

English Curriculum Overview

In the SJF English department, we believe that English is about knowledge and skill: knowledge and understanding about literature, language and culture and skill in decoding what you read and experience in light of this. We see English as a journey into deeper knowledge and seek to nurture imagination and curiosity by presenting new and exciting challenges along the way. There are always more challenging texts to read, more sophisticated ways to write and to speak, and we aim to support you in exploring as many of these as you can.

Through our curriculum, we intend you to escape from the ordinary and to project yourself into unfamiliar or fictional experiences so that you can develop your own voice and identity by exploring how you feel about and relate to the worlds between the pages and, by extension, our world in which all texts are written and received.

The Department KS3

A total of 459 students study English at KS3: 240 in Y7 and 219 in Y8. Both year groups have 6 lessons per fortnight, one of which is taken in the library. During this library lesson, Y7 pupils take part in the Accelerated Reader scheme whilst Y8 read for half of the time and complete VCOP activities for the remaining time. In 2019, 85% of Y7 students and 85% of Y8 students were on or above target to achieve their end of GCSE target grade. Eleven teachers deliver this curriculum with some library lessons taken by an additional teacher. Miss L Beecroft, as deputy of the department, is responsible for progress within this Key Stage and Mr C Kilby, as Head of Department, oversees.

Intent at KS3

Our primary intention is that pupils are prepared and educated for life. We recognise that success in English is vital to students' social, cultural and intellectual development. To this end, we aim to ensure that pupils can read, write and communicate successfully in exams and, more importantly, in the wider world beyond that. We also endeavour to develop pupils' love and appreciation of literature and the written word. As such, in year 7, we expose pupils to universal themes through a wide range of literature including both pre-1914 and contemporary fiction and non-fiction, providing opportunities for breadth of knowledge and interleaving of key skills. In year 8, pupils continue to refine these key skills, deepen their knowledge and further broaden their cultural capital through exploring different literary genres. The school values of Compassion, Humility, Respect, Integrity, Service and Tolerance are at the heart of our curriculum. As such, we aim to ensure that pupils are habitually exposed to literature from different cultures. Furthermore, we aim to foster an environment and culture that encourages the discussion of complex and sometimes sensitive issues in an open and safe manner.

We track the maturation of the key reading, writing and oracy skills and knowledge through modular assignments and End of Year Assessments. To encourage learners' resilience and reflection, we endeavour to embed opportunities to redraft and perfect their work, drawing on constructive teacher/ peer feedback and modelled answers. We aim to give pupils transparency in the success criteria in a timely manner through learning journeys. In line with school policy, we assess using descriptors that range from a grade 1 to 9; these descriptors align with those required at KS4 to ensure pupils have been prepared for the demands of the next key stage in English. We have the same high expectations of all students, regardless of background, and scaffold to enable students to achieve these high expectations as well as realising their full potential. We track data meticulously to ensure this is the case and aim to intervene in a timely manner when necessary.

We endeavour to make lessons as engaging as possible, including a range of teaching and learning activities. To this end, our department constantly strive to develop their teaching through relevant

CPD and attendance at Teaching and Learning team meetings. We also assign time to share resources and best practice regularly at department meetings and briefings. We seek out-of-classroom opportunities to further develop pupils' engagement with the subject whilst further building their cultural capital and we aim to maintain the highest levels of engagement and benefit through annual reviews of data and pupil voice.

Implementation at KS3

Our units of learning are designed to develop and hone pupils' skills in responding to and analysing a range of text types from different genres, increasing their ability to emulate a plethora of writing styles, including both fiction and non-fiction. For example, pupils read texts such as poetry, scripts and letters as well as whole texts, in line with the National Curriculum. Teaching these different skills side-by-side helps to instil the idea that the disciplines are complementary. Furthermore, exposure to such a wide array of modes, as our curriculum allows, builds cultural capital that is necessary to fully understand and appreciate a text's production and reception; something especially important in broadening the horizons of our largely white, middle-class cohort. Across KS3, key skills and knowledge are interleaved since this has been proven to improve retention therefore better preparing our pupils for GCSE study. To monitor pupils' progress through this programme of study, we assess every half-term. Prior to this assessment, pupils have drafting, feedback and reflection time. On completion, pupils participate in additional DIRT tasks to ensure they know how to progress. Assessments are moderated to ensure the descriptors are applied consistently across the department and exemplar work is stored to aid the marking and standardising process in future feedback cycles.

In year 7, pupils are taught in mixed ability groups as research suggests this is beneficial for the progress of lower prior attaining students; it also appears to support pupils' mental wellbeing- a key school focus. In year 8, we currently group students into three bands (accelerated, mixed and nurture) based on their target data and prior attainment. The groups study different novels to enable the accelerated groups to work with texts such as *The Book Thief* which requires a faster reading speed and allows opportunities to stretch their knowledge and understanding. In both year 7 and year 8, classes have home and away seating plans so that students work with students of similar abilities and with students of varying abilities. Furthermore, teachers scaffold accordingly to ensure vulnerable groups are achieving, including by effectively deploying TAs where possible. Where this is not the case, pupils are identified by teachers as their 'Focus 5' and wave 1 interventions are put in place. Our English TA also runs targeted intervention sessions with smaller groups outside of the classroom- especially those for whom catch-up funding is allocated.

