

## What are the fundamental concepts of English?

The national curriculum for English divides the core concepts of English into three broad categories: spoken language, reading and writing.

The text below is taken from the Department for Education's national curriculum for English, around which our curriculum is designed:

### **Spoken language:**

The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language continues to underpin the development of pupils' reading and writing during Key Stage 3 and teachers should therefore ensure pupils' confidence and competence in this area continue to develop. Pupils are taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate, as well as continuing to develop their skills in working collaboratively with their peers to discuss reading, writing and speech across the curriculum.

- We encourage reading out loud in pairs and groups through our reading of class novels but also through the reading of plays such as a modern version of 'Dracula' and Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and extracts from a range of his other plays.
- We also have units dedicated to spoken language: 'Finding my Voice' in year 7, 'The Tempest' in year 8 and at the end of year 9 our pupils complete a speech for their GCSE spoken language component. Alongside this, we take numerous opportunities for class discussion and in year 9, conduct a formal debate.

### **Reading and writing**

Reading at Key Stage 3 should be wide, varied and challenging. Pupils should be expected to read whole books, to read in depth and to read for pleasure and information. We read extracts from a broad range of fiction and non-fiction texts, along with the following full novels: 'The Shadow of the Minotaur' by Alan Gibbons, 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding and 'Of Mice and Men' by John Steinbeck.

Pupils should continue to develop their knowledge of and skills in writing, refining their drafting skills and developing resilience to write at length. They should be taught to write formal and academic essays as well as writing imaginatively. They are taught to write for a variety of purposes and audiences across a range of contexts. This requires an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Opportunities for teachers to enhance pupils' vocabulary arise naturally from their reading and writing. Teachers show pupils how to understand the relationships between words, how to understand nuances in meaning, and how to develop their understanding of, and ability to use, figurative language. We explore writing skills through some of the following forms:

- Year 7: Gothic stories and writing about Gothic literature
- Year 8: essay responses to poetry, creative writing inspired by 'Lord of the Flies' and collaborative responses to Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'
- Year 9: non-fiction protest writing, extended essay writing and short story writing inspired by John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'.

Pupils should be taught to control their speaking and writing consciously, understand why sentences are constructed as they are and to use Standard English. They should understand and use age-appropriate vocabulary, including linguistic and literary terminology, for discussing their reading, writing and spoken language. This involves consolidation, practice and discussion of language. It is important that pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English and that these terms are integrated within teaching. Teachers build on the knowledge and skills that pupils have been taught at Key Stage 2. We develop the use of Standard English and age-appropriate vocabulary through some of the following forms:

- The study of poetry and speech writing in all years
- Formal essay writing in all years
- Speech writing in all years

### What topics will the pupils be studying in each year?

At Key Stage 3, each year has a focus on a central theme:

**Year 7:** the theme of 'heroes and villains' explores:

- Gothic writing skills;
- the study of a Gothic play;
- the study of how the English language has developed through time, including newspaper articles;
- Greek myths and their links across time;
- becoming heroes through the art of persuasive speech writing.

**Year 8:** the theme of 'places: ours and theirs' explores:

- travel writing and poetry of the Lake District;
- a study of science fiction across time;
- William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies';
- Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'.
- Both of the latter are set on islands and explore issues of civilisation and oppression.

**Year 9:** the theme of 'power and protest' explores:

- protest writing in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries and persuasive speech writing;
- protest 'poetry with teeth';
- the protest novel 'Of Mice and Men' to explore the writers' craft and inspire short story writing;
- 'Henry V', which supports students in their return to speech writing and presenting their speeches to the class.

We complete two full GCSE courses in English – English language and English literature. The examination board is Eduqas for both.

**Year 10:**

For English language, we study the two English language papers, which each include reading sections (one on fiction and the other on non-fiction). The writing sections are transactional writing and short stories.

For English literature, in year 10, we study some of the anthology poetry, William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde' (students sitting their exams in 2025 have studied Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol').

### **Year 11**

For English language, we revise the two English language papers.

For English literature, we study JB Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls', the rest of the anthology poems and unseen poetry before returning to 'Macbeth' to explore further themes and how to write about extracts.

**A Level English literature** – we study AQA specification B. Our options are comedy and political and social protest writing.

### **Year 12**

- On the comedy side, we study William Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' and some of the comedy poetry.
- On the political and social protest side, we study Khaled Housseini's 'The Kite Runner' and some of Tony Harrison's poetry. Work is also completed in preparation for the unseen text section of the examination.
- At the end of the year, pupils select their texts (one novel and a collection of poems) for the independent non-examined assessment.

### **Year 13**

- On the comedy side, we study Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest' and the rest of the comedy poetry.
- On the political and social protest side, we study Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' before completing the rest of Tony Harrison's poetry and the unseen text section.

