Disciplinary Concepts in History

1) Chronology
This involves creating a sense of period and time. It is developing an understanding of the sequence of when things happened and the period in between. What came before and what came after?

2) Historical Evidence
Knowledge in history is constructed from sources which give us evidence on which to build an interpretation of the past. Children should be encouraged to construct their own views of the past which are valid if they are based on the evidence. To involve children in the process of enquiry, teaching must include sources. Sources comes in many different forms, including written, visual or artefactual. Every historical source provides some information about the past although some sources will inevitably be considered more significant than others.

3) Interpretations
Every image, object, building, written source, and landscape is a piece of evidence that can help us understand the past. Analysing this kind of evidence is called 'interpreting'.
Historians recognise that judgements are influenced by the viewpoint of the observer. The way that commentators 'see' things is influenced by their own unique set of beliefs, values and experiences. Therefore, beginning to interpret historical evidence involves asking questions to help look at the evidence in a new way. Children should use what, where, when, who, and why questions as a starting point to interpret all sorts of historical evidence.

4) Continuity and Change
What changed and what continued? Historians recognise that although many things about a society may change over time, other aspects of life and living conditions, can and do remain much the same. When change does occur, change may be gradual or very sudden. Change can be positive and precipitate social and economic progress, or it may be considered regressive and have negative outcomes. Historians seek to identify, describe, explain, and evaluate the impact of change over time.

5) Similarities and Differences
What is the same now and what is different? Comparing similarity and difference require pupils to probe or question how historians group people, situations, structures or phenomena. These range from individuals, to villages, to systems, to cultures. When asked directly to analyse similarity/difference, pupils are being asked to consider how 'good' those groups are... It often involves detecting and analysing generalisations.

6) Reasons and results
Cause and Consequence (effect) is how we explain why things happened in history and what followed as a result, including how people made a difference. There can be any number of causes and consequences around a single event that relate to the short or long-term historical period in question.

7) Significance
Historians as well as everyone else in life operate on the basis that some things are more important than others. It is important to be able to identify specific events, people, places, themes, and ideas from the past as being of greater importance or more notable than others in terms of their impact and justifying why.