So that students take responsibility for their own learning, for homework, pupils choose from a wide range of tasks from a 'menu', each offering a different level of challenge and the opportunity to practise different skills each week. To ensure consistency and appropriate challenge, completion of homework is tracked by teachers each week and performance is celebrated with parents via postcards home and prizes. Pupils are also supported through a metacognitive booklet, in revising for their EOY assessments to better prepare them for the demands of linear exams in KS4.

To ensure that all students are receiving consistent delivery of the curriculum, regardless of set or teacher, we conduct regular learning walks, book looks and pupil voice panels. These methods also ensure that lessons are engaging.

In terms of extra-curricular opportunities, there is a creative writing club which runs on a lunchtime and is open to KS3 students. We also have visiting authors who talk about the writing process and deliver workshops and book signings in the Library. In the summer term, we offer English enrichment trips; students have been to The Forbidden Corner, The Bronte Parsonage and Beningbrough Hall in order to inspire and develop their reading and writing. We also run theatre trips, including to the pop up Globe Theatre in York and to the Leeds Playhouse to help improve cultural capital. Each year we celebrate National Poetry Day in English lessons. Students also look forward to the famous Spelling Bee competition that takes place in Year 8 as well as the Poetry Slam in Year 7.

Literacy is, of course, a corner stone of what we do and numeracy is embedded through consideration of narrative tension charts and structural analysis. We liaise with PHSCE, History and RE where we see opportunities to align our texts and discussion with their curriculums. For example, year 7 study 'The Breadwinner', a text set in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule, which allows for conversations about different cultural beliefs whilst many year 8 pupils study 'Noughts and Crosses' and, in doing so, consider both historical and contemporary racial prejudice. All of our teachers are very open and supportive and so the conversations encompassed as we engage with a text often allows for fascinating coverage of St John Fisher's CHRIST values as well as the fundamental British Values. Students are astute at recognising when the learning links with these values and discuss them with respect.

Impact at KS3

Frequent data tracking via SMID demonstrates how well students are accessing the curriculum content. We also closely monitor all pupils' residuals at regular intervals across the year, including to measure the impact of interventions on catch-up students. Data from 2019 demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of KS3 pupils, including vulnerable groups, were on or above target to achieve their end of GCSE target grade. Since key skills necessary for success at KS4 is embedded and interleaved in the KS3 curriculum, this provides strong evidence that they are well prepared for KS4 in terms of both their work ethic and their breadth and depth of subject knowledge. In year 7, Accelerated Reader data provides further insight into both the progress and engagement of specific groups. In addition, termly book looks confirm that students' skills are maturing as they are immersed in engaging teaching and learning activities in the classroom, something largely corroborated by pupil voice panels and evidenced during the PM cycle, department review process and in learning walks. Learning walks provide a further opportunity to observe implementation of effective seating plans and effective deployment of TAs as well as demonstrate to observers that students in our department relish open and healthy discussion about CHRIST values and British values and will communicate ably through life and make positive contributions towards society. Outside of the classroom, pupils' engagement with the 'chilli chart' homework menus is displayed and celebrated in each English classroom.

The Department at KS4

689 students study English at KS4: 234 in y9, 240 in y10 and 215 in y11. Y9 have 7 lessons per fortnight; Year 10 have 8 and Year 11 have 9 with two additional hours per fortnight for students who drop a GCSE. In 2018, the English Language results were: 9-7 36%, 9-5 75% and 9-4 90%. The Literature results were 9-7 44%, 9-5 79% and 9-4 92%. 12 Teachers deliver this curriculum with occasional lessons in y9 being taken by a 13th. C. Kilby, as HoD is responsible for progress within this Key Stage and L. Beecroft as 2ic assists with y9 progress. The courses are assessed by two terminal papers each and graded 1-9; with a separate award of "pass," "merit" or "distinction" for their spoken presentation work.

Intent at KS4

It is our intention that all students can access and enjoy an array of literary and non-literary texts both as part of the AQA specification and around it and that students gain confidence and proficiency in their writing and their speaking in order to communicate with success and to thrive in their exams and in the world beyond them.

We assess using the AQA GCSE Assessment Objectives and mark schemes though in year 9 our task setting is slightly more accessible than the KS4 terminal exams. We group students into three bands: accelerated, mixed and nurture and within classes we aim to vary seating plans so that students work with others of varying abilities. We have the same high expectations of all students and aim to scaffold in order for everyone to achieve them, but we do make slightly different text choices for the accelerated groups so that we can deepen their knowledge and push their lines of enquiry.

6 members of our department are active members of the Teaching and Learning Team. 2 members are lead Practitioners and 1 member is Assistant Head responsible for Teaching and Learning. We strive to consistently demonstrate excellent, research-led teaching practice by avidly sharing ideas and resources in department meetings and briefings.

