

## English Curriculum Intent

“When I am writing, I am trying to find out who I am, who we are, what we’re capable of, how we feel, how we lose and stand up, and go on from darkness into darkness. I’m trying for that. But I am also trying for the language. I’m trying to see how it can really sound... I love it for what it does for us, how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and delicacies of our existence. And then it allows us to laugh, allows us to show real wit. ...We need language.” Maya Angelou

“The limits of my language means the limits of my world.” Ludwig Wittgenstein

“I have loved *An Inspector Calls* with all my heart. The story is so captivating that I read it all in one sitting at 8 o'clock in morning!” Year 10 student

As teachers of English at Dorothy Stringer, we want our students to have access to the breadth and depth of experience that reading gives us; to be able to process our thoughts and influence the world through writing. We want to show the young people in our care the value of being part of an ongoing global conversation, the longest in history: to join the ever-growing line of people who, since the dawn of humanity, have tried to make sense of a chaotic world, bring joy, enrapture, engage and illuminate truth – sometimes all at once.

We know that some of our students already feel this pulse, this connection to the past, the present and the future. They derive joy and gain insight and power from the printed word, from writing and speaking their own words. We aim to support, guide and challenge those embarking on their lifelong love affair with English. We recognise these students because every one of us has been there, some of us from when we were very young, others later in life. Our passion and knowledge is tangible.

But we also recognise those who have drifted from this feeling, have never had it (yet!), or have a barrier to the subject due to a learning need or having English as an additional language. Some might feel they know enough about the subject as it is – they speak it every day! What more do they need? As a core subject, we teach every student in every year group and we know from surveys and student voice interviews and the sheer volume of thank you emails and cards we receive, English is always a subject that students love, despite and maybe sometimes because of how challenging it is. It has taught them about who they are, not what they are. Being a part of this process is the immense privilege of being an English teacher.

In our view, each student should understand how vital the ability to communicate and to understand the communication of others is, has always been, and will continue to be. Texts may change according to technological changes. The medium may sometimes alter the

message. But in an increasingly polarised world, reading a wide, diverse range of voices is incredibly powerful. Understanding that you have a voice is crucial.

The study of English – of reading, writing and speaking - leads to better communication, collaboration, critical thinking, independence and adaptability, transferrable skills that are valued in the workplace as well as in society. Reading fluently, widely, and frequently is linked to better exam results, better life outcomes. We have the great pleasure of seeing all this manifest in the classroom.

### **Preparedness from KS2**

Our students arrive at Stringer having completed their KS2 SATs, focusing on reading and writing as part of their Literacy lessons. Our objective is to build on this knowledge and develop a more holistic understanding of what makes a text interesting and engaging to the reader – there is no point knowing what a fronted adverbial is if you don't understand how and why it is used for effect. Our first unit in Year 7 was designed alongside several of our feeder schools, building on the skills they have developed in Key Stage 2. In addition, we continue to build on the varied stories and themes that our students come from primary school with and aim to introduce them to new, diverse voices.

### **Organisation of KS3**

In Year 7, students are taught English in their mixed ability tutor groups across six hours of lessons each fortnight. The units of work are, predominantly, chronological; looking at the developing of literature across time, starting with the 'autobiography' of writing – *Book* by John Agard, moving on to myths and legends and ending with a contemporary novel.

In Year 8, the vast majority of students are taught in mixed ability groups across six hours of lessons each fortnight, with a handful of students, who require additional literacy support, in small, focused nurture classes. Our units of work in this year build on the foundations of Year 7 but develop further into understanding of genre, themes and the big ideas of literature.

Year 7 and 8 also have an additional reading lesson, where they are able to read independently (but from a selection of high quality, curated texts chosen by the English department) and also follow the principles of Reciprocal Reading (Predict / Clarify / Question / Summarise) with a whole class text.

In Year 9, the majority of students continue to be taught in mixed ability groups across seven hours of lessons each fortnight, with a handful of students, who require additional literacy support, in small, focused nurture classes. In addition, we also run a Cultural Capital course for a small number of students who are not taking a Modern Foreign Language GCSE course in Year 10. Our focus in Year 9 is to continue building on students' previous knowledge, with greater emphasis on the analysis of language, authorial purpose and the "big ideas" that will need to be understood in preparation for their GCSE courses.

