



The History Department

The Leys School History Department is a hub of highly enjoyable and innovative teaching, well-regarded by pupils and parents for our reputation for reliability and academic purpose. We expect our historians to combine intellectual curiosity and fun with rigorous, scholarly method and we achieve consistently pleasing examination results (2023 - 90% A*-B at A Level and 78% Grades 9-7 at GCSE. History has always been a popular option at Sixth Form and GCSE with a quarter of Sixth Formers and almost three quarters of GCSE pupils taking the subject. A handful of pupils study both History and Politics A Level with us and approximately a third of our Sixth Form cohort will go on to read History, PPE or International Relations at top level universities.

There are currently five History teachers, all of them subject specialists. One of the secrets of this department is a strong culture of sharing best practice, flowing from lively weekly departmental discussion and open-door teaching to an exceptionally wide range of original resources, embedded in interactive schemes of work. While students are encouraged to feel completely secure in a department that has clear procedures and an assured touch, staff also enjoy a process of continual experiment and improvement. Our long-term objective has been to achieve *at least* an A grade for all students at A-level and nothing but Grades 9-7 at GCSE.

The department occupies the first floor of a purpose-built humanities building. We have four well-equipped classrooms, along with a seminar room, library and a History office. The school archives are also housed in their own room within the History department and are a fruitful source of material for teaching and research. There is a busy weekly Sixth Form workshop out of class for aspiring students which prepares ambitious historians to consider reading the subject at university. The Upside-Down Society is an informal lower school History club that also meets each week, and the Sixth Form run their own publication 'The Barker' from the department. Step through the door into History and you find a buzzing, vibrant place where everybody expects the very best of themselves.

KS3 historians broadly follow the National Curriculum, in Year 7 studying the medieval world from a global perspective, and in Year 8 looking at Britain's place in the early modern and industrial-era world. All Year 9 complete a week's field work during term-time in Flanders and the Somme as part of their study of the Great War, continuing then to examine Nazi Germany in a unit that flows into a PSHE study of Holocaust. Throughout these terms there is a clear and progressive emphasis on historical method, tested in regular common assessment. Each year group is taught in mixed-ability sets: in Years 7 to 9 in 2 x 50 minute lessons per week.

For GCSE we sit AQA History (8145), taking the Norman Conquest and Power & the People options for the British paper and Russia 1905-41 and the Cold War options for the World history paper. There is no coursework. There are four mixed-ability sets, taught 3 x 50 minutes each week.

A-level History students also sit AQA examinations. For 2023-24 we will be offering courses on the Crusades 1071-1204, Stuart Britain 1603-1702, Modern UK 1951-2007, The British Empire 1857-1967, Russia 1917-53, and the Cold War 1945-1991. We enable each member of the department to teach to their strengths and interests, and it is departmental policy that every A Level candidate has a combination of periods under their belt, and that they have been taught by each member of the department according to their degree specialism. NEA coursework is completed in the summer term of Lower Sixth, with recent topics ranging from Viking archaeology, the British Army at war since Crimea, Indian nationalism under the Raj, and the US civil rights movement. We currently teach three sets at A Level, each with 6 x 50 minutes teaching a week. It is no surprise that History is such a popular choice at A-Level.

We also offer Politics A Level, taught by teachers in the History department with similar exam success (2023, 80% A*-A). We follow the Edexcel specifications, taking the UK Politics and Government options alongside the comparative US option and the study of the non-core ideology of Nationalism. We have one set with 6 x 50 minutes teaching a week.

History Department Personnel

Nick Born (Head of History)

James Fawcett (Head of Politics)

Robert Francis

Katie Upton

Emma Mayo (Deputy Head)