We intend to ensure that a broad range of texts are taught to give students the widest possible experience of Literature and that teachers model good reading and writing habits, often by making good use of the visualisers we have in each classroom. Metacognitive practices are priorities for our classroom practice so that students are increasingly resilient and reflective. We aim to give this particular emphasis in the run-up to each assessment point and in each aftermath.

When it comes to supporting students within vulnerable groups, we aim to track progress carefully and to provide additional support and opportunities for students who are presented with additional challenges because of them. It is our intention that every student makes optimum progress regardless of background. We value regular theatre trips to see set texts performed and prioritise the needs of students with gaps in their cultural capital when allocating places.

It is a priority of our homework policy that much of the work set relies upon students reading and revising around the subjects covered in class which helps in preparation for later life, be it higher level study or time management and organisation. We aim to make stronger links with Higher Education institutions to encourage greater engagement with English after GCSE and A Level.

Implementation at KS4

Our programmes of study for years 9-10 are below. We dovetail Language and Literature teaching to make sure that students are aware of the transferrable skills and to improve interleaved revision practices. In year 9 we choose different texts to the AQA specifications in order to ensure breadth of our curriculum and depth of understanding of universal themes but we assess using the GCSE mark schemes so that students become increasingly aware of assessment procedures and measure as well as how they are making progress.

Each module is assessed, at its end, by a summative assessment and students complete comprehensive DIRT activities on their feedback. These summative assessments are stored in assessment folders which follow the students through the school and are accompanied with trackers showing the variety of targets set and the progress through levels awarded. Each new module begins with the sharing of a learning journey and home-learning resource that ensures students know what they are studying, why they are studying, how they will be assessed and how they can best apply themselves at home to make optimum progress. Home-learning often involves parents discussing issues or testing recall as we value their involvement highly and encourage it in our parental

information evening where we explain our courses and how they can support their young people throughout them. Assessments are moderated for each module and, this, alongside book looks allows the department leaders to feel confident that coverage of the curriculum is consistent across the department. Moderation is enhanced significantly by the fact that 6 of our teachers are GCSE exam markers for the exam board.

On top of the breadth of texts studied in Literature units, we use the GCSE Language course to broaden students' knowledge and cultural capital by working with texts from a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction sources. Wherever possible, we use texts from other cultures to broaden the experience and understanding of our students. When we respond to texts and when we create texts we frequently discuss the school's CHRIST values and the Fundamental British Values as it is often behaviour not in accordance with these that leads to the disruption we find in narratives and a return to them that brings about denouement. Texts we deal with examine issues to do with ethnicity, sexuality, gender and socio-economic backgrounds and all teachers and students discuss issues arising openly and respectfully. Students are astute at recognising when the learning links with these school and British values and discuss them with respect.

When grouping students into three bands, we use KS4 target grades in the first instance and then average and terminal assessment scores from the previous academic year. Opportunities to see texts in performance are available to students of all abilities and differentiation is provided through higher level text choices for classes in the accelerated band and otherwise through carefully considered "home" and "away" seating plans and lesson plans so that students are appropriately scaffolded towards achieving our high expectations of them. Disadvantaged students are set carefully to ensure that they study with students who will offer a higher level of vocabulary in discussion and will help to motivate others and PP funding is spent on providing revision text books and stationery as well as funding special revision evenings with the HoD and places on educational trips.

Literacy is, of course a corner stone of what we do and numeracy is embedded through consideration of narrative tension charts and structural analysis. We liaise with PHSC, History and RE where we see opportunities to align our texts and discussion with their curriculums.

Teaching and Learning is always a departmental priority with directed time being used avidly to discuss strategies and share resources. Learning walks, performance management observations and informal planning partnerships all provide rich evidence of an engaging curriculum led by enthusiastic teachers. On top of the excellent teaching of curriculum-related skills, the English department keep up to date with the most current educational research in study habits and metacognition so skills of interleaving, planning, problem solving and evaluating infuse our lessons consistently.

Impact at KS4

Our outcomes show that we are in the top 5% of schools for results in English Literature and Language at grade 7-9 and the top 20% in Language at 5-9 and 4-9. The success is replicated at 5-9 in Literature though at 9-4 we are back in the top 5%. Outcomes for all vulnerable groups are at or above National Average for GCSE Language and regular data checks suggest that the gaps in attainment continue to close.

Pupil voice demonstrates that students feel engaged in their English lessons and enjoy their learning. Where student voice or student attainment suggests areas for improvement, the course design is amended as far as possible and our reflective teachers always plan to maintain the highest levels of engagement. Students in our department prove themselves able to be involved with open and healthy discussion about CHRIST values and British values and go on to communicate ably through life and make positive contributions towards society. One instance of such an opportunity is in the delivery of An Inspector Calls in which students improve their understanding of different attitudes towards social responsibility and communicate this in increasingly clear and insightful ways.