

English Department Curriculum Statement – July 2024

Vision

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, writing and speaking 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. Students are encouraged to become articulate learners, voicing their views on both writers' methods within canonical texts and on real world issues in a range of contexts. Learning should be sequential and thoughtfully planned to ensure students are able to embed and build upon key conceptual knowledge through their studies of both English Language and English Literature. 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.

Action

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. Given the breadth of concepts and knowledge explored in English lessons, the subject lends itself to a range of cross-curricular links. Within their English lessons, students are actively encouraged to draw on prior knowledge from other subject areas to enrich their understanding of set texts, further embedding knowledge from across the curriculum.

Students will regularly recap learning from across their studies at Thomas Telford School, ensuring a solid basis for future learning, and the ability to use this learning to make further progress. Students are assessed regularly through knowledge tests, summative essay responses and creative and transactional writing pieces. This 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. A reading programme and phonics programme are also implemented for learners who are identified as needing additional support in these areas and is reviewed regularly. 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, lesson observations, 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 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.

Subject contact

Director of English, Miss Alice Couzens – acouzens@ttsonline.net