## **What key skills will the pupils develop over time?**

Across the curriculum, pupils will develop their communication skills in reading, writing and spoken language. They will develop an understanding of the origins of the English language and different ways in which it has developed over time. This develops their skills as investigators who are determined to overcome challenges when faced with unfamiliar language that they will come across in the classroom and beyond.

The aim is for all pupils to be independent communicators who are equipped with the tools and resilience to cope in the real world. But also, to recognise that others may seek to persuade them so that they have the knowledge to recognise and deal with these situations.

Through debate and discussion, we aim for our pupils to develop positive ways to collaborate with others, with an understanding that other people may have different opinions, but to have the skills to share their views in positive ways. Overall, we seek to develop pupils who know how to deepen their knowledge through reading and listening, and to feel empowered to have a voice of their own.

## How are all pupils learning in English?

We select our texts and topics with our pupils in mind to ensure that they are engaging and relevant to them. This ethos allows them to see themselves in what we study, as well as learning about the lives of others. This ensures that our pupils can make connections between their world and what we are studying. Through these choices, we aim to ensure that our pupils feel empowered and recognise how their study of English gives them a meaningful voice in the world.

To ensure that our pupils can access the texts we study, we never assume that they know anything – we teach them about the context of texts and key vocabulary that enable them to deepen their understanding. We constantly check learning through the use of mini-whiteboards and other forms of questioning so that no pupil is left behind. Key concepts are constantly revisited to embed new knowledge.

To ensure that all pupils make progress, we reteach core skills in each unit. For example, for writing assessments, revision of paragraphing, sentence structures, punctuation and key spellings are constantly revisited and modelled. The aim is to ensure mastery of core skills and to encourage our pupils to recognise that they can always ask if they can't remember a concept.

When completing formal analysis, core skills are gradually built up every year. We use 'flash marking codes' which enable our pupils to read a question and identify the skills required to respond to it effectively. We use these codes every time we construct responses. We model these and pupils 'flash mark' and evaluate their responses. These skills are developed and broadened from year 7 and in year 9, they are expanded upon to develop methods for planning extended responses that are detailed and sustained. By the end of year 9, our pupils have mastered these skills so that they can begin their GCSEs from a firm foundation with a range of core skills.

By using flash marking codes and revisiting core skills in each unit, our pupils are constantly revisiting the fundamentals of English. These allow for a wide range of responses within a loose framework. As flash marking responses are modelled every time they are used, all pupils are reminded of how to construct responses. Frameworks are provided until pupils are confident in constructing responses independently. This enables pupils of all ability ranges, or with any additional need, to be able to attempt and flourish when approaching analytical tasks. As these skills are built up from year 7, they are able to master them by the time they reach their GCSE years.

In addition, by giving our pupils methods to approach questions, it ensures that they can focus their attention on the more challenging areas of considering how writers are creating meaning rather than having to work out how to construct their ideas. Furthermore, as flash marking always includes modelled examples, pupils use these to go on to evaluate their work. They can flash mark it themselves to decide what they have done well and to consider what areas they should focus on developing. This helps them to develop a greater level of independence. We encourage them to use green pens to go back and make improvements based on their reflections. This provides a visual model for them to look back at and understand what to watch out for next time.

With writing, by repeatedly returning to revise core skills such as sentence structures and punctuation, all pupils are supported in developing their writing. No assumptions are made that all pupils will remember but instead, we recognise that by revisiting these skills, they are more likely to recall them next time.

When reading texts, we use a wide range of methods to support pupils. For example, teachers reading texts, group or paired reading; predicting what a text may be about through context, subject or definitions of key words; developing a toolkit for overcoming challenging texts. For example, when we study the history of the English language, we explore how words are created and constructed (pre-fixes, roots, and suffixes). This supports the learning of new spellings and decoding of new vocabulary.

Furthermore, our classrooms encourage a lot of group work with discussion that can enable pupils to think through their ideas, planning them out before putting pen to paper. Either teacher provided or pupil supported writing frames then support pupils when they write.

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Each time these are modelled, pupils are given the opportunity to develop responses in ways that demonstrate deeper thinking. This may be through exploring a writer's techniques or by making links across a text.

As flash marking responses are modelled every time they are used, all pupils are reminded of how to construct responses. This enables pupils of all ability ranges to be able to attempt and flourish when approaching analysis tasks. As these skills are built up from year 7, they are able to master the skills by the time they reach their GCSE. This ensure that they are more likely to be able to write developed and sustained responses that allow them demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

As flash marking always includes modelled examples, pupils use these to go on to evaluate their work. They can flash mark it themselves to decide what they have done well and to consider what areas they should focus on developing. This helps them to develop a greater level of independence and critical thinking. We encourage them to use green pens to go back and make improvements based on their reflections, which encourages a greater level of critical thinking.