The structure of a lesson, across all of KS3, will vary according to the content and skills being taught. Our aim is always to incorporate some reading, writing and deep discussion in each lesson, always building on and expanding on previous knowledge. Lessons rarely use textbooks and use a variety of teacher made resources instead, which allows for development of resources over time.

<b>YEAR 7</b>	Experiences; <i>Book</i> ; Memoir writing	The Origin of Stories	Girls Across Time	What is a story? Narrative Writing	The Poetry of Grace Nichols	<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Lightning Mary</i>	
<b>YEAR 8</b>	<i>Now is the Time for Running</i>	Fear and Dread Narrative Writing	The Poetry of Conflict	The Environment	Room 101 – Persuasive article	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Animal Farm</i>	
<b>YEAR 9</b>	The Short Story	Tension – Narrative Writing	<i>The Crucible / Blood Brothers</i>	Poetry of Protest, Identity and Struggle	The Art of Rhetoric 2 Speech Writing	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	<i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>

### **Meeting the National Curriculum**

Our Key Stage Three Curriculum is a meticulously planned and considered scheme of work, that builds on the foundations laid by literacy teaching at Key Stage 1 and 2, and provides its own foundation for GCSE, without allowing the ultimate goal of summative exams at 16 to be overstated and overwhelming. Add to this delicate balance: the demands of the National Curriculum, the responsibility to engage and inspire, the need for clear structure and the ability to be flexible and responsive and you have a robust programme of study that we are proud to share with our students.

The English National Curriculum states that pupils should be taught to ‘develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently’ with some clear rules about texts:

- English Literature, both pre-1914 and contemporary, including prose, poetry and drama
- Shakespeare (two plays)
- Seminal world literature

In addition, they should be taught to ‘write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information’ as well as to ‘speak confidently and effectively’.

Each of our units in KS3 is designed to include at least one of the text types stated, as well as develop and enhance both writing and speaking skills.

There are strong and persuasive arguments about the limitations of the National Curriculum. Whilst meeting the requirements of the curriculum, there is a need to emphasise the multicultural nature of English-speaking literature, its interconnectedness with the world, and how to develop a pedagogy that more properly interweaves the contribution of diverse voices to the canon as a body of legitimate knowledge. This flexibility is much more difficult at GCSE level, which has a crowded, narrowly focused, specification allowing almost no opportunity for such aims. The rigid curriculum requirements provide limited opportunity to make links to an explicit BAME history of literature, but our teachers look for opportunities to mitigate this absence. Changing some GCSE texts to include more diverse voices is being discussed within the department, but the workload and cost are significant barriers.

### **Progression of Knowledge**

In Year 7, our units of work are specifically designed to follow a chronology of English-speaking Literature, reflecting the progression of ideas in society. Throughout the rest of KS3, each unit connects to prior learning and these connections are identified and built on in lessons. Knowledge also advances as topics have more depth and complexity as KS3 develops. For example, in studying a Shakespeare play in Year 7, we will focus primarily on plot, characters and themes but by the time of studying *Much Ado About Nothing* in Year 9, we are developing students' awareness of the playwright's language choices and the contextual issues in the play, such as the role of women in Elizabethan England.

### **Progression of Skills**

The study of English can be separated into 3 separate but interdependent skills that are covered in depth across the entire curriculum: Reading, Writing and Spoken Language.

Reading, in English, relates to a wide range of subskills that allow our students to make sense of the texts they study. From inference, through the analysis of language and structural choices to the evaluation of a writer's ideas, our students are encouraged to develop their depth of understanding and unlock the meaning imbued within a text. Our units of work are designed to reinforce and enhance these skills; providing the tools required for our students to approach any difficulty of text at GCSE.

Alongside these reading skills, our students learn how to write effectively in a range of forms. Our curriculum is designed to build on their knowledge of grammatical devices, sentence structures and word choices from KS2, increasing in sophistication and complexity as they progress. Both fiction and non-fiction writing is embedded throughout our units of work and the structure of good writing is modelled regularly.

The third strand of spoken language is implicitly and explicitly taught through every single unit of work in our curriculum. All students are actively encouraged to participate in discussion and debate around the various topics they cover, again, with increasing levels of depth and thought built into the teacher's questioning. In addition, students are given

regular opportunities for more detailed and lengthier speaking opportunities, debating key themes and ideas and leading towards the GCSE Spoken Language endorsement completed in Year 11.

