Curriculum Implementation

English

The English curriculum is designed to give students a broad experience of a wide range of literature which is woven together through schemes of learning which have been designed to be thematic in their focus and which take an intertextual approach. Embedded into our schemes of learning across both Key Stages 3 and 4 are the key skills required for the four different GCSE exams. These skills have been scaled so that they develop progression of the key requirements in relation to the topics and texts being covered. Our vision for English is that, by placing learning at the centre of everything we do, we continually reflect upon and develop our own practice, seeking opportunities to enhance teaching and learning.

Our purpose is to inspire and motivate students, fostering a love of all things English and broadening and enriching their minds and hearts.

We deliver a varied and creative curriculum, allowing all students the opportunities to flourish. Through teaching of transferrable skills and strategies, we enable students to achieve in our subject and others, as well as in their lives beyond school.

We aim to empower our students to become effective independent learners through supportive and skills-based feedback and next steps which develop students' skills and challenge them to aspire beyond their expected progress.

Our principles behind our approach to English lessons:

We want to:
- Take an 'intertextual' approach to English, encouraging students to make links between different styles and types of texts which have been written and used across different periods of time, reflecting changing attitudes, a range of purposes and different audiences.
- Take a multi-modal approach to learning so that students utilise ICT facilities available as well as using (and creating) moving images, dramatic performances, pictures and photographs alongside written texts.
- Encourage students to be able to use transferable skills: skills that can be utilised in other lessons across the curriculum.
- Enrich students' experience of English.
- Provide a clear sense of purpose to tasks, making them 'real' and relevant to everyday.

How is the curriculum planned?

The English curriculum is planned to build a broad understanding of a wealth of texts in a wide range of different forms: articles, novels (& extracts from novels), letters, speeches, poetry and so on. These texts span the literary canon from the sixteenth century through to the twenty-first century. Most texts span the nineteenth to twenty-centuries, covering both fiction and non-fiction. In addition, students study three of Shakespeare's plays across their five years.

Texts and assessments have been planned to build key skills relating to the GCSE success criteria: comprehension, synthesis, comparison, contextual links, writers' methods and intentions.

All students will gain these experiences through:

- Thematic schemes of learning which, whilst focusing on key texts, embrace a range of different texts exploring the key themes in differing styles, forms and from a range of different times, offering an array of differing perspectives and viewpoints. This will, therefore, enrich their engagement in English Language and Literature through a more intertextual approach.
- Literacy lessons and Accelerated Reader lessons at Key Stage 3.
- *Let's Think in English* lessons, fortnightly, which develop students' cognitive development through group work, discussion and questioning.

How is the curriculum planned to be linked explicitly to relevant learning in other subjects and to the context of their lives?

The content of the English curriculum directly supports key content in Humanities' subjects, such as the teaching of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism in Year 8 using a range of literary and non-literary fiction and non-fiction, complementing the Year 8 History curriculum. In addition, key concepts such as the human condition in Year 10, explored before studying *Lord of the Flies* and considering the practices of eminent social psychologists, such as Philip Zimbardo and Stanley Milgram, and their recognised experiments, such as the Stanford Prison Experiment and the Milgram Experiment, again support content and concepts from the Psychology GCSE. Ideas about society, societal issues, such as social class, woven into the English curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4 (in particular) complement the curriculum content in Sociology. In addition, culture and religion not only link well with Sociology but also Religious Education. In all cases, our intention to broaden students' depth and breadth of knowledge of the world that they live in, developing their enquiring minds and deepening their understanding of concepts pertinent to their lives, is at the core of every scheme of learning. Thus, through newly developed schemes of learning, such as Year 9's *The World's Wife*, modern poetry from the Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy is explored alongside Greek Mythology, further deepening students' cultural capital together with their awareness of topical issues such as feminism and patriarchy in society. Furthermore, philosophical thinking has been woven into schemes of learning, again addressing and engaging concepts which can be applied to all and any texts studied.

How is the curriculum delivered?

The English curriculum is delivered using a range of pedagogical approaches. Key skills and topics are taught thematically rather than in isolation so that skills and aspects of the range of texts are revisited regularly, through questioning, quizzes, active registers and Kahoot, for example.