Furthermore, our classrooms encourage a lot of group work with discussion that can enable pupils to think through their ideas, planning them out before putting pen to paper. These discussions are designed to stretch their thinking skills and encourage them to be critical thinkers who always ask questions and seek answers themselves.

### **How are pupils assessed in English?**

In English, we are constantly assessing our pupils. Mini whiteboards are used in most lessons as ways to test knowledge and understanding. A range of questioning methods are used to encourage discussions, deeper thinking and to make connections

across what has been learned and draw attention to what will be learned later. Therefore, recall is constantly being encouraged and assessed.

Flash marking is used as a method for pupils to assess their skills independently or with peers. This work is then evaluated by the teacher to determine their level of understanding. Green pen is a way for pupils at all levels to revisit their work and make improvements based on feedback in all forms.

Before each assessment, core skills are revisited and pupils are encouraged to consider targets from previous assessments, or skills they know need to be improved. They are given success criteria so that they understand how their work will be marked.

At KS3, pupils complete end of unit assessments with a focus on writing, reading or spoken language skills. Mark schemes are written with a focus on the national curriculum. In year 9, these are developed so that they begin to look a little more like those used in GCSE to enable our pupils to become familiar with those methods of assessment. At KS3, pupils also complete a 'powerful knowledge' multiple choice quiz based on the unit. These are low stakes quizzes that ensure all pupils can feel success in every unit assessed.

At KS4 and KS5, all assessments are designed around GCSE examination style questions using their mark schemes.

Approximate timings for homework are set out below. Please note that there may be occasions where more or less time is considered appropriate and time allowances will be adjusted to suit these tasks:

- year 7: approximately 20 minutes of homework
- year 8: approximately 25 minutes of homework
- year 9: approximately 30-35 minutes of homework
- year 10: approximately 35-40 minutes of homework
- year 11: approximately 40-50 minutes of homework

A level – all examination boards advise that pupils should spend the equivalent time studying outside of lessons as they do in lessons. Therefore, substantial time should be spent working independently. This could include reading in preparation for lessons, revising, working on their NEA (non-examination assessment), writing essays or completing research.

Once assessment have been completed, all pupils have at least one lesson that is devoted to feedback and reflections. They use green pens to make improvements to ensure that they understand how to move their work forwards, either towards, or above their target grades. At times, they may be given a homework task to complete 'green pen' improvements or redo tasks.

There may be times when some pupils require additional intervention to support them in making progress. This may be done as a one to one or in small groups. These sessions take place during lunchtimes or in afternoon tutor times. At other times, pupils may be set a different homework to others to enable them to focus on a particular area that is holding them back.

## How can pupils progress in English?

The curriculum is designed with progression in mind – there are connections across each unit and each key stage. For example, in year 7, our pupils study literary heroes and villains so that they are able to recognise how writers draw on mythical stories throughout history. These references are made repeatedly in literature and enable our pupils to draw on those connections to understand writers' ideas more deeply.

Another example is in year 9, where the year is designed around the theme of power and protest. This has connections to our GCSE texts where writers are protesting about issues in their world – repression in 'Jekyll and Hyde' and the consequences of irresponsible actions in 'An Inspector Calls'. In addition, it links to one of the units studied at A-level, thus encouraging our pupils to understand these patterns across literary texts through universal experiences.

As English is fundamental to all roles in society, it is a subject that has the power to enhance every person's life chances. The study of A-level English literature is highly regarded by employers and universities alike. As such, it supports a very broad range of careers. However, there are some specific areas where the reading, analytical and writing skills developed within the subject are particularly well suited. For example, any career in writing such as journalism, social media manager, PR manager, administrator, marketing, paralegal, copywriter, copy editor or web content manager. It also supports with professional careers across the board, such as law or teaching.

## How can pupils enrich their knowledge and understanding in English?

The best way to enrich knowledge in English is to read, and read as widely as possible. Students are advised to make use of the library and aim to challenge themselves to read texts that broaden their world and enable them to expand their knowledge and horizons.

Reading high quality journalism is also an excellent way to enrich knowledge and understanding of English.

Enrichment opportunities such as 'From book to film' can also encourage students to imagine how words can be transformed into different formats as well as immersing themselves in the world of stories.

We encourage students to enter competitions. Young Writers run competitions all year round and often send us resources to help inspire. Every year, we enter a poetry competition and Millom has been among the biggest contributors to the Young Writers yearly poetry publication. We encourage entrants from all year groups.

Other competitions are posted in the library. Students are encouraged to ask their English teacher if they'd like some help.