

PORT·REGIS



History: Not just a thing of the past

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After completing his undergraduate degree in Modern History and Politics and subsequent PGCE at Southampton University, Mr Capozzoli started his

teaching career at Whiteparish All Saints Primary School, Wiltshire. After spending three years there, a move into private education followed at Hazlegrove Prep School, which also included four years of study to achieve a master's degree in Education: innovation, practice and leadership.

He thoroughly enjoys modern history, especially imperial and revolutionary periods. Outside school, he enjoys a good parkrun and visiting sites of historical interest (especially castles and forts).

Historians are often asked: what is the use or relevance of studying History? Why on earth does it matter what happened long ago? This is a question that is often asked by our students, who need to see, discuss and debate how the subject fits in modern lives. History is inescapable. It studies the past and the legacies of the past in the present. Far from being a 'dead' subject, it links things through time and encourages its pupils to take a long view of such connections. How can we make sense of the present or prepare for the future without an understanding of what came before? Study must also be captivating. Compelling narratives and extraordinary characters should

both inspire and motivate children to be excited about our past. History is a story – our story – and who doesn't love a great story? Inspiration and motivation, discussion and debate are at the heart of history at Port Regis and we hope that passion for this subject will last their entire lives.

Themes within and connected to 'why we study history' are the cornerstone of teaching and learning in the Port Regis History Department and are our mantra. It is vital that pupils see and understand the subject's relevance and this engagement has added an extra buzz of excitement to the department this year, enabling the naturally inquisitive minds of our pupils to explore these endless opportunities

Relevance and making sense of the world

Our first objective, has been to design and deliver a History curriculum that enables our pupils to make sense of the world around them and one that is relevant to their 21st century lives,

within the values of free thinking and free speech. This is vital as there is never a day that goes by where current events are not rooted in the past. Whether it is the Russia invasion of Ukraine, the development of the Black Lives Matter movement, the war on terror or the Brexit, these events or actions have their beginnings in history- some many centuries ago. As such, topics taught at Port Regis are diverse and aim to discuss the 'big questions'. All the children have a wonderful opportunity to experience and explore the whole breadth of British history, covering social, military, political and chronological themes. While the old favourites are still studied, new topics have been added to the curriculum to help facilitate this. The settlement of North America, the women's suffrage campaign, Britain and Empire, WW2, the Black Death, WW1 Henry VIII and the dissolution of the monasteries (the first Brexit!) and Anglo Saxon culture and help bring relevance to the history. Our B Form (Yr 7) mini-study into James Cook is a classic example of bringing relevance

to a topic, as after exploring Cook's impact on Aboriginal Australians, the topic ended with each pupil considering whether Australia should keep its current flag.

'A people
without the
knowledge of
their past
history, origin or
culture is like a
tree without
roots'

Marcus Garvey



Diverse History

We are fortunate to have a wonderfully diverse pupil body at Port Regis, with children arriving from across the globe. Naturally, this means that diversity is a vital component of the curriculum, as it needs to reflect and engage the whole community. This not only means that the subject is more inclusive but provides a more balanced view on the past. As such, there has been a move from a Eurocentric perspective, with greater emphasis on the perspectives of indigenous, or colonised peoples in the history of empire and migration. In the Upper School curriculum, Britain and Empire is now a key topic of study. It enables pupils to better understand the impact Britain has had on the world and the effect it is still having today. Naturally, multiple perspectives are examined and in B Form (Yr 7), this has enabled opportunities to understand Aboriginal Australian and Native American history better. The women's suffrage campaign helps explore gender inequality, while the Industrial Revolution better supports

working class history and social justice in A Form (Yr 8). Comparative analysis and studies have their place too and help engage the pupils in the Middle and Lower School. Whether it is the Aztecs, Ancient Egyptians or the development of the Kingdom of Benin, these topics allow us to zoom out and allow the pupils to explore the wider world. Most importantly, they challenge many common misconceptions and learning about successful African states (like the Kingdom of Mali) or the technological advances of the Aztecs are certainly eye-opening for the children.

Perspectives and a balanced view on the world

History also has the unique ability to provide the children with a balanced outlook on the world. It is easy to feel, that when we are pressed up right against the present that things are exceptionally challenging now, but they rarely are when you open the lens wide enough. The present isn't unusual in its levels of mediocrity and

compromise. Once you read the sources, the letters and newspapers, those in the past had challenges too. Though our challenges are of course great, they are not exceptional- when compared with those faced by people living through the Black Death, the survivors of Pompeii or those Native Americans having to face the consequence of European settlement. Each topic provides pupils with time to reflect on this and understand the wider picture. Naturally, achieving a balanced view is further supported by the extensive use of historical sources, which include texts, artefacts, paintings, cartoons and letters. It is through the use of these sources that the pupils can learn that events are often the result of multiple and complex factors. Politics, communication, beliefs, misunderstandings and even the environment can shape the way things turn out. It enables pupils to empathise with those tackling these events and come to a logical conclusion based on the best evidence available. Thus showing how an





History, PSHE (and RSE) and good citizenship

From September 2020 most PSHE education (and RHE) became statutory in schools. This is vitally important in order to equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to cope with the many pressures and challenges of modern society. It explores ways in which children can be good citizens and contribute positively to modern society.

History has at its heart, is the ways in which people may have felt, thought and behaved, the decisions, both personal and social, that they made about how to live, within the constraints of past times, from which current values and attitudes emerged. History also promotes national identity, while also teaching emergence of national institutions, problems, and values— indeed it's the only significant storehouse of such data available. Pupils are encouraged to make ethical judgements from a historical point of view. Topics such as Richard III, WW1, Robin Hood and the exploration of Africa in the 1800s allow children to analyse sources as evidence to determine their moral inferences. Children are also able to better recognise British values and institutions of state. Exploring the women's suffrage movement or the Civil War enable pupils to better understand British values and reflect on how the rights we can take for granted today and the institutions which support them came into being.

It is wonderful to see so many children who clearly have or are developing a love for history. The high levels of success in A Form exam results and our super scholars in this subject, clearly demonstrate the willingness and enthusiasm in engaging with the

historical experiences we explore. With enjoyment, subsequent success follows closely. The study of History is thriving at Port Regis and for our children and staff alike this learning is enormous fun!

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Aztec priest might have felt with the world being turned upside down with the arrival of the Spanish or how religious leaders were challenged by Darwin's book, 'The Origin of the Species'. The extensive use of sources is also great for showing children how bias can affect a source. It's said that 'history is written by the victors', which is as true today as it was 500 years ago. This is vital for pupils going into the modern world, many of whom will get their news from social media and other online platforms. Reading the diaries of Cesar, investigating propaganda during WW1 or exploring photographs from the British Raj, provide the children with the skills to recognise and interpret bias and propaganda.