

# Diversity & Inclusion *in History*

## Case Study

2020

1948

1066

1215

Samantha Slater, Subject Leader of History at Chatham Grammar, shares her academy's journey to building a more diverse and inclusive three-year KS3 history curriculum from scratch.

### Sam Slater, Subject Leader of History at Chatham Grammar



Sam Slater  
Subject leader  
for History

For me, a diverse and inclusive history curriculum goes beyond the history of the white man. It's about looking at gender history and looking at history from a wide range of ethnicities and sexual orientation - it's a curriculum where everybody feels welcome, represented and included.

When our academy made the decision to move from a two-year, to a three-year Key Stage 3 curriculum, I knew this was our opportunity to start from scratch and really transform the history we teach to better reflect our students and the world around them.

While it's an ever-evolving journey, and we are by no means done, so far the changes we've made to diversity our curriculum have been loved by students, teachers, parents and carers alike.

#### What are our priorities?

When it came to re-writing our KS3 history curriculum, we literally took a blank piece of paper, tried to forget everything we had done previously and started from scratch.

We joined a few Historical Association webinars, which were really useful and got us thinking about our priorities. What

knowledge of the world do our students need to understand the world they're living in? What groups should be included in what we cover? What kind of themes should we explore? What do we want to achieve by the end of the three years?

While we started working through these kinds of questions in January 2020, later events like the first national lockdown and the Black Lives Matter movement further fuelled our work. Both led to a wealth of online CPD that we could tap into as we rewrote our schemes of work, from webinars with Toby Green to a host of new resources and books.

We were already embedding more black history into our curriculum to reflect the significant number of black girls we have in our school, but the Black Lives Matter movement further confirmed that the work we had started would be welcomed and impactful for all our students.

## **Choosing what to explore with students**

One of the hardest things was deciding what to teach and what to leave out. We had to make some brave decisions.

We've initially put a real focus on exploring more women's history and BAME history. For example, we look at Aethelflaed and her powerful role in Anglo Saxon England, comparing her strength to later Kings. We explore Africa long before slavery, and look at a range of African Kingdoms, including Benin to better reflect our students who are of Nigerian descent.

When we go on to explore the impact of colonialism, we look at the Biafran War, the apartheid in South Africa and the Indian rebellions against the British Empire leading up to Gandhi. Our new scheme of work on genocide takes a global view, looking at the Holocaust, but also the American's treatment of Native American's, as well as Rwanda and Darfur.

However, we don't stop there. We think about the words our students are hearing in the news and in conversations and whether they really understand them. So, we explore things like the history of England's relationship with Scotland, helping them to understand growing calls for independence. We also reflect on Brexit and key events in modern day history like 9/11.

## **Academy wide effort**

So far, the changes we've made have been amazingly received. The students are loving it, and teachers are feeding back to say how much they're enjoying teaching the new enquiries like the Biafran War. Parents and carers have been really positive too and even offering sources.

It's all coming together and going in the right direction, but this is due to a whole academy team effort. Our academy has put diversity and inclusion at the forefront in its policies and initiatives - and the Principal and leadership team have fully supported us in History. I work with a fantastic team of history teachers who have embraced change and topics that many knew nothing about before - they're going the extra mile to do reading and really thinking about their teaching, when they could have continued with the old safe topics.

## Moving forwards

The job is by no means done. There are still groups of people who aren't represented in our history curriculum yet, so next year we want to explore more LGBTQ+, Asian and local history too.

But there are things that could greatly help us, and others, on this ongoing journey. A lot of the topics we explore are very emotional and we have to really think about the terminology, language and resources that we use. More training, resources and CPD for teachers to help us with what phrases and terminology is and isn't acceptable, as well as to help increase our subject knowledge and confidence would be invaluable.

That said, despite the challenges, I would urge all other teachers to take the risk and give it a go. If you've got an idea to make your curriculum more diverse and inclusive, sit down, discuss it, lean on your team, your school and potentially the wider history community via Twitter. You've got that desire to teach something for a reason, so make it happen.

## **Samantha Slater is Subject Leader of History at Chatham Grammar.**

Take a look at [Pearson's Diversity and Inclusion in History webpages](#) for more great content.