Students are assessed regularly, using formative, peer and summative assessments, as outlined in our Assessment Policy. In addition, each scheme of learning has specific assessments – with choices and a range of assessment opportunities – clearly outlined in each scheme of learning. Within each scheme of learning, according to the year group, the assessments are designed to build key skills appropriate to the particular stage of students' learning.

Feedback from teachers focuses on specific skills from the Key Stage 3 and 4 Programme of Study and GCSE Assessment Objectives, all of which underpin all schemes of learning.
The importance of reading and language acquisition are also at the core of our curriculum. Thus, texts are carefully selected to ensure that students receive a breadth and depth of topics and that they are appropriately challenged, whilst being engaged, building confidence, comprehension skills and strategies. Equally, teachers model and encourage students to be more adventurous with their vocabulary. A range of strategies are incorporated into lessons and schemes of learning, such as etymology 'word webs' to help students explore lexical patterns and meanings, glossaries and 'word of the week' as well as the use of dictionaries and thesauruses being integral tools in lessons.

Key Pedagogies

The English curriculum draws upon pedagogical approaches which support the development of students' learning, comprehension, application and recall of key ideas within the curriculum that they are studying. These include the pedagogical approaches below – and others as detailed in the English Department Handbook.

Constructivism
Constructivist theory is linked to Piaget and Vygotsky's theoretical approaches to learning. Constructivism in teaching recognises the student as a learner and the knowledge that they bring to the lesson. It places the teacher as facilitator and the student takes an active role in their learning. Strategies such as the teacher establishing what students already know (to build on their prior knowledge), recognising different backgrounds and cultures of learners, creating learners who seek to ask questions and find solutions, creating activities which encourage students' enthusiasm for their learning are all broadly constructivist.

Flipped Learning
Flipped Learning puts greater focus on the pre-learning which takes place prior to the lesson so that the lesson can focus on applying the knowledge. Flipped Learning creates opportunities with students' independent learning before their lesson. It requires careful planning to ensure that the learning/application in the lesson builds on the learning that has taken place prior to the lesson. (It is important to have strategies in place for students who have not completed the task for IL).

Interleaving
Teaching the English curriculum through interleaving (mixing) both Language and Literature skills and through making connections between the texts and exam papers, rather than teaching them in a 'blocked' way. Interleaving has been shown to be more effective than blocked practice for developing the skills of categorization and problem solving; interleaving also leads to better long-term retention and improved ability to transfer learned knowledge. Cognitive psychologists believe that interleaving improves the brain's ability to differentiate, or discriminate, between concepts and strengthens memory associations.

ABC: Add, Build, Challenge
To avoid the 'table tennis approach' to whole class discussion (back and forth between teacher and individual student), students are encouraged to use 'ABC', the 'basketball approach', enabling discussion to go across the classroom between students.

Modelling, including live modelling – part of the metacognitive approach – and shared writing.

Metacognition
The development of students' cognitive knowledge and regulation:
Their own knowledge of themselves as a learner and the factors affecting their cognition (person & task knowledge; self-appraisal)
- Their awareness and management of cognition, including knowledge about strategies (procedural & strategy knowledge).
- Their knowledge about why and when to use a given strategy (conditional knowledge).
- Their identification and selection of appropriate strategies and allocation of resources (planning).
- Their awareness of their own comprehension and task performance (monitoring/regulating; cognitive experiences).
- Their assessment of the process and products of their own learning; revisiting and revising goals (evaluating).

PiXL Thinking Hard

Thinking Hard is at the heart of excellent classroom practice and students who engage in learning and think hard achieve well and progress. With the advent of more challenging curricula across all Key Stages and examination reform, practical strategies to develop depth of understanding are more essential than ever for students of all abilities. One of the main things that distinguish expert teachers is challenge in the classroom[1]. Robert Coe, when defining learning, says it *"…happens when people have to think hard"*[2], so the question becomes: how can I increase the amount of thinking for all in my classroom without increasing my workload?