### **Transition to KS4**

By the end of Key Stage 3, students will have been exposed to a wide range of seminal texts from across the English-speaking world and, in terms of skills development, be prepared for their GCSE courses in English Language and Literature. With the exception of a short introduction to GCSE poetry in Year 9, we believe fully in the integrity of the KS3 curriculum and the importance of providing a diverse and broad range of texts before the narrower, less flexible content of Key Stage 4.

At Key Stage 4, students take the AQA GCSE English Language and English Literature courses. These consist of the following units:

#### **English Language**

1. Paper 1 – Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing
2. Paper 2 – Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

#### **English Literature**

1. Paper 1 – Shakespeare (Macbeth) and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Novel (A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens)
2. Paper 2 – Modern Texts (An Inspector Calls by J.B.Priestley) and Poetry (Love and Relationships - a range of poems from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day)

Students must also complete a Spoken Language endorsement, which is an additional certificate separate from the English Language and Literature GCSEs.

Lessons in Key Stage 4 are very similar to lessons in Key Stage 3 with the appropriate progression in skills and knowledge. Students will use some substantive knowledge from Key Stage 3 in their Key Stage 4 studies. Lessons in Key Stage 4 will include a focus on making effective knowledge notes in exercise books for use as an effective revision resource.

The English Literature GCSE requires students to recall a great deal of knowledge about the texts and, in particular, key quotes. The final assessment examinations are closed book and the questions could be drawn from across the entire text's characters or themes. Therefore, recall and retention skills are built into our spiral curriculum. In addition, the question design for the GCSEs (both Language and Literature) has a specific structure that demands students understand which skills are required in response to each one. Although we teach the required skills for these questions at Key Stage 3, we do not believe that it is appropriate

to teach GCSE question technique until the course starts in Year 10. Therefore, in addition to our development of these skills throughout students' time at Stringer, we do spend time on exam technique to develop their confidence in final assessments.

### **Transition to KS5**

By the end of Key Stage 4, many of our students consider taking either or both English Language and English Literature at A-Level. Additionally, the skills developed through the understanding and analysis of texts, as well as the ability to write effectively for information, leads many of our students to choose subjects such as Politics, Law, History and Classics. To support the transition to KS5, we have developed a range of activities and opportunities for our students to make use of before starting the next stage of their education.

### **Assessment**

Throughout Key Stage 3, students are formatively assessed at regular intervals in reading, writing and spoken language. As teachers, we consistently and routinely assess our students' progress in each lesson, using a range of tools such as questioning, self/peer and verbal assessment. Written work, completed in exercise books, is marked using live marking under the visualiser; Whole Class Feedback; self and peer-assessment.

In addition, each year group will sit down for more formal summative assessments at four points in the academic year. We refer to these as Checkpoints as they are focused on the skills required to progress and allow teachers to accurately assess what students do and do not understand. These checkpoints then feed into the teaching of further units, to ensure that all students are given the tools required to make good progress.

Reading assessments focus on a key text(s) and include a range of comprehension and analytical questions. These may take the form of multiple choice, short or long form questions, building on previous knowledge during a specific unit of work or across the Key Stage.

Writing assessments will be rooted in a specific form (writing for entertainment or information) and focus on the students' understanding of content, structure and technical accuracy. These skills cut through the entire curriculum and students' progress is measured regarding the clarity of their writing.

Spoken Language assessments are assessed with a focus on the clarity of ideas and expression within a presentation on a specific topic.

At Key Stage 4, assessments are designed to support students with their preparation for final examinations at the end of Year 11. These take the form of both in-class, end of unit tests and mock exams; in all cases mirroring the requirements of the final exams to ensure that students understand the expectations. Many of the skills that students develop transcend different questions, exam papers and courses but it is necessary to aid their understanding of individual questions and their rubrics.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is provided in a range of forms throughout a lesson and unit of work. Our teachers make regular use of peer and self-assessment activities that are designed to develop students' understanding of what they are learning. These allow students to make good progress as they can make clear comparisons with their previous attainment.

We also make use of Whole Class Feedback as a regular tool in our lessons; allowing students access not only to guidance on how to improve but effective modelling that supports their further progress. This leads to opportunities for DIRT activities where students actively engage with the feedback they have received.

### **Literacy**

Literacy is a vital component of our teaching in English and is taught explicitly to have an impact on our students' learning. Every unit of work in our curriculum focuses on key Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, either within a studied text or to allow understanding of the ideas in a text. This vocabulary is explicitly taught in lessons to engage and enhance students' understanding of what they are studying and to