

## **ENGLISH Departmental Curriculum Statement 2022/23**

### **Curriculum Intent Statement**

The English team is committed to developing students' understanding of the wider world and their ability to express themselves articulately and with confidence. For Key Stages 3 and 4, We follow an innovative language-through-literature curriculum in order to develop a deep shared understanding of texts and ideas. The curriculum is broad and engaging, using thematic units and text-led learning to develop knowledge and cultural capital while improving pupils' skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing in order to fully prepare them for life in modern Britain. Each unit focuses on core knowledge and skills with integrated retrieval activities. Half-termly composite assessment tasks are centrally set and require students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills that they have learned. Weekly homework tasks prioritise developing knowledge through essential quizzes and practising creative writing skills.

At Cowley, reading is central to the teaching and learning experience as it offers a stimulating source of knowledge, ideas and vocabulary. Our students enjoy a rich and varied diet of classic and modern literature including prose, poetry, drama and non-fiction. Texts are drawn from a range of periods and cultures featuring a diverse cast of voices. All students read whole prose and drama texts and receive their statutory requirements set out in the National Curriculum, and are encouraged to read widely within an appropriate range of challenge for their development. A range of poetry is studied, from 18th century to modern day, and poems are often linked to other texts and topics to deepen understanding. Additional themed units expose students to an even greater range of writers, genres and styles.

Reading widely for pleasure is encouraged at all times and the college library is central to our vision. Accelerated Reader provides a personalised reading programme for each student; we shadow the Carnegie Prize for children's literature and we organise visits to theatres and from published authors and poets. The English team champions the acquisition of fundamental literacy skills by modelling how standard English, accurate grammar and a range of different reading strategies can be used by students to express themselves articulately and with confidence. As a department, we take the lead with whole-school literacy policies to ensure that reading progression is evident for all students and we intervene so that all students are able to develop their reading to age-related expectations and beyond.

Our curriculum topics and set texts help to introduce and contextualise engaging writing tasks which develop understanding of the writer's craft as well as consolidating knowledge of the texts themselves. Students are taught to produce clear and accurate written texts in a variety of styles and to meet the needs of different purposes and audiences. Students are expected to produce commentaries on all creative writing pieces (both fiction and non-fiction) to encourage more conscious crafting. Speaking and listening skills are taught explicitly and all pupils are encouraged to express their ideas confidently in a variety of situations, leading to presentations fulfilling the Spoken Language requirement of GCSE English Language in Years 10 and 11.

To further develop students' literacy, we promote a practical approach to grammar where features of the writer's craft are identified and analysed in context. This is supported by weekly grammar lessons in Key Stage 3 following the Ark Curriculum's Writing Mastery programme to ensure that a comprehensive range of grammatical features are taught explicitly and through a logical progression. For every unit, items of tier two and three vocabulary are identified, applied and recalled thus ensuring that they are retained.

We are ambitious for all our students. The curriculum has been designed to ensure there is equality of access with core knowledge, skills and composite tasks that all students must complete. There are increasing levels of challenge as the years progress and texts have been chosen carefully to extend learning. Activities to address areas of weakness and to extend students further are included in each unit and these are set by class teachers according to student needs identified by monitoring and assessments. We actively promote students to continue their studies in the subject in our Sixth Form by identifying talented and interested students and supporting them during Years 10 and 11 with wider reading and appropriate transition tasks. This prepares students for the Key Stage 5 curriculum which also embodies the principles set out above. Studying either A Level English Language or A Level English Literature, students encounter our most challenging texts and are encouraged to develop as critical thinkers who can debate provocative ideas and social issues, who read with passion and insight, and who recognise the power of words as articulate speakers and writers.

### **Curriculum Implementation Statement**

In following a language-through-literature curriculum, each year is organised into five or six units with either a theme or a literary text as its focus. This is to create practical learning which encourages the acquisition of vocabulary and knowledge through reading and writing experiences. Given the range of literary texts on offer, we make sure students rise to what we call the 'Language Challenge' by responding to the reading and writing tasks integrated into each unit, such as creative writing tasks that are linked to the source text and also challenging extension tasks that require students to use higher order thinking skills by comparing texts with contrasting ideas or making sophisticated evaluations. Students are assessed regularly and formative feedback is given throughout their learning. Study and improvement time is embedded in the curriculum and students have regular opportunities to consolidate their learning and show development. There are four compulsory 'composite' assessment tasks during the year and all students sit end of year exams linked to the curriculum content for that year.

Key Stage 3 runs from Year 7 to Year 9 and the curriculum is structured with a view to developing the key skills and understanding that students need to be successful in later years. Themed units using linked texts and poems develop depth and mastery of understanding by offering a breadth of experience and by giving students the opportunity to make links and see the wider cultural significance of their learning. Vocabulary, retrieval and practical grammar tasks are embedded in each unit and linked to the core content. Within each year, units have been scheduled in order to be complimentary and allow for the interleaving and revisiting of core knowledge to ensure it is embedded in the long-term memory.