There are four key approaches that can support deep thought in the classroom, two of which we will focus on. Each of these follow the maxim: high thinking; low planning:

1. Thinking Hard Process: Knowledge, understanding, analysis and flexibility.
2. Effective explanations: analogy, role modelling, worked examples.
3. Think-pair-share: question technique to get students thinking and talking in a focused way.
4. Assessment and feedback: including test, feedback, retest.

Thinking Hard Process – *Knowledge, understanding, analysis and flexibility*

The Thinking Hard Process moves student engagement with essential information from passive to active interactions.

Knowledge and Understanding by reducing (e.g. a paragraph to 12 key words) and transforming (e.g. change this text into a diagram – no words) information focuses students to think hard and understand the content and gives teachers the opportunity to check essential knowledge.

Analysis by prioritising (e.g. Diamond 9) and categorising (e.g. group together questions that require the same technique to answer) allows students to make sense of the information that open up the highest GCSE grades that feature throughout examination questions.

Flexibility by extending (e.g. how is this similar/different to X? What question do we need to ask now?) allows students to make connections across a range of topics and subjects and enables them to tackle questions that require application of knowledge in new situations.

Think-Pair-Share – *Transform classroom thinking*

A shift away from 'hands up' questioning to a model that promotes wait time, depth of discussion, dynamic classroom dialogue, audible thinking and experimentation of ideas.

Let's Think in English

Let's Think in English is a teaching programme to help young people develop the reasoning skills needed for success in English. As soon as they have learned how to decode letters, words and sentences, they need to develop higher-order reading skills such as inference, deduction and analysis. This gradually leads through the Key Stages to the ability to recognise and discuss how language can be used to create features such as characterisation, mood, tone, pace and irony and how texts can be structured for various effects.

Let's Think in English draws on research by Piaget and Vygotsky that young people learn best when exploring ideas together. The lessons are based on structured challenge and include the development of understanding through discussion (social construction), problem-solving (cognitive challenge) and structured reflection (metacognition) which makes students more aware of their thinking processes and how they think most effectively.

---

[1] Hattie, John (2003) *"Teachers Make a Difference: What is the research evidence?* "Australian Council for Educational Research Annual Conference; 15-16

[2] Coe, Robert (2013) *"Improving education : A Triumph of Hope over Experience"*
http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf; 14-15

How is the curriculum assessed?

Teachers use a range of assessment strategies within lessons, between lessons, within units in schemes of learning and at the end of units. For example, questioning is a valuable strategy used to assess comprehension within the lesson to ensure understanding and to create challenge. Personalised Learning Checklists (PLCs) and Flight Paths are used to focus on key skills and to RAG rate understanding. This includes the use of the Know-it, Grasp-it, Think-it 'mats' to help students also take ownership of their strengths and areas for development.

Regular, explicit use of success criteria helps to ensure that students are clear about the expectations for their final assessments. These are 'unpicked' along with modelled examples, which are also used to create success criteria. In addition, live modelling and shared written and verbal responses are all used during the development phases of learning to aid progression. The sharing of Written Learning Targets from the Flight Paths and PLCs, along with regular written and verbal 'next steps' tailors the learning for individual needs.

Formative written and verbal feedback is recorded in students' drafting books and in teachers' data folders (as well as on Department Trackers, as appropriate), with some feedback using the 'Michaela's Way' approach which is recorded on a single sheet and guidance is then given via PowerPoint targets for differentiated needs. This approach also helps to ensure more regular feedback whilst tailoring it to specific misconceptions and allowing the teacher to focus on key students, as well as identifying strengths which can be shared and celebrated.

Peer assessment strategies focus on key skills, further building students' knowledge of success criteria – skills and mark schemes – so that feedback given to each other is specific and mostly relevant. Strategies such as 'caterpillar marking' and 'tickled pink & yellow boxes' are used by students as part of their peer assessment.

Teacher assessment follows the English Assessment Policy, using the Next Steps stickers and allowing students time to respond to next steps and feedforward. Next steps are also then fed-forward into learning objectives to ensure highly personalised learning and to create a dynamic approach to students' learning, which is always both reflective and forward-thinking.

Assessment is used to identify misconceptions, as well as to identify individual and whole class strengths and areas for further development and focus.