the positioning of some curriculum units could be interchangeable. The subject leader in the school with a two-year cyclical curriculum did not mention progression in history at all.

While on the surface it may appear contradictory for subject leaders to have justified some sequencing in terms of progression in history while also suggesting that some units may be interchangeable, these responses do perhaps reflect how knowledge in the subject is cumulative (Bernstein, 2000). This may also explain why, as a whole, their rationales for content sequencing, in relation to the study of history, seemed slightly less confident than the rationales for content selection that were outlined in relation to research question 1. Overall, given that the research sample was based upon schools in receipt of a Gold Quality Mark award, the lack of confidence and/or consensus in relation to what progression in history might 'look like' suggests this is an area that would benefit from further research within the early primary phase.

7.2.4   Summary of discussion in relation to content sequencing

In an area that has been significantly under-researched, my research findings reveal how subject leaders draw on their knowledge of the child, their knowledge of educational contexts and, to a lesser extent, their knowledge of the subject (Turner-Bisset, 2013) to justify their 'planned route' through the Key Stage 1 history curriculum. These decisions are present-focused and future-focused and therefore align with earlier themes identified as informing content selection. Knowledge of the child particularly informs decision-making at the beginning of Key Stage 1, indicated by the explicit focus on 'known' contexts coupled with the close attention given to transition from the EYFS phase. Planning a journey from the familiar to unfamiliar seems to align with some of the very earliest research in the field of childhood education (e.g. Dewey, 1915/2001) and it is striking to see how such assumptions still hold sway in subject leaders' decision-making over a hundred years later. In brief, a successful curriculum sequence in Key Stage 1 is not solely based upon beliefs about the subject, but also upon assumptions about learners' ability to access the subject.

7.3   Subject leaders' perceptions of their agency to influence content and sequencing

In eliciting perceptions of subject leaders' agency to determine the Key Stage 1 history curriculum, three themes emerged. These themes are interrelated and build upon concepts relating to subject expertise, subject training and primary school contexts, delineated in the conceptual framework for subject leader agency that underpins this study. The first theme explores how past experiences shaped subject leaders' views and behaviours towards their role as history subject leader. The second theme identified subject leaders' use of CPD to both inform and validate their curriculum. The final theme centred upon curriculum decision-making as a collegiate activity. Subject leaders' aspirations for their history curriculum were both short-term, focused - in some instances - upon a need to satisfy the school inspectorate, coupled with a longer term perception of curriculum construction as an ongoing process.

These themes have been broadly aligned with an ecological approach to teacher agency as they are temporal, relational and facilitated by material, cultural and structural contexts (Biesta et al. 2015). At primary level, it has been used as a theoretical framework to explore overall curriculum development in primary academies (Parker, 2017). At specific subject level, it has been used as means to understand history curriculum decision-making in the secondary phase (e.g. Harris & Graham, 2019). In also drawing upon the work of Biesta et al. (2015) as a way to make sense of how primary history subject leaders navigate curriculum construction, I therefore extend the efficacy of the ecological approach to teacher agency to a new context.

7.3.1   *The importance of past experiences*

Positive attitudes towards history, positive attitudes towards history education and previous experiences of subject leadership emerged as key themes, as they individually or

cumulatively helped to facilitate both subject leaders' access to the role as well as their subsequent enaction of the role. The importance of these past experiences does seem to confirm the view of Biesta et al. (2015) that life histories and professional experiences may inform teachers' agency towards the achievement of an identified goal.

Teacher agency over decision-making may be inhibited when teachers have limited understanding of their subject (Biesta et al., 2015). A distinctive feature of the primary phase is how class teachers may hold multiple and different subject leadership roles both simultaneously and over the course of their career (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018), with middle leaders "wearing many hats" (Ofsted, 2023c, no page). The transience of history subject leadership can therefore act as a constraint in developing specific subject expertise (Temple & Forrest, 2018).

However, my findings extend our understanding of the subject leadership role as they indicate that there may also be a potential advantage to the primary phase. Previous subject leadership experiences (both negative and positive) may shape attitudes towards subsequent subject leadership roles because this awareness of how to lead one subject may be drawn upon to develop expertise in leading another. This could be seen in the way that more experienced primary subject leaders, such as Max and Emma, drew upon a generic leadership 'know how' to identify a means to reflect upon what they did not know, what they needed to know and how to access this knowledge. And they brought this repertoire of experiences (Biesta et al., 2015) to bear upon the successful execution of the history leadership role.

7.3.2   Developing agency through CPD

A consistent factor for all five subject leaders was recent access to subject-specific CPD. This was irrespective of background in history education, professional experience or school type. Part of their rationale for engaging with CPD was identification of perceived

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deficits in relation to either their own knowledge of the subject or their capacity to develop that knowledge within the time frames permitted for the role.

Ainsworth et al. (2022) argue that while a performativity culture has reduced the capacity for middle leaders to be agentic, the 'knowledge turn' in England's education system combined with an inspection framework focused on the curriculum has presented "opportunities for subject leaders to reconnect with the essence of their role as subject experts" (Ainsworth et al., 2022, p. 10). However, equating leadership with expertise is perhaps complicated at primary level, given the often short-lived nature of subject leadership (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018) coupled with the minimal attention given to foundation subjects in both undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training routes (Caldwell et al., 2020; Catling, 2017a). My findings suggest that subject leaders sought to mitigate such limitations by drawing on a range of support. They generally considered these types of 'curriculum brokers' (Leat & Thomas, 2018) to bring subject and/or leadership expertise which either informed or confirmed their curriculum decision-making.

Subject leader access to resources or knowledgeable others particularly drew on CPD offered by the Historical Association or those connected with the Historical Association. This suggests the importance of subject-specific CPD as a supportive mechanism for the subject leadership role, a finding that is shared with the recent Ofsted history subject survey (Ofsted, 2023b). The fact that these knowledgeable others were sought externally further supports the views of those concerned about a potential lack of expertise at school level (e.g. Maddison, 2017), as the repository for this type of expertise was considered to lie beyond the primary school gates.

Several studies have suggested that multi-academy trusts give teachers less autonomy over their curriculum (e.g. Parker 2017; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). However,

membership of a MAT subject group can provide access to, and influence within, a decision-making process at a scale beyond individual school level. Equally, for inexperienced subject leaders, such as Freya, it offers access to a ready-made subject community, a feature less common in primary schools, which are unlikely to have subject departments. The loss of specialist teacher support at local authority level (Temple, 2010) may therefore be compensated for by middle leaders working beyond school level within academy chains (Ainsworth et al., 2022). However, while Freya was overwhelmingly positive about her MAT subject group, she was the one subject leader who did not initiate or access CPD of her choosing. My findings may tentatively suggest that this process of collective decision-making may therefore constrain individual agency if access to subject-specific CPD is determined collectively and bounded by group consensus. This is because it may limit teacher access to a range of alternative perspectives.