In Year 7, our learning is mainly focused on fiction with students designing their ideal books and being introduced to a wide range of texts to encourage wider reading. Students are assessed formally at the start and end of the year, as the culmination of a sequence of complimentary units which are intended to develop a range of skills and their understanding of how language can be used to great effect in literary texts. Two novels and the dramatic adaptation of 'Frankenstein' are read in full. Creative writing is developed through narrative and character-based tasks, and non-fiction is included for 'In the News' at the end of the year to capitalise on school initiatives such as Pulse TV, the BBC School Report and the Year 6 journalism event.

In Year 8, students are encouraged to see themselves as local and global citizens who can have an impact on the communities that they belong to. The focus of this year is non-fiction with students creating their own charity campaigns, writing persuasive speeches and developing their understanding of effective speech writing. Students are encouraged to articulate and exchange their views by exploring the personal challenges and societal issues presented in their set texts, culminating in a debating competition between classes. As in the previous year, Year 8 students are assessed formally at the start and end of the year after studying themed units and a range of literary texts including the novel 'Trash', the Shakespeare play, 'The Tempest' and the poetry of Maya Angelou.

Year 9 is more challenging again with our maturing students having the opportunity to explore and discuss social and moral issues within a broad theme of taking responsibility. They begin by reading a more challenging novel, George Orwell's 'Animal Farm', intended to widen their appreciation of the writer's craft and how texts can be linked to the contexts in which they are produced. A diverse range of survival stories are then used to inspire students to write their own first-person narratives in the subsequent unit. While reading 'Romeo & Juliet', students further develop their understanding of Shakespearean theatre by investigating the conventions of the tragic genre and the mistakes made by flawed protagonists, leading to linked creative work writing in character. A non-fiction unit about gaming introduces more advanced rhetorical techniques and uses personal accounts to stimulate debates and link our studies meaningfully to the wider world. Students continue to use talk as a learning tool whether to debate interpretations of texts or to plan engaging writing, and also deliver presentations to the class in the final unit on travel.

Key Stage 4 begins in Year 10 with students studying GCSE set texts and completing examination-style assessment tasks. We follow the AQA specification for English Language and the EDUQAS specification for English Literature. Considerable focus is placed on the set texts for English Literature during Year 10 so that they can be understood with key items of knowledge and vocabulary being identified, applied and tested in retrieval tasks. In order to extend pupils' understanding and securely embed content in the long-term memory, these texts are revisited in Year 11 but with new content and higher expectations, for example by exploring overarching themes in the texts rather than individual characters, and by completing more challenging assessment tasks that require higher-order thinking skills. An important feature of the language-through-literature curriculum is that literary texts are used to generate skills work for English Language, with a range of reading and writing activities integrated into each unit. Writing remains an important focus with students producing relevant articles, letters and speeches linked to the set texts as well as challenging creative tasks writing in character. There is a themed unit focusing specifically on the knowledge and skills needed for English Language Paper 1 in the summer term prior to the end of year exams. Students also deliver presentations to satisfy the Spoken Language element of GCSE English Language in the final term.

The Year 11 curriculum has been designed to enhance students' skills and understanding by consolidating the knowledge and skills learned during the previous four years. Themed topics help students to develop their Language skills through texts that are linked by context and focus. For English Literature, development units build on prior reading so that fundamental knowledge can be applied in the discussion of themes and issues in the texts. Students are challenged to discuss and debate conflicting ideas when comparing non-fiction texts or interpreting works of literature. In the first term, students focus on Language Paper 2 and poetry before completing development units on Literature content from the previous year. In the second term, a similar pattern is followed using a Language Paper 1 unit called 'Danger in

the Water' to develop students' appreciation of the writer's craft taught alongside further development units on English Literature texts. Year 11 students sit mock examinations before the Christmas and Easter breaks.

In terms of developing literacy skills, an integrated approach is promoted using set texts as contextual sources of new vocabulary and models for grammatical structures. However, there are explicit grammar lessons and tasks in every unit of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure that grammatical features are taught explicitly and through a logical progression. Sets are created to support this process following the Pathway Setting Guide set out in the Ark Curriculum's Writing Mastery programme so that areas of weakness or any misconceptions are not overlooked. Students complete weekly grammar lessons to build on knowledge from Key Stage 2 and have regular opportunities to practise their creative writing such as a fortnightly writing task in Key Stage 4. Significant efforts have also been made to link writing to reading, with wider reading texts and suggested reading lists developed as part of the curriculum planning. Students can now access the library services and reading material online, with guidance and reading lists published on the school's website.

Students receive weekly homework tasks which are monitored and checked. The department priorities for homework are developing knowledge and creative writing, with essential quizzes being set to ensure that students have the opportunity to revisit and recall key learning points in order to embed them in the long term memory.

### **Sixth Form Study**

The English Department offers two possible progression routes into the Sixth Form: A Level English Language and A Level English Literature. Studying English at Key Stage 5 requires students to think critically and maturely about adult issues, and to have broader knowledge of the genres and cultures that have influenced the production of language and literature. The curriculum for both subjects therefore offers a diverse range of voices, representations and ideologies through the texts and topics that have been chosen.

