The challenges of decolonising the history curriculum
Professor Rebecca Harris, University of Roehampton

This workshop will draw on studies of the history curriculum in English schools from different perspectives. It will include research into how students’ respond to the historical content they are taught; these studies tend to reveal that students from minority ethnic backgrounds feel disconnected to a curriculum that is perceived as overwhelmingly white. The workshop will also draw on research that examines history teachers’ curriculum decision making, which is largely sympathetic to broadening students’ knowledge of the past beyond a predominantly white perspective, and place this alongside the challenges history teachers face in attempting to teach a more diverse and inclusive past. The workshop will include examples of practice that offer ways to teach a more complex, representative past.

Rebecca Harris is a Professor of Education at the University of Reading, where her main responsibility is as School Director of Teaching and Learning. She taught history in secondary schools for 16 years and has been involved in training history teachers for 18 years. Her research interests centre on different aspects of history education. Most recently her work has focused on the nature of the history curriculum (in terms of its purpose and content), how young people engage with the history curriculum, and the decisions history teachers make about what the curriculum should cover.