Subject leaders' access to CPD also seemed to serve another agenda. While teacher agency over curriculum decision-making at secondary level may be curtailed by the need to maximise success in examinations or to encourage students to opt for history in subsequent school years (Harris, 2021b; Harris & Graham, 2019; Smith, 2019), these factors do provide secondary subject leaders with an external benchmark of 'achievement' that is not afforded to their primary counterparts. The process of completing the Quality Mark award therefore seemed to act, in some instances, as an alternative benchmark, one which could be used as currency for forthcoming school inspections. This use of one external judgment (Quality Mark award) intended to satisfy a different external judgment (Ofsted inspection framework) suggests a potential lack of confidence in decision-making. The cumulative damage of performativity in the English school system, where external criteria become the only criteria that matter, has been well documented (e.g. Ball, 2003; Ehren & Perryman, 2018; Perryman et al. 2018). And my findings provide a new contribution to knowledge in this field by

suggesting how the impact of external directives also finds resonance within history primary subject leadership. Interestingly, the influence of the inspectorate was not questioned or critiqued by subject leaders, further suggesting how it has become a professional norm in the English school system.

7.3.3 *Decision-making as a collaborative process*

Shared decision-making is considered to be the normative practice in primary schools, which are seen to typify a collegiate staff culture (Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011; Lumby, 2016). This was borne out in my findings as subject leaders described the process of curriculum construction as a shared activity; expertise was seen to be multi-faceted and therefore decision-making, both planned and unplanned, was distributed amongst the school community. Priestley et al. (2021, p. 2) describe curriculum decision-making as a series of social interactions with "room for manoeuvre", and this was also born out in my findings in the way that subject leaders viewed decision-making as an ongoing process of co-construction. The Key Stage 1 class teachers in the study tended to draw principally upon their knowledge of learners (both empirical and cognitive) when contributing to the process of curriculum decision-making (Turner-Bisset, 2013). This knowledge of the child often seemed to be based on 'what has worked' in practice, ranging from requests to broaden or deepen content or to more general views about which units would best promote pupil engagement in history.

All the subject leaders in the study considered themselves to have considerable agency over the process and outcome of curriculum decision-making and tended to frame their interactions with colleagues (on the whole) as enabling, rather than constraining. In a work setting where every teacher is delivering the majority of the curriculum and a majority of teachers may hold subject leadership roles (DfE, 2023e), perhaps a workplace culture of collegiality is also engendered by this type of reciprocal accountability. This culture framed

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their actions as subject leaders, and therefore my findings contribute to the idea that teacher agency takes school norms into consideration, either consciously or unconsciously (Biesta et al. 2015; Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011; Priestley et al., 2015).

In negotiations and interactions with teachers, subject leaders were seen to exert authority in their role when acceding or denying teacher requests to amend the curriculum. However, agency might not emerge from a present positional role (Priestley et al., 2021), as it may be a consequence of previous leadership or other professional roles held. Equally, middle leadership roles, although usually positioned between the role of senior leadership and teacher, are also complex to define as they are highly context-dependent (Ainsworth et al., 2022). This complexity of primary contexts, where a member of staff may be a senior leader, a subject leader and a class teacher simultaneously, was confirmed in my study as it was difficult to attribute the capacity to be agentic solely to the formal, positional role of history subject leader.

The role of the headteacher seemed to be pivotal in creating or facilitating the context for curriculum decision-making. All of the subject leaders identified the support of the headteacher in ensuring the successful enactment of their role. It was the headteacher who decided whether they were recruited into (and retained) the role of history subject leader; it was the headteacher who facilitated subject leaders' access to external CPD, by releasing the budget and time to access this support; it was the headteacher who created - whether explicitly or implicitly - a cultural climate of peer collaboration or non-collaboration. This interplay between structural, material and cultural influences (Biesta et al., 2015) had the headteacher at its core. When all teachers from Year 1 to Year 6 are delivering the subject, then perhaps it is necessary that the subject becomes a whole school issue. And a whole school issue then becomes a matter for the headteacher.

It was also noticeable that the involvement of the headteacher in tacitly 'agreeing' the school history curriculum tended to occur early in the decision-making process. The active involvement of the headteacher in conversations about the intended curriculum suggests that primary schools may differ in this regard from the secondary phase, given that research conducted in the latter (e.g. Harris, 2021b; Harris & Reynolds, 2018; Ormond, 2017; Smith, 2019) has tended to situate school-based decision-making at faculty or departmental level. Given the lack of extant research in this area, my findings support and reinforce recommendations made by Fidler (2023) that the involvement of primary headteachers in history curriculum decision-making would therefore benefit from further investigation.

However, headteachers may also lack agency over their school curriculum, due to the extent of external directives from government agencies (Bush, 2011; Harris & Burn, 2011). The growth of school federations and multi-academy trusts has complicated the boundaries of leadership structures (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018), with De Nobile (2018) suggesting that, in some instances, the role of headteacher might be positioned more as one of middle leadership. However, as the example of Freya's headteacher shows, headteachers within academy chains, while potentially disenfranchised from curriculum decision-making at school level, might simultaneously exercise greater authority over some aspects of their curriculum at trust level. Although the focus of this research study was not the academisation of the English school system, this finding does offer a new contribution to existing research (e.g. Ainsworth et al., 2022; Ehren & Perryman, 2018) about the complexity of attempts to map accountability networks in academized school structures.

7.3.4 *Summary of discussion in relation to subject leaders' agency*

Subject leader agency to determine the primary history curriculum seems to draw upon a range of factors. Attempts to delineate these factors separately may be slightly obscured by the complexity of leadership models in primary schools and the multiplicity of roles (both

past and present) that can be held by primary subject leaders. What can be ascertained is that the subject leader does not consider their role to be solitary or fixed in time. Curriculum construction is considered to be a journey, not a destination. It involves the active contribution of external knowledgeable others, who bring both support and legitimacy to decision-making. It involves the active contribution of class teachers, who bring their knowledge of the Key Stage 1 child to bear upon the process of decision-making. And it also involves the active contribution of the primary headteacher who, notwithstanding the external directives that are a hallmark of the English education system, acts as a locus of control.

