



English Department Curriculum Statement

Intent

The English Department seeks to empower learners to be able to skilfully navigate the language in a multitude of contexts. We understand the importance of reading and writing as ways of engaging with the world, in terms of sharing personal daily experiences and utilising language in the workplace and wider society. At the heart of this desire to inspire students lies the importance of clear and coherent communication. By actively teaching reading and writing skills within every year group, we will demonstrate the progress students make when reading texts of varying purposes, and producing texts for different reasons.

Implementation

In every year group students will encounter a range of imaginative writing that draws on the proud literary heritage of English. This will include prose fiction, poetry and drama, and will give students a developed understanding of the literary canon. This will include the study of Shakespeare within every year of study, recognising the central importance of Shakespeare as the cornerstone of our literary cultural capital. Students will also explore a range of non-fiction texts from the last 200 years, developing their analysis and evaluative skills to demonstrate in depth understanding of how writers construct texts.

Equally important is the development of writing skills that accompany students' appreciation of the writing of others. We seek to create writers who are imaginative, engaging, ambitious in scope and technically accurate. This is made possible by careful curation of writing skills, from word, through to sentence, paragraph and whole text level. We build on the intensive grammatical focus of Key Stage 2 assessments to continue to build on the firm knowledge and skill foundation that students possess. By utilising expert subject knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the English language, teachers are able to inspire children to be experimental with writing, and to understand its place in their whole lives, as well as in their academic study.

Lesson planning will take account of the School's intention to make learning sequential and progressive, and embedded in long term memory. Each year group has key, subject-specific vocabulary that is taught and embedded through careful planning. This may draw from general vocabulary, or from wider curriculum objectives, and serves to make students confident when confronted with new concepts, equipping them with the self-belief to use their newly discovered knowledge across their learning. Students will regularly recap learning from across their studies, ensuring a solid basis for future learning, and the ability to use this learning to make further progress. Regular assessment of knowledge and skills identifies priorities for intervention or further focus, with Session 3 used for students in need of extra support, or to encourage students to further extend their learning. This ensures that students possess a firm foundation on which to base for Key Stage 4 examinations in English Language and Literature, and beyond into Sixth Form. We envisage students being keenly aware of the purpose of their learning and how it fits into the overall programme of study. The efficacy of the delivery of this will be evaluated by learning walks, book scrutinies and student dialogue.

Impact

Outcomes within the English department are among the best in the school, and stand out against national comparison in terms of both attainment and progress. Uptake on English courses at Sixth Form is very high, with numerous students pursuing higher education studies in the field and related areas. The English Department has sent a number of students to Russell Group and Oxbridge universities, and numerous students have gone on to work in industries where the written word is of fundamental importance.

Utilising a range of formative and summative assessment strategies will be central to evidencing the progress that students have made. Key Assessment Points will identify incremental command of knowledge and skills, while continuous assessment of classroom performance will help to evaluate the quality of the curriculum.



Enrichment groups have been established to cultivate a wider interest in the subject. From imaginative writing groups in the lower school, to critical theory discussion and reading mentor groups in Sixth Form, staff strive to provide the extra impetus for students to pursue their passions and to maximise their progress. We also use visits to theatre trips and other areas of regional and national interest to contextualise and bring alive learning for students.

The Impact of COVID-19

The onset and continuation of the global COVID-19 pandemic presented some unique challenges and significant opportunities to revisit our methodologies. During the first lockdown remote learning strategies were quickly implemented to address the initial learning needs of the students. This was mainly document-based, as staff familiarised themselves with remote learning technologies. On returning to work, staff underwent significant CPD in the use of these technologies, developing their skills in using pre-recorded and live material for lessons. Upon the full time return of students to school, a programme of frequent assessment was conducted to ascertain levels of performance. The scrutiny of this data allowed immediate intervention in terms of providing additional in-class support through recapping key material and focused group work. Year 7 catch-up was also identified as a key priority, owing to the disruption caused to their crucial transition period. Initial testing of reading ages and teacher assessment was used to identify a target group of students who would benefit from further support. The departmental focus on literacy was also of paramount importance in creating a clear sense of what students had learned and retained.

The onset of the second lockdown in January 2021, coupled with the increasing confidence of staff in using remote technologies, provided the opportunity for a blended approach to learning. The English department restructured its curriculum plan in specific year groups to ensure that material was covered that could best be delivered without face-to-face teaching. This included the teaching of, for example, 'A View from the Bridge' in Year 9 rather than 'Wuthering Heights' and 'An Inspector Calls' in Year 8 rather than 'Oliver Twist', with curriculum restructuring allowing the students to make the most progress possible. On their return, students were quickly assessed on their learning with a range of tests, and this highlighted further need for intervention, as indicated through the module report system.

As we face the emerging longer-term challenges posed by the pandemic, the English department strives to seek opportunities to support students in line with the school's 'Roadmap to Recovery'. We will seek strategies to enrich the students' experiences through a varied and engaging curriculum and positive opportunities for students to discuss their experiences and feelings. Teaching will address the numerous PSHE priorities of the school, and will provide situations for students to re-establish peer relationships, developing confidence and a renewed sense of belonging in the school. With creative and imaginative use of language at the heart of everything in the subject, the English department will seek to enrich the students' views of the world after a period of significant upheaval.