

The Quality of Education: English - Purpose and Provision



St Christopher's:
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither-
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

The Purpose of Study

As a team of passionate and knowledgeable teachers, underpinned by our shared values, we commit to:

- encourage highly aspirational ways of communicating, and appreciating our world
- develop strong relationships based on mutual respect
- foster independent and challenging thinking
- encourage a love of literature and an understanding of our English heritage.

“Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were,
but without it, we go nowhere.”

We offer all pupils a high quality education helping them to communicate effectively, and to appreciate and respond to our world. We want our pupils to experience a wide range of literature and ideas, to be curious, to ask questions, to think critically, and to appreciate and produce good English. Through flexible teaching approaches, we aim to make the curriculum accessible to pupils of different abilities.

Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society.

The study of English helps pupils to understand and contribute to the infinite variety of our world (‘Knowing What It Is To Be Fully Alive’ and ‘Learning How To Live Well Together’).

It is our aim that all pupils will complete their studies as literate and intelligent contributors to their communities. We aim to inspire a life-long love of English and a foundation from which to build a love of literature.

The successful teaching of the subject will enable pupils to develop an understanding of the English Language and its literature as well as their contexts and learn to appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage. Pupils are encouraged to learn about and explore their cultural heritage, especially as research suggests this can be a limiting factor in career progression. This is explored through studying a range of different genres from different time periods. For instance the Gothic and Dystopian genre, and the Shakespearean, Dickensian, Victorian and modern day periods. Through independent research, and study of these texts, including an awareness of the importance of context, pupils will learn to analyse, evaluate and empathise. This will aid their path to becoming global citizens as being able to reason and think for themselves, is a desired commodity. This will in turn, open up opportunities in many different fields of work. Through the study of a wide range of texts, pupils will exercise textual skills such as close reading for both pleasure and information, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, comparison, deconstruction. They will acquire a wide vocabulary; an understanding of grammar and linguistic conventions and use these skills to widen and deepen their understanding of, and facility in the production of, and adaptation of, texts, using Standard English, for a wide range of audiences and purposes. This knowledge will aid them when they go forth into the wider community.

Successful teaching of the subject will, in addition, ensure that pupils will be competent in the arts of speaking and listening and through these medium be able to work collaboratively with their peers and be able to articulate clearly, their understanding and ideas. We aim to foster teamwork and leadership skills. These are transferable life skills and attitudes which are valued by future employers.

We endeavour to equip our pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to have the widest choice when it comes to them making choices with regard to their future career path. For those who wish to continue their study of English language and/or English literature, we offer A-level courses. This will lead them to deepen their knowledge and enhance their skills.

Complementing the School Purpose

Foundation Scripture

The study of English encourages all to evaluate the world and “meditate on God’s Law” enabling them to keep them from the path of the “wicked”. Good literacy skills will enable our pupils to “yield their fruit” and to “prosper”.

Key Themes

The acquisition of knowledge is not limited to a collection of unrelated facts. Whilst English is a rewarding discipline in its own right, it is also a foundation on which study of all other subjects, and indeed the world, is built.

Pupils will learn to understand their place in the world. Through Literature, they will learn to understand and care for one another and the world. Language study will help them to rationalise and express their feelings. Lessons will be taught in such a way that encourages exploration of ideas and formation of views, as well as mutual respect.

Christian Virtues

Study of English is essential for the development of all the Christian Virtues of our school. It is only through developing pupils’ ability to understand, think and articulate that they can deepen their ability to understand and practise Forgiveness, Friendship, Hope, Justice, Love, Peace, Trust and Wisdom.

As a team of passionate and knowledgeable teachers, underpinned by our shared values, the English department promote Christian Virtues throughout their lives, professional and personal. We believe that our example should embed these virtues in our subject and our pupils’ lives.

Curriculum Aims – Main School

Within the framework of the National Curriculum, all pupils will be provided with opportunities to learn, develop and achieve. The curriculum is designed to encourage progression and for each year to build on the knowledge and skills acquired in the previous year(s).

All Teachers build on the knowledge and skills that pupils have been taught in previous years and decisions about progression are based on continuous assessment of pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils whose development is more advanced, are challenged through being offered opportunities for increased breadth and depth in reading and writing. Those who are less fluent have their knowledge, understanding and skills, consolidated, including through additional practice.

A range of different strategies and resources are employed to stretch the most able, whilst supporting those who have yet to acquire the necessary knowledge and/or skill. Many different strategies are employed to cater for diverse needs. For instance: scaffolding tasks; the utilisation of visualizers (installed in each classroom) to facilitate the sharing of material produced by the pupils, both exemplar texts and texts used to help illustrate common errors, as well as teacher exemplars. White boards are used to as a non-threatening tool to check recall and encourage whole class participation, whilst also providing immediate feedback to the teacher. Learning styles are also taken into account, kinaesthetic, visual and aural, and lessons are planned accordingly. A teacher might, for instance use graphic images on a set of cards for the teaching of review writing; short video clips to underpin context; handouts for pupils to annotate. Teachers also challenge pupils by presenting them with abstract concepts to encourage their higher level thinking skills

Pupils’ oracy skills are developed through questioning techniques, and pair and group work, to encourage pupils to express their ideas coherently, using spoken Standard English. Targeted questioning is a key teaching strategy used to stretch the more able - as well as to support those who, for instance, need to be refocussed in order for them to make progress - causing them to question themselves.

Peer assessment and self-assessment is planned into lessons to encourage critical evaluation and reflection. Current research and pedagogy is considered, particularly in the areas of metacognition including the importance of interleaving, spacing, revisiting and the framing of questions to aid the retention of knowledge.

To further deepen pupils’ knowledge of their culture, extracurricular activities and visits are arranged, for instance author visits, theatre trips, and a cultural weekend in London has been a yearly occurrence for many years. In Year 11, all pupils are invited to participate in a revision weekend and to ensure that it is inclusive, PP pupils are funded by the school. The department participates in a yearly literature quiz competition involving local schools. Lunchtime activities are also arranged, for instance a drama club, debating club and the opportunity to study for the English Speaking Board qualifications.

We believe in building strong relationships with pupils and encourage them to ask for help and advice. Regular revision/help sessions are held after school. The department encourages a positive attitude and nurturing environment, through a policy of mutual respect and clear expectations.

The English department considers reading a key skill for pupils to acquire. We believe all pupils should be able to read a range of texts critically and with comprehension and this is taught in lessons. However, we also wish pupils to enjoy reading. To this end, all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are encouraged to read a book of their choice at the beginning of lessons; a range of class readers aimed at appealing to a range of different tastes are used in KS3; a different Shakespeare play is studied in each year at KS3; reading homework is set; library lessons are a feature of the timetable in Year 7 and 8; Accelerated Reader is used in Years 7 and 8 to encourage and expand pupils' reading skills, and expanded into Year 9 for less confident readers; the school library is open before school, during break and lunchtime, as well as after school and pupils are encouraged to read the range of texts available to them; the School Librarian encourages pupils to use the library by running competitions such as design a bookmark and by getting pupils involved in the Lancashire Children's Book of the Year. The department also takes part in National Book day wherein pupils dress up as a literary character and compete in library competitions. A range of vocabulary is necessary to enable pupils to understand and appreciate texts and different strategies are used to promote this. For instance: teaching an awareness of etymology and morphology; regular spelling tests; studying key vocabulary from a text prior to the text being shown to pupils; challenging vocabulary logs; vocabulary windows.

English is unique in that, as well as allowing measurable levels of achievement in terms of acquisition of skills and knowledge, achievement is also demonstrated in more abstract ways as pupils understanding and ability to communicate develops. There will be discrete units of work in, for example, Formal Letters or Persuasive Writing, but all this contributes to, and underpins, a continuous, linear improvement in general literacy. By the end of Year 9, pupils will have experienced most of the main genres, and had opportunities to practise the creation of pieces of work from many of these. In Years 10 and 11, the genres will be revisited, and augmented by new ones which will contribute to the broad and balanced curriculum required for the GCSE.

Curriculum Aims – Sixth Form

The A-levels in English Language, English Literature, and English Literature and Language are designed to foster students' independence, interest in and enjoyment in their chosen subject. During their studies, they will read widely and independently and engage critically with a body of texts, developing their awareness of different cultures, traditions and contexts. This in turn, will enhance their own creativity and give them a greater awareness and expertise of how to use language to communicate in different ways. Study at A-level provides students with an introduction to the discipline of advanced literary studies and presents them with the opportunity to read widely and make creative and informed responses. Moreover, it provides students with the opportunity to undertake independent and sustained studies to develop their skills as producers and interpreters of language and therefore enables them to develop intellectual maturity. All the above will provide them with skills that will enhance their employability, preparing them for adult life (public and private). In addition, the study of English allows for the fostering of British values such as tolerance, respect and free speech, an understanding of which is essential for participation in a free society.

It is the intention of the English Department to ensure that the curriculum is made accessible and stimulating to all students who have chosen to study the subjects. We aspire to foster a love of literature and language. We wish to enable our students to appreciate both the relevance and the utility of literature and language within their daily lives. We seek to encourage students to explore the universal and timeless nature of the human condition as it is presented throughout literature. We further seek to encourage students to explore mankind's unique capacity for language and its primary function of allowing humanity to communicate within and across our cultural and geographic communities. It is our belief that such explorations will inevitably enhance our students' sense of compassion in fidelity to our mission statement.



Ad Gloriam Dei

To the Glory of God



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