7.4 Chapter summary

The conceptual framework for curriculum construction which underpinned this study was centred upon three beliefs: beliefs about the subject, beliefs about the learner and beliefs about the phase.
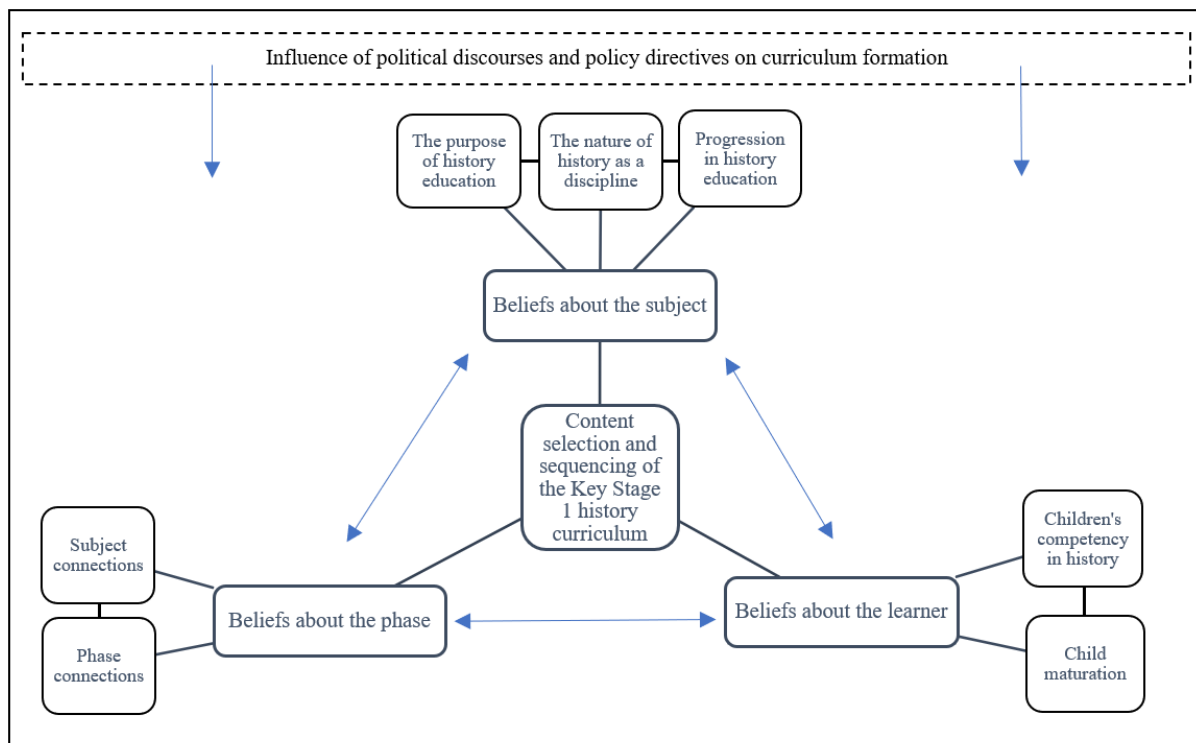
Figure 7.2 Conceptual framework of curriculum construction

In revisiting this framework, all three beliefs do hold sway for content decision-making, albeit with perhaps different emphases, dependent on school context or subject leader priorities. However, in relation to content sequencing, there emerges a stronger emphasis upon beliefs about the learner and beliefs about the phase; the latter is, however, mainly centred upon transition from EYFS to Year 1. There is, correspondingly, less consensus in relation to subject leaders' beliefs about the subject, particularly in regard to what might constitute progression in history education.

The conceptual framework for subject leader agency which underpinned this study was also centred upon three themes: subject expertise, subject training and primary school contexts.
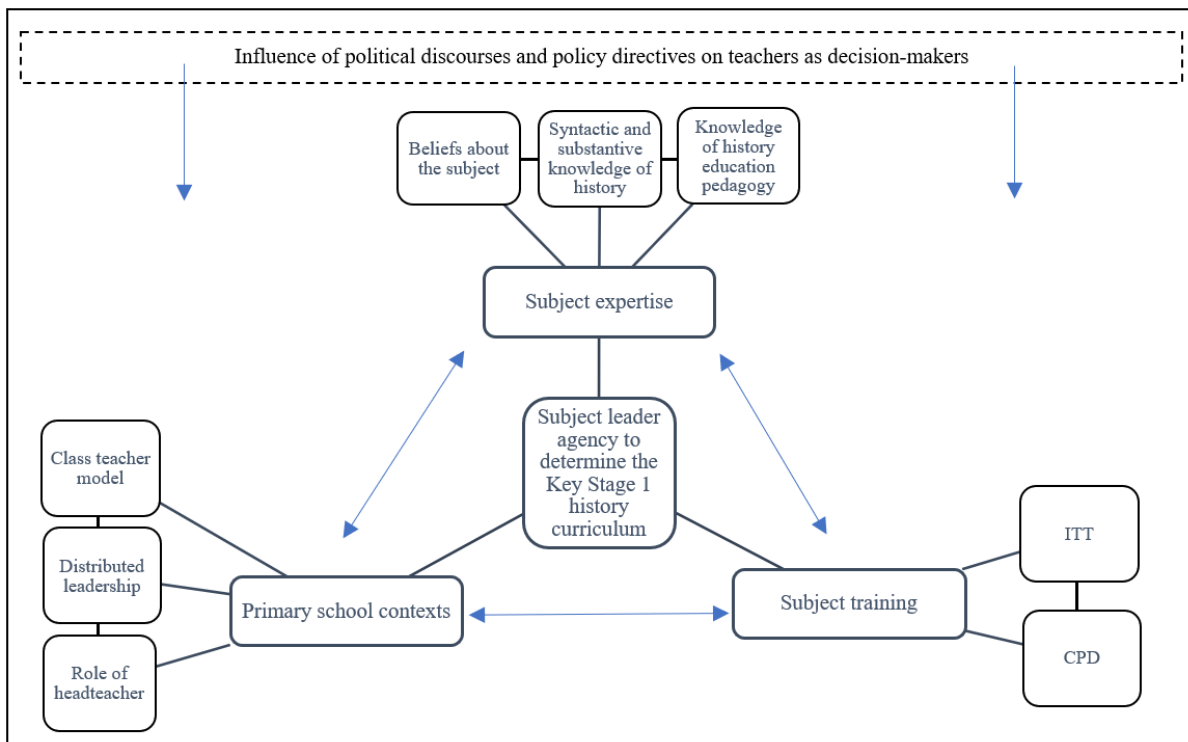
Figure 7.3 Conceptual framework of subject leader agency

In revisiting this framework, primary school contexts emerge as pivotal. This is because subject training and subject expertise are beholden, in part, to the nature of the class teacher

model. Distributed leadership practices, incorporating past and present leadership roles, collaboration with class teachers and the influence of the headteacher, also attest to the distinctiveness of the primary phase.

