

English Department Curriculum Statement

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. We are focused on providing a curriculum that is broad, balanced, and challenging, which also builds rich knowledge and develops skills which prepare students for their next steps in education, training and employment. The curriculum is comprehensive 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 the modern world.

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.

Our curriculum topics and set texts help to introduce and contextualise engaging writing tasks which develop understanding of the writer's craft. 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. Writing tasks are integrated in all units of learning and pupils have a range of opportunities to plan, craft and edit writing texts to meet desired outcomes.

Vocabulary is at the heart of our lessons, and students engage with a wide range of ambitious vocabulary that will enable them to articulate themselves clearly in a range of situations and for a range of purposes and audiences.

Speaking and listening skills are taught explicitly and all pupils are encouraged to express their ideas confidently in a variety of situations. We are committed to ensuring our pupils have the greatest opportunities in education and beyond and the ability to communicate in a wide range of settings is key to this.

Curriculum Implementation

At Cowley, the curriculum is sequenced to provide learning which develops the knowledge and skills students require to progress throughout all Key Stages. We revisit knowledge in a cyclical nature allowing students to become confident in applying this knowledge for a range of different purposes and audiences.

In Key Stage 3, a wide range of texts are used to develop the essential skills of reading. Writing techniques are taught and modelled through the selection of key texts and pupils have lots of opportunities to develop their independent writing skills throughout each year. Our thematic units 'Journeys and Adventure' in Year 7 and 'The Gothic' in Year 8 aim to develop pupils' understanding of a wide range of genres across the literary timeline. Non-fiction texts, multi-modal texts and poems are used to develop a body of knowledge that prepares students for the next stage in the learning journey. Concepts introduced in Y7 are revisited and developed throughout Year 8 and Year 9. Pupils develop their understanding of texts as didactic constructs and the non-fiction texts that support each unit develop pupils' understanding of the contextual factors that impact literature. The art of rhetoric is introduced in Year 9 so that students can confidently articulate their views in relation to a range of topics. A variety of Shakespearean texts are studied and students are exposed to a wide range of poetry to enhance their understanding of seminal world literature and the complexities of the human condition.

At Key Stage 4, we aim to further develop resilient and independent learners who are able to confidently access both the English Language and Literature GCSE content. 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 key items of knowledge and vocabulary are taught, applied and tested in retrieval tasks. To extend pupils' understanding and securely embed content in the long-term memory, these texts are revisited in Year 11 but with new content linked to overarching themes. A range of English Language reading and writing activities are integrated throughout Key Stage 4. Pre and post 19th century fiction and non-fiction texts are used to develop pupils' understanding of writers' viewpoints and perspectives, and to develop pupils' creative and transactional writing skills.

Our curriculum purposefully embeds effective retrieval strategies which allow pupils to revisit key knowledge and develop long term memory. Pupils have regular opportunity to retrieve the knowledge and skills learned in previous lessons or years and develop these through the unit of work they are currently studying.

In all year groups, a range of formative and summative assessments are used to determine pupil outcomes and to assess the validity of the curriculum. In lessons, questioning and retrieval tasks allow teachers to respond accordingly. At key points throughout the year, multi choice questions are used to test pupils' knowledge. Application of knowledge is assessed through a range of essential tasks throughout the assessment cycle. During the summer term, exams are used to assess everything covered that year.

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 a range of sociocultural concepts, facilitating a broader knowledge of the genres and cultures that have influenced the production of language and literature.

For English Language, we follow the EDUQAS specification and students begin Year 12 by investigating a range of introductory topics such as spoken language of the media, politics and the law, film, TV 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 non examined assessment 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 Year 13. Throughout the course, students develop their creative writing skills by learning about a range of genre and styles.

For English Literature, we also follow the EDUQAS specification. 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 non examined assessment projects comparing novels from different centuries. Throughout the course, students also practise skills for analysing unseen prose and poetry texts.

Curriculum Beyond the Classroom

As a department, we champion reading by offering extra-curricular activities in the library including a reading club. We organise theatre trips and we invite performing groups into school to provide the students with the opportunity to experience live theatre productions of set texts.

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 at GCSE and A Level. We also have trained primary specialists who support our effective transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Appropriate professional training is delivered in-house or arranged externally every year. Representatives from the department attend exam board events and

feed back to the department. We are always looking to make improvements and stay informed by monitoring national publications, online sources and by contributing to professional development networks.

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 the modern world. Students have several opportunities to work with writers and actors, including the Book Buzz initiative and theatre workshops. 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, Film and Politics, 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 are shared to support progression and aid transition onto Key Stage 5 courses. 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, Law, Creative Writing and Education at degree level.