For English Language, we follow the EDUQAS specification and students begin Year 12 by investigating a range of introductory topics such as the news, spoken language of the media, politics and the law, film, TV chefs and promotional texts. This exposes students to a broad range of linguistic contexts before introducing the more conceptualised studies of language and gender, language and power and Standard English. Students begin coursework projects in an area of interest relating to language and identity in the summer term. The most challenging topics of child language acquisition and language change are covered in the autumn term of Year 13 in preparation for mock examinations in January. To promote interleaving and consolidation, all topics are revisited and extension work is completed in the spring and summer term of Year 13 prior to the final external examinations in May and June. Throughout the course, students develop their creative writing skills by learning about a range of genre and styles as this is covered by an additional examined component.

For English Literature, we also follow the EDUQAS specification and students begin Year 12 with an investigation into Modernism to challenge students with experimental texts and to consider literature in a wider cultural context. The set drama texts of 'The Tempest', 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and 'The Duchess of Malfi' are all covered in Year 12 and students are introduced to the poets Heaney and Sheers. In the summer term, students begin coursework projects comparing dystopian novels from different centuries. In the autumn

term of Year 13, students complete an investigation into Post-Modernism which helps to extend the analysis of the dystopian novels in the redrafting phase, plus the most challenging poetry (Keats or Blake) and new material by Heaney and Sheers are covered in preparation for mock examinations in January. Similar to the approach in English Language, all topics are revisited and extension work is completed in the spring and summer term of Year 13 to promote interleaving and consolidation. Throughout the course, students practise skills for analysing unseen prose and poetry texts as this is also an examined component.

We also offer students the opportunity to resit and pass GCSE English Language. As in Year 11, this follows the AQA specification for English Language and similar approaches are used to those set out above. The department has a strong record of success here by consistently achieving above the national average pass rate with this age group.

### **Curriculum Beyond the Classroom**

As a department, we champion reading by offering extra-curricular activities in the library including a reading club. There are several theatre trips every year and we also invite performing groups into school through links with LIPA and by hosting an annual festive performance of 'A Christmas Carol' for Year 7 and Year 11 students. We have also held talks with parents to champion reading at home and regularly visit literary events and festivals as and when they become available. Debating is an important enrichment activity and the school has experienced some success in competitions like Debating Matters and Up for Debate in recent years.

We work with a well-equipped media department to offer a number of journalistic activities by contributing to the termly edition of Pulse TV, the BBC School Report and run a Year 6 journalism event for more able students as part of our outreach to primary schools. The school has produced feature films for screening at a local cinema in the past and plans to do so again in the future.

There are further opportunities for enrichment in the Sixth Form with additional theatre trips and excursions to BBC Breakfast, ITV Studios and the John Rylands Library supporting Key Stage 5 studies running in recent years.

**Subject Expertise**

The English team is well established and well qualified to deliver the curriculum: all our teachers are experienced subject specialists with post-graduate qualifications and many are trained examiners or have masters degrees in relevant fields. Appropriate professional training is delivered in-house or arranged every year. Subject leaders will deliver on key strategies from the Departmental Improvement Plan. Representatives from the department will attend exam board events and feed back to the department. We have a department innovator who works with other departmental leads on current teaching and learning developments and who takes a lead with sharing ideas and good practice. We are always looking to make improvements and stay informed by monitoring national publications, online sources and by contributing to professional networks including those organised by the Local Authority, and we have been supported by colleagues at Haydock High and Loreto Grammar School in recent years.

In a large department, ensuring consistency is critical and everyone has a leadership role to play to maintain high standards of teaching and learning. We complete collaborative planning tasks every year and each member of the team is expected to take on some responsibility in order to help with developing and updating everyone's professional practice.

**Destinations**

Significant efforts are made to develop students' ambitions and interests in the subject into adult life. Specific units of study are linked to professional roles in news media and charity campaigning. Students have several opportunities to work with writers and actors, including the Book Buzz initiative and theatre workshops. In 2019, we held a very successful Careers in Creative Writing and Publishing event with an external speaker who worked with interested students in Years 10, 12 and 13. We have taken students to lectures by famous academics and continue to exploit any opportunities to link our studies to the professional world whenever they are available.

In terms of transition, we support the College's programme of induction for Year 6 students into the school with English staff contributing to the programme of activities. Summer writing tasks and project work are set each year to encourage Year 6 students to produce work of an appropriate standard in preparation for Year 7. We also hold an annual meeting with local primaries to moderate and standardise written work. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is organised to develop appropriate skills and prepare students to access the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Year 10 students have Sixth Form taster activities in English Language, English Literature, Media Studies and Film so that they are aware of the Key Stage 5 options available to them. Transition work and reading lists helping Year 11 students to prepare for A Level courses have been shared in recent years. By including additional units on critical theories, educational visits to campus buildings and by taking a research-style approach to non-examined assessments, the A Level curriculum is designed to prepare students for university study and we regularly support Y13 students in moving on to study English Language, English Literature, Creative Writing and Education at degree level.