8   Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising my findings in relation to their overall contribution to knowledge, while acknowledging the limitations of the study. I also consider the implications my findings might pose for professional practice, my own work with the field of primary history education and future research in this field.

8.1   Contribution to knowledge

At the heart of curriculum decision-making in history lie beliefs about its purpose and place on the curriculum. More than thirty years since the inception of the National Curriculum in England, this study is the first to focus upon decision-making in history in the Key Stage 1 phase.

The study has expanded our knowledge of the factors informing curriculum construction in Key Stage 1 history education by showing how subject leaders draw upon an interplay of knowledge bases relating to the child, the subject and the phase. I have adapted and expanded Style's (1988) theory of curriculum as mirror and window and, in doing so, have offered a new model that may serve as a framework for making sense of curriculum decision-making in primary history.

Perhaps the overarching theme to have emerged from my findings, and which forms the basis of my original contribution to new knowledge, is the distinctiveness of the early primary phase. Beliefs about the child and the Key Stage 1 phase are consistently emphasised by subject leaders in considerations of both content selection and content sequencing of the curriculum. These present-centred factors coexist alongside more future-focused decision-making, where both intrinsic and extrinsic purposes for history education find their place. There seems to be no inherent tension here. The emphasis upon the child is not at the expense of the subject, but rather is aimed to facilitate access to the subject.

This study is also the first to explore the agency of primary history subject leaders to determine their Key Stage 1 curriculum. In doing so, I have demonstrated how the ecological approach to teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015) has efficacy as a way of understanding how primary history subject leaders achieve agency as decision-makers in their school contexts. My study has identified how collaborative staff practices reinforce the distinctive nature of the class teacher model in the primary phase. Individual subject leaders do consider themselves to have agency to determine their curriculum, but they operate within a professional norm that is highly collegiate. Class teachers bring their knowledge of 'what works' and headteachers are seen to facilitate rather than inhibit the decision-making process. Again, there does not, overall, seem to be an inherent tension between the contributions of these different actors. It is this distinctiveness of the primary phase which may need to be given greater prominence in both curriculum decision-making at primary school level and as a basis for any future research in this area.

This study is also the first to draw upon the voices of primary history subject leaders who have received a Gold Quality Mark award; this was a deliberate intention to explore what insights might be gained from schools where the history curriculum is considered exemplary. Both of the conceptual frameworks - curriculum construction and primary subject leader agency - that underpin this study offer therefore a model of 'best practice'. As such, they may provide a useful scaffold upon which to base further explorations of curriculum making or curriculum theorising in the early primary phase.

8.2   Limitations of the research

As a qualitative researcher working within a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm, subjectivity was at the heart of my study (Punch & Oancea, 2014). And although I have demonstrated confidence in my research findings, through processes designed to make

explicit my positionality as a researcher and the credibility and dependability of my study, I acknowledge that different approaches to data collection and analysis may have elicited alternative perspectives and outcomes.

One of the limitations of my research is that it may misrepresent the fluid and dynamic nature of school life. A curriculum is in a constant process of construction and reconstruction; it is neither fixed nor static (Priestley & Philippou, 2019). This was borne out in my findings as all five subject leaders perceived curriculum-making to be a process rather than outcome. Similarly, school communities are in a constant state of flux (Brouwer et al., 2012). This research, founded upon empirical school practice, is therefore bounded by time: national directives change, schools move on and so do staff and subject priorities.

When reflecting upon my choice of research method, I am mindful that studies of educational leadership suffer from an over-reliance on interviews as a means of data collection; this means that research findings tend to be based on what leaders think they do, rather than on what they do (Coleman, 2012). Although my focus upon perceptions, rather than actions, does justify the use of interviews as a research method, I acknowledge that I have perpetuated this status quo. Equally, distributed leadership practices are methodologically problematic to research due to the very nature of these types of multiple social interactions (Harris, 2010). My focus upon the single lens of one individual in each school has offered no solution to such a problem.

In developing the themes which have helped to explain and interpret my research findings, I have necessarily produced some theory-connected generalisations within and across the different school contexts (Punch & Oancea, 2014; Yin, 2018). In interpretivist epistemology, generalisation is problematic due the contextual process of knowledge construction (Scotland, 2012). I agree, however, with Pring that the contextual uniqueness

"does not entail uniqueness in every respect" (2015, p. 140). All Key Stage 1 contexts are unique, but they do also share certain features: the age of pupils, the requirement to provide a balanced and broad education and the predominant use of a class teacher to deliver the curriculum. However, my purposive sampling criteria mean that my subject leaders are, *per se*, atypical. I hope that my focus on schools considered 'best practice' has produced findings that are insightful, but it seems pertinent to re-emphasise that representativeness of the broader primary school population in England was not an aim of my study.

8.3   Implications for professional practice

Overall, my research findings have shown that there is no 'template' for successful construction of the Key Stage 1 history curriculum. It is a highly complex activity, in both the range of factors that inform the decision-making process and in the number of actors involved in this process. However, in a period where history education in England has been dominated by knowledge of the subject (Chapman, 2021), this study perhaps serves as a reminder to curriculum makers, at all levels, that attention must also be paid to knowledge of the child, knowledge of the Key Stage 1 phase and knowledge of primary school contexts.

And in a period where generic competencies seem to be the hallmark of much teacher training in England, this study also serves as a reminder of the continuing need for high quality subject-specific ITT and CPD to support both future and current subject leaders of primary history. This could include, but is not limited to, the importance of considering how subject progression can be embedded in curriculum sequences and the need to ensure broader approaches to diversity in history education.

Finally, in a period where teacher professionalism in England has been assailed by performativity and characterised by compliance, it is revealing that the 'best' primary subject leaders are not passive recipients of curriculum planning but view themselves to be active

agents of curriculum construction. This study therefore supports the renewed calls for greater

trust in teacher expertise and for greater opportunities for teachers to develop and exercise

judgment in the execution of their professional role (Müller & Crook, 2024).

