

English Martyrs' Catholic School

English Curriculum Statement

Key Message – Intention

We want our learners to become informed, critical and articulate evaluators of a wide range of ideas and texts, including their own.

We want our learners to become effective communicators who can use spoken and written language confidently, accurately and appropriately to make a powerful impact on their audiences.

Our subject plays an essential part in developing the cultural capital of our learners and enabling them to develop as reflective persons who can contribute positively to the fabric of our society.

Serving all students equally:

Our Let's Think in English approach from Year 7 onwards encourages all pupils to take risks when discussing texts and ideas. All students are entered for GCSE English Literature and English Language in Year 11. Teaching methods are adapted according to the prior knowledge of learners. Precise choice of exam texts is informed by prior attainment of learners, but still provides a rich reading experience. Teachers, working alongside TAs, provide appropriate scaffolding and explicit teaching for novice learners whilst offering enquiry-based approaches and targeted modelling to more expert learners.

Core Message - Sequential Approach:

As learners progress through the school, they encounter increasingly complex and demanding stimulus material, writing tasks and spoken language opportunities.

We have designed a genre-based approach in Key Stage 3 to enable learners to make connections between texts from different eras, to consider the impact of contexts and make increasingly perceptive evaluative responses to language and structure, informed by their prior reading and knowledge. Learners move from independent reading of novels for pleasure and curiosity towards a more considered preparation of set texts, where notes are organised to keep track of key themes, character development and contextual factors. They develop a growing bank of genre-specific subject terms.

In writing, learners move from understanding the importance of structure, through appreciating the impact of language to making independent choices about how best to influence their readers or listeners. They are introduced to more nuanced language choices as they encounter a wider variety of spoken and printed material.

In spoken language, learners move from rehearsed poetry and drama performances, through group discussion and more formal public speaking situations, to formal debates of increasingly complex issues arising from texts.

Core Message - Teaching Approaches

Where appropriate we use dual coding to enhance learning and retrieval from memory (Paivio 1990)

We provide appropriate scaffolding and explicit teaching for novice learners ensuring that knowledge is provided in smaller chunks in order to help them process it and avoid cognitive overload (Kirschner, 2002.)

Our more able or expert learners are offered more enquiry-based approaches to learning (Kalyuga 2007) enabling them to develop greater independence, alongside explicit teaching of more effective writing styles.

Influenced by the King's College, London's *Let's Think in English* programme we deploy social construction in most lessons as well as cognitive conflict to enable learners to reassess their own thinking and the potential meanings of texts (Piaget and Vygotsky). This programme encourages the growth mindset that increases pupils' attainment, self-confidence and willingness to take risks (Dweck 2006).

We offer a language-rich curriculum – especially ensuring that EAL and less literate learners are immersed in high quality English. We use Word of the Week and Vocabulary books to bridge the language gap (Quigley 2017).

We use interleaving (Rohrer et al 2015) and retrieval practice (Barenberg Roeder and Dutke, 2018) with exam classes (and increasingly in KS3) to help students learn and retain knowledge in the long term.

Core Message - Development of Whole Child and Catholic Ethos

Reading and discussion of texts and ideas enable learners to understand themselves and the world around them, equipping them to speak with confidence in a wide range of situations.

Learners are encouraged to make links between ideas explored in texts from different eras and current ethical dilemmas, news stories and political events across the world.

Exposing learners to quality texts and ideas enables them to wonder, to experiment and to take risks as they make discoveries about the power of language and the impact of collaboration. Through English they develop the deep learning and skills needed to understand their vocation, undertake a fulfilled life and become ready for the fast-changing world of work. Our emphasis on accurate, effective writing tailored to purpose and on clear, confident speaking enables learners to impress prospective employers and make progress in their chosen careers; our emphasis on social construction enables them to participate effectively in their communities and in collaborative projects at work, college or university.

Core Message - Focus for Change

We are in the process of reviewing our Key Stage 3 curriculum (introduced in September 2020) to reflect our core values more precisely, to provide a more appropriate link from Key Stage 2 to the demands of the Key Stage 4 Curriculum, and to offer even greater challenge for HPAs. Schemes of learning in Years 7 and 8 now clearly identify core knowledge and HPA tasks. We are developing closer links with our main feeder primary, intending to create a cross-phase programme throughout Year 7.

Although the Key Stage 4 curriculum – including that in Year 9 – provides sufficient challenge for HPAs we plan to develop more flipped-learning approaches for home study so that higher-order thinking in lessons takes precedence over information retrieval. We are building a bank of excellent work for modelling and standardisation purposes.

We are improving our Let's Think in English strategies to enable all students to develop ideas. Post-Covid we will develop whole school literacy via the school's accelerate programme, which we want to target more precisely for each year group, and reading for pleasure, initially in Years 7 and 8. We are bringing in online reading logs with appropriate challenge for HPAs. We are also building on our remote-learning experience: using relevant digital platforms for homework and moving away from individual to whole-class feedback.

The rest

Evidence for the need for changes to our curriculum is gathered from book samplings, moderation of work in Faculty meetings, learning walks, peer lesson observations, student feedback and assessment data, including detailed analysis of examination results, and staff CPD research. Our curriculum is reviewed at Faculty meetings: immediate action is taken to amend the curriculum if it is clear (through analysis of exam performance, book scrutinies, and student feedback, for example) that learners' knowledge is not secure; major revamps occur during the summer term where colleagues have time to work together on different aspects.

In Years 7 and 8 classes are taught in mixed ability, as recommended for the Let's Think in English programme. Students with specific literacy needs are withdrawn for intensive work in order to help them bridge the gap. From Year 9 students are set according to their expected grades: normally set 1 caters for students achieving 7+; set 2 and 3 are parallel for students expected to achieve 4 to 6; set 4 is the smallest group for students who need greater support. There is currently an Option English group in Years 9 to 11 for learners who require more support.

Homework is set weekly for all students from Year 7 onwards. We use flip learning or preparation for test essays and in-class assessments, so the homework is not graded. Learners produce work in Assessment Books which contain appropriate grade criteria for each piece – facilitating clear feedback, peer review opportunities and a visual record of progress and areas for improvement.

TA support and scaffolding is offered to our least able; our most able are set more challenging work and asked more challenging questions.