8.4   Implications for my own professional roles

Throughout this study, I have become more cognisant of the factors and processes

involved in subject leadership decision-making and curriculum construction. This has given

me greater awareness of the importance of many aspects of my professional roles: as a

teacher educator of primary history, as a Quality Mark assessor and as an advocate for

primary history through my work with the Historical Association.

One specific contribution that has emerged from my research findings relates to the

Quality Mark assessment criteria, which are currently under review. While the criteria for

primary schools cannot be key stage specific due to the existence of single phase infant or

junior schools, I have already made a recommendation to the Historical Association that

greater emphasis should be placed upon the value of a curriculum that has relevance to the

lives of pupils.

As someone who teaches in higher education, I hope that the knowledge and skills I

have developed as researcher will also better enable me to instruct my own students in the

field of educational research. One benefit I did not envisage at the start of my study, was how

instructive it has been to be back in the student chair and to 'be supervised'. I have learnt so

much from all my supervisors about how to strike an appropriate balance between support

and challenge, and I would like to think this has already made me a more effective supervisor

of my own students.

8.5   Implications for future research

Such is the absence of research into Key Stage 1 history education, that in attempting to suggest avenues for future study, I am inclined to say, 'all of them'. However, the following areas would build directly upon my research findings.

Given the emphasis upon collegiate decision-making of the history curriculum, it would be instructive to move beyond the single lens of the subject leader. An exploration of how other actors perceive their contribution to curriculum construction would provide valuable insights. Such studies could include both the perspectives of class teachers and/or headteachers about their role(s) in the decision-making process.

The study has also produced some interesting findings in relation to how subject leadership may operate within MAT school structures. I have suggested there can be both positives and limitations to such structures: access to a ready-made history community yet potentially less autonomy as a subject leader. Given the growth of academisation and federated structures in primary schools in England (Ehren & Perryman, 2018), it would be timely to pursue further research in this area of primary subject leadership.

Unique to the primary context are those schools with mixed-aged classes. The dearth of research in this area is striking and results in a lack of any evidence-informed guidance for class teachers and subject leaders. Future research, particularly centred upon how to navigate the issue of content sequencing, would provide much needed insight into these class contexts.

Finally, given the emphasis placed by subject leaders upon knowledge of the child and 'what works' in the classroom, there is a pressing need for more research to be conducted at child level. This would produce a much broader evidence base of pupil competencies in relation to how children make sense of the past.

8.6 Concluding thoughts

The lack of prescriptive curriculum guidance in Key Stage 1 history places a huge responsibility upon those who select and sequence the history/ies that children encounter in the Key Stage 1 classroom. It is all the more important, therefore, to develop research-informed understanding of the processes of curriculum construction and to highlight, where we can, best practice at school level.

Almost fifty years ago, the Plowden review of primary education in England stated that, " history for children is a subject on which it is not easy to reach agreement" (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967, p. 225). I hope there will always be some 'disagreements' about the purpose of history education, the relationship between the child and the subject, and the place of history within the wider primary curriculum. Because it is only through continued interrogation of these issues that we can produce the new knowledge that will guide best practice in the classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Ethical Consent

University of Reading

Ethical Approval Form A (version November 2021)

Please tick one:

Staff: ☐   PhD: ☐   EdD: ☒

Name of applicant(s): Helen Crawford

Title of project: An exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

Name of supervisor (s) (for student projects): Richard Harris; Amanda Cockayne

Please complete the form below.

Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that	YES	NO	N.A.
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	X		
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	X		
c) gives a full, fair, and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	X		
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	X		
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	X		
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention, and disposal	X		
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	X		
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	X		
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email. If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included, and their name provided	X		
j) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants			X

	YES	NO	N.A.
k) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: "This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct."	X		
l) includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request."	X		
Please answer the following questions:	YES	NO	N.A.
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	X		
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to 1)?	X		
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		X	
4) Staff Only – Have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.asp For all student projects, please tick N.A. and complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.			X
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form (included below with this ethics application)?	X		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	X		
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?	X		
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?	X		
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?			X
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[1], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	X		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act			X

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[1] Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?		X	
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?			
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?		X	
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.			
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		X	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete either **Section A** or **Section B** below with details of your research project.

- Complete a **Risk Assessment**.

- Sign the form in **Section C**.

- For all student projects, complete a **Data Protection Declaration form**.

- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, and ALL research instruments which may include tests, questionnaires, and interview schedules, and for staff, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g., screen shot/copy of certificate).

- Email the completed form, as a **SINGLE** document, to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

Section A: My research goes beyond the "accepted custom and practice of teaching" but I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	☐
Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g., teachers, parents, pupils etc.	
Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments, and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting: 1. Title of project 2. Purpose of project and its academic rationale	

3. Brief description of methods and measurements

4. Participants: Recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria

5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)

6. A clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with then.

7. Estimated start date and duration of project

Section B: I consider that this project **may** have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.	☒

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g., teachers, parents, pupils etc.

Six primary schools: six history subject leaders ~~and six senior school leader~~

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project.

1. Title of project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

2. Purpose of project and its academic rationale:

The general aim of the research is to provide insights into the nature of outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history in England's schools, with a specific focus on the factors that influence curriculum content selection, sequencing and curriculum design. The specific research questions are:

- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content selection and design
- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content sequencing and design
- To identify the contexts which affect agency to determine content selection, sequencing and curriculum design

3. Brief description of methods and measurements:

- Semi-structured interviews with the history subject leader (one hour x 2) ~~and a senior school leader (30 minutes)~~ from each participant school. Interviews will be video recorded using Blackboard Collaborate software. and transcribed and coded using NVivo software (based on inductive grounded theory analysis)

- Textual analysis of documents relating to the school's curriculum for history. This is likely to include: school produced curriculum overviews, school policies, school curriculum information for parents, history schemes of work, Ofsted reports, Historical Association Quality Mark submission materials, Historical Association Quality Mark report. Documents will be coded using NVivo software and based on inductive grounded theory analysis.

4. Participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria

   Six state primary schools in England which have been awarded the Historical Association gold quality mark for history. This is a criteria-referenced assessment which is valid for three years. The specific focus is the sixteen schools which have received the gold quality mark between January 2020 – October 2021. Six participant schools will be drawn from this sample of sixteen; this selection will be based on schools which show variation in Key Stage 1 curriculum content and design.

5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)

   In order to identify six schools from the sample, it will be necessary to seek permission from the Historical Association to view the quality mark assessment materials which led to the award of a gold quality mark. Six schools will then be invited to take part in the exploratory study. The nature of the study is that schools can only take part in the study if they have given consent to do so.

6. A clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with then.

   Although the schools and interview participants will be anonymised (and pseudonyms used), the register of quality mark schools is publicly available on the Historical Association website. It may therefore be possible to identify a participating school. As of 31.10.21, there were 106 primary schools listed. However, any possible identification of participant schools is timebound. The quality mark award lasts for three years, which means that participant schools (depending on their date of accreditation) will only remain on the register until January 2023 - October 2024. After this date, they will either seek reaccreditation (and be allocated a different award date) or be removed from the register. The EdD thesis is due to be submitted in January 2024.

   The interviews will be video-recorded using Blackboard Collaborate software – this data will be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed.

7. Estimated start date and duration of project
   The study will begin in February 2022 with the intention of collecting data in the summer term 2022.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Brief outline of Work/activity:	Semi-structured interviews with the history subject leader ~~and a senior school leader~~ from each participant school. Textual analysis of documents relating to each school's curriculum for history.

Where will data be collected?	School documentation will be accessed remotely via the internet and email. Interviews will also be conducted remotely using a virtual classroom facility (Blackboard Collaborate) provided by my employer (University of Northampton)

Significant hazards:	None

Who might be exposed to hazards?	N/A

Existing control measures:	N/A

Are risks adequately controlled:	Yes

If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:

Section C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: Print Name: Helen Crawford   Date: 20.12.21

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Print Name: Anthony Zhang   Date: 21/01/22

  Signed:

(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative) *

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION

Research Project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

Researcher: Helen Crawford

Supervisors: Richard Harris, Amanda Cockayne

Contact details: Phone: Email: helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Dear

I would like to invite the Historical Association to take part in a research study I am undertaking.

What is the study?
The general aim of the research is to provide insights into the nature of outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history, with a specific focus on the factors that influence curriculum content selection, sequencing and curriculum design. The specific research questions are:

- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content selection and design
- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content sequencing and design
- To identify the contexts which affect agency to determine content selection, sequencing and curriculum design

Why has the Historical Association been chosen to take part?

The focus of the study is primary schools that have been awarded the Historical Association gold quality mark.

Does the Historical Association have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether the Historical Association consents to take part in this study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting Helen Crawford at helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if the Historical Association takes part?

If you agree that the Historical Association can participate in this study I would like to access and examine the quality mark portfolios submitted by primary schools who were awarded the gold quality mark between January 2020-October 2021.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information given in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and supervisors. The school portfolios examined will not be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about the schools will not be shared with the University, nor anyone else.

Your participation in this research will help to develop knowledge and understanding about the nature of outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history. This is an area of the primary school curriculum which has been under-researched.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Research information records will be stored securely and on a password-protected computer and seen only by the named researcher.

In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use. All anonymised research data will be retained indefinitely whereas any identifying information such as consent forms will be disposed of securely after the research findings have been written up. The results of the study will be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles. We can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard your data.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Professor Richard Harris; e-mail: r.j.harris@reading.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part, please complete and return to Helen Crawford the attached consent form.

Yours faithfully

Helen Crawford

Data protection for information sheets

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Research Project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

Please complete and return this form to: helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

		tick
1	I have read the information sheet about the project and received a copy of it.	
2	I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.	
3	I agree to the involvement of the Historical Association in the project as outli in the Information Sheet	
4	I give consent for the researcher to examine the quality mark portfolios submit by primary schools who were awarded the gold quality mark between January 20 October 2021.	

Name:

Signed:

Date:

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Research Project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

Researcher: Helen Crawford

Supervisors: Richard Harris, Amanda Cockayne

Contact details: Phone: Email: helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Dear

I would like to invite your school to take part in a research study I am undertaking as part of my EdD doctoral thesis at the University of Reading.

What is the study?

The general aim of the research is to provide insights into the nature of outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history, with a specific focus on the factors that influence curriculum content selection, sequencing and curriculum design. The specific research questions are:

- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content selection and design
- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content sequencing and design
- To identify the contexts which affect agency to determine content selection, sequencing and curriculum design

Why has my school been chosen to take part?

Your school has been awarded a Historical Association gold quality mark for history.

Does my school have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether your school consents to take part in this study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting Helen Crawford at helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if my school takes part?

If you agree that the school can participate in this study, I would like to conduct two interviews with the history subject leader The interviews would be arranged at a mutually convenient time, will be conducted online and will last approximately one hour each.

I would also like to explore any school curriculum documents relating to the Key Stage 1 history curriculum the school holds (e.g. schemes of work, school history policy, history curriculum information for parents/carers). These documents will form the basis for discussion in the interviews.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

Given that the Historical Association publishes a register of schools who have achieved the quality mark on its website, it may be possible to identity your school. However, the name of your school and participants will be anonymised. Information given by participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and supervisors. Information about individuals will not be shared with the University, nor anyone else.

Your participation in this research will help to develop knowledge and understanding about the nature of outstanding practice in Key Stage 1 primary history. This is an area of the primary school curriculum which has been under-researched.

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Yours faithfully

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Research Project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

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		Tick
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2	I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.	
3	I agree to my school's involvement in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet.	

Name:

Signed:

Date:

INFORMATION SHEET FOR HISTORY SUBJECT LEADER PARTICIPATION

Research Project: an exploratory study of Key Stage 1 history curriculum decision-making in England's primary schools

Researcher: Helen Crawford

Supervisors: Richard Harris, Amanda Cockayne

Contact details: Phone: Email: helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Dear

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What is the study?
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- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content selection and design
- To identify the factors that influence decision-making in relation to curriculum content sequencing and design
- To identify the contexts which affect agency to determine content selection, sequencing and curriculum design

Why have I been chosen to take part?

You are the history subject leader at a primary school that has been awarded a Historical Association gold quality mark for history.

Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether you consent to take part in this study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting Helen Crawford at
helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to conduct two interviews with you. The interviews would be arranged at a mutually convenient time, will be conducted online and video-recorded and will last approximately one hour each.

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Yours faithfully

Helen Crawford

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		Tick
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2	I understand what the purpose of the study is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.	
3	I agree to my involvement in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet	
4	I consent to being interviewed.	
5	I consent to video recording of the interview.	

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 5 Announcement from Historical Association to QM schools

From:
Sent: Tuesday, July 19, 2022 1:41 PM
To: ████████████
Cc: Helen Crawford <Helen.Crawford@northampton.ac.uk>
Subject: Calling QM gold schools!

[CAUTION - EXTERNAL EMAIL] Please ensure you do not reply, click links, or open attachments unless you have verified the sender and know the content is safe.

Primary history research: Gold QM schools needed

One of our Quality Mark assessors, Helen Crawford, is completing doctoral research on history in Key Stage 1.

Her research focus is schools which have an exemplary curriculum. She would like to work with your school as you have been awarded a QM Gold Award.

The research would involve Helen interviewing you about your role as subject leader and your Key Stage 1 curriculum. Interviews would take place online – Helen is available during the summer break or at the start of the new school year.

There has been very little research into outstanding primary provision in history so this would be an excellent opportunity to share your school practice with the wider history community.

If you would like to take part in Helen's research, please contact her at
helen.crawford@pgr.reading.ac.uk

All best wishes
 at the HA

History subject leader: interview questions

First interview

Personal Background

1. What is your experience of learning history?
2. What is your experience of teaching history?
3. What do you consider to be the purpose of history for primary pupils?
4. What do you consider to be the purpose of history at Key Stage 1?

School context and ethos

5. How would you describe your school context.
6. How would you describe your school ethos.

Role of subject leader

7. What's your role or roles in the school?
8. How did you come to be appointed as history subject leader?
9. What does your role consist of?
10. How does the role of history subject leader fit within the overall leadership structure of your school? For example, in relation to phase leadership or senior leadership?
11. Why did you/your school apply for the History Association Quality Mark?

Second interview

Curriculum content selection, sequencing and design:

1. Tell me about your Key Stage 1 history curriculum. What do you teach and why?
2. What factors determined which content was placed in Year 1 and which content was placed in Year 2?

3. In what ways - if any - does your Key Stage 1 history curriculum link to other areas of the school curriculum?

4. What - if anything - would you change about your current KS1 history curriculum?

Curriculum decision-making:

5. What training and support - if any - have you had in developing your history curriculum?

6. As history subject leader, what was your involvement in the decision-making process in relation to your school history curriculum?

7. What - if any - was the involvement of other members of staff (e.g. senior leaders, key stage 1 teachers, other subject leaders) in developing your school history curriculum?

HC (00:01):

Um, there we go. And, um, you've said, I mean, I sent the questions in advance, but I might, we might jump around a little bit. It's quite, it's quite an informal interview. Um, okay. And if you want to anything repeating, let me know and thank you for sending, um, your consent form, but if, obviously, if you do want to withdraw at any point, please just let me know and we will remove all the data. Um, but thank you. Um, so really the first set of questions are about your, your personal background. Um, what's, what's your experience of learning history?

Interviewee (00:36):

Yes, I, I mean, I went to Secondary school in the eighties. I mean, it's going back then really, when it got to GCSE, I had a choice of whether I did history, geography or other subjects. To be honest, I, I dropped it at GCSE and took geography instead. I've always liked history, but I think it was just, yeah, I mean, I just made the decision to follow geography. When I got to university so I did like a BA QTS and it was a four year course. So I specialized in like the teaching of history as a part of that. And our fourth year we did like projects in schools where we had to come up with like a resource pack and we created like a bunker in school, like a world war II bunker, and we did a victory garden. And then we did a resource pack to go with that. Um, yeah, like I say, I've just had a real passion for history since then. Um, so

> Commented [HC1]: Viewing past education as influential -
> Commented [HC2]: Viewing past education as influential +
> Commented [HC3]: Viewing past education as influential +
> Commented [HC4]: Viewing past education as influential +
> Commented [HC5]: Identifying passion for history

HC (01:25):

How did, how did you go from not being that interested at kind of GCSE, A level to suddenly in your teacher training thinking? Well, actually I'm really interested in history now. What happened? Do you think?

Interviewee (01:36):

I think it was the courses. So, I mean, I did the geography degree and some of the courses I picked, so I, I chose to study things like South Africa, which was looking at the history of South Africa and the geography of it as well. And I think I actually enjoyed the history side of it more. So I think it's, it is some of those kind of lecturers and some of those things that we picked as, but, and again, I, I, I think I just spent a lot of my free time going to different National Trust places like English heritage and doing bits like that. And I think, yeah, it was really things I just did in my own time. Whereas I think at GCSE, sometimes it's down to the teacher who teaches you and I think, yeah, I think I was just unlucky with some of my teachers in secondary school. I, I just wasn't that passionate about it, yeah, to do it at GCSE level.

> Commented [HC6]: Viewing past education as influential +
> Commented [HC7]: Viewing past education as influential +
> Commented [HC8]: Identifying passion for history
> Commented [HC9]: Identifying passion for history
> Commented [HC10]: Viewing past education as influential -
> Commented [HC11]: Viewing past education as influential -

HC (02:20):

And what, what did you do for A level or level three? What subjects?

Interviewee (02:24):

Um, so I did, um, chemistry. I did biology and I did geography.

Commented [HC12]: Viewing past education as influential

HC (02:30):

And then your, your degree was a teacher training degree, like the equivalent for BEd.

Interviewee (02:37):

Yeah. So I'd say it was over the four years. So I, I opted to do it for the four years. Like I say, the fourth year, it was just kind of going into schools. It was kind of, it was mainly teaching history and geography really. And like I said, we just had to specialize in the project and like I say, we, we did a bit with world war II and then it was presenting it to the staff. So the fourth year was ma mainly made up of yeah, like a research project really.

Commented [HC13]: Viewing past education as influential

Commented [HC14]: Viewing past education as influential

Commented [HC15]: Viewing past education as influential

HC (02:59):

And can you, where did you go to university? Where did you go?

Interviewee (03:03):

xxx, xxx university. Oh yeah. So in xxx. Yeah.

HC (03:09):

That's where I did my xxx.

Interviewee (03:12):

Oh, right. Yeah. And I did it as well. I did it as a part of the course there. And then it's yeah, it's lovely.

Commented [HC16]: Viewing past education as influential

HC (03:20):

Yeah. You were lucky cos I didn't, I didn't go to a xxx university. And then when I started working in xxx schools, I then had to do my xxx on top.

Interviewee (03:30):

I mean I used to do it at lunch times on top of it. And even then, I mean, I was doing it for three years. Like every lunchtime yeah. Actually was just once a week, but yeah, its quite a bit. Yeah.

Commented [HC17]: Viewing past education as influential

HC (03:40):

So the first three years were kind of more general primary teacher training and then in your year, fourth year was more practice based?

Interviewee (03:49):

It was, we pretty much qualified after the third year. So we pretty much got our QTS after year three, but yeah, it was just an extra one where you could just kind of specialize in set subjects, which is what we did. Yeah. It was a lot to do with like subject leadership. Yeah. And then, like I said, I did my NQT year and then the year after that, I, I got asked to do history, geography the year after that. I think that's the way it used to be. At the end of your NQT year. It seems to always be a popular one that you kind of got given. And I think because why do you,

HC (04:17):

Why do you think that is? Why do you think that is?

Interviewee (04:21):

I think then (emphasis) people saw it as an easy subject. I think it was almost people that were in the job for a lot of years got given things like maths and English. So I think if you'd been teaching for four or five years, and that was certainly the case with me after I'd been actually doing it for four years, I got offered maths and it was there. But I think that's changed massively. I think with like the new curriculum, the change in Ofsted. I mean I got asked to take history geography on again three years ago, 'Cause I think that emphasis has completely changed. I mean I was coordinating English. I got asked to change from English to history and geography cuz I think it was seen that there wasn't a lot to do for English, but actually history and geography. It was like lots that needed changing.

Commented [HC18]: Viewing past education as influential +

Commented [HC19]: Viewing past education as influential +

Commented [HC20]: Seeing HT as decision-maker

Commented [HC21]: Seeing HT as decision-maker

Commented [HC22]: Viewing past roles as influential -

Commented [HC23]: Viewing past roles as influential -

Commented [HC24]: Viewing past roles as influential -

Commented [HC25]: Changing wider contexts

Commented [HC26]: Seeing HT as decision-maker

Commented [HC27]: Changing wider contexts

Commented [HC28]: Seeing HT as decision-maker

Commented [HC29]: Changing wider contexts

Summary of content sequencing RQ.2
Fir School
Subject Leader: Freya

Social scale was considered an appropriate factor for Freya. The Year 1 unit on Your Community was structured to move outwards from the child to the parent, to grandparents and the wider community – intersecting both social and chronological scales. She also suggested that pupils' engagement with their own history in Key Stage 1 would later help them to relate to other people's histories when studying early civilisations in Key Stage 2, citing the lives of people in Ancient Greece as an example. Chronological and geographical scale did not feature to a great extent. Rather, she stated that too much focus on personal and local history in Key Stage 1 would be inadequate preparation for content in Key Stage 2 (as this tended to be located much further afield).

The unit on Your Community was positioned in Year 1 as it was seen as less challenging than content in Year 2 which related to early civilisations. Freya explained that the unit on Important Documents was positioned at the end of Year 1 to prepare pupils for Year 2 content, which required more in-depth knowledge of, and engagement with, sources.

Transition from EYFS to Year 1 focused on 'Stories from History' which then led to specific themes or topics (such as Rags to Riches). Some of these stories were designed to lay foundations for content the following year (e.g. the story of Tutankhamun was chosen as it was seen as preparation for content on Ancient Egypt). The Year 2 unit on Stone Age was positioned before the unit on Ancient Egypt to provide a 'starting point' for history. Transition from Year 2 to Year 3 was explicitly mentioned in relation to the final Year 2 unit on Ancient Egypt which was seen as an introductory focus to early civilisations covered in Key Stage 2.

Freya was less confident with explaining some sequencing, suggested that the Year 2 units on Rebellion and Important Women could potentially be taught in any order. Seasonality and curriculum connections were not a predominant theme in relation to sequencing.

QM as subject development	Alex	, and then I suppose the quality mark in a sense, really kind of, um, going through that process and thinking about the different elements of the criteria sort of supported with that. So, that's kind of the main, main sort of CPD I've had, um.	**Commented [HC1]:** Seeing QM as improving
	Beth	And it was nice as well to be able to talk about, you know, strengths and next steps, but then have that further guidance once we'd had the report and got the award, "Actually, these are the things that we think ... Next steps you could do."	**Commented [HC2]:** Seeing QM as improving
	Emma	that's why we then went for the Quality Mark, because I knew that if it was something, A, that we'd had to invest some money in and some time in, that it would then be done well.	**Commented [HC3]:** Seeing QM as improving
		I think it's also, the community's been so involved in what we've done that it, it's improved the whole profile of our school, not just history, but of our school as well.	**Commented [HC4]:** Seeing QM as improving
		Um, but it did give me something to, um, to hang my hat on, and to give me a structure to move forward, um, and to know that what I was doing was the right thing.	**Commented [HC5]:** Seeing QM as improving **Commented [HC6]:** Seeing QM as proving
		So, again, the Quality Mark gave me that structure, but I don't think the national curriculum is enough for non-specialist teachers.	**Commented [HC7]:** Seeing QM as improving **Commented [HC8]:** Reflecting on need for CPD - knowledge
	Freya		
	Max	then we officially went for the award, you know, last year, but I think that's cuz we felt we'd done enough to get the gold award, but really, I mean, it's not like we just suddenly decided a year ago to do it. I think we'd been using the audit tool already for three years. We'd been using it for our action plans, that school development plan.	**Commented [HC9]:** Using QM for improving
		I think we knew we wanted to develop history and I think we saw that as the best way to do it. So it's not like we just suddenly decided, I think we've almost been building it up to it for three years. So I think we used the audit tool and I think even three years ago we were looking at that audit tool and almost like ticking things off.	**Commented [HC10]:** Using QM for improving
QM as validation/quality assurance	Alex	, I think it was really just to, it gives you that quality assurance really from a professional body and it's, it is nice to hear that you're doing things well and that you're giving the children a good quality education.	**Commented [HC11]:** Wanting curriculum to be best for pupils **Commented [HC12]:** Seeing QM as proving
		And I suppose as we were, we were due an Ofsted inspection as well. It was also something that, that for us, you know, when you, you, I suppose speaking to an inspector, you can say as well, actually, you know, we've been assessed by the Historical Association for our quality mark.	**Commented [HC13]:** Seeing QM as proving
		This is what they're saying, you know, and the Ofsted inspector might not actually be an expert in history. Whereas the assessor, the HA are, so .it really gives you that confidence, I think, with, with what you're doing.	**Commented [HC14]:** Seeing QM as proving
	Beth	, I think, I think it was once everything was established, and once everything that we put into our development plan was up and running, and when we saw that impact, I think it was at that point, I thought, "Actually, I would like to make sure we are doing everything we can for these children in terms of history."	**Commented [HC15]:** Seeing QM as proving **Commented [HC16]:** Wanting curriculum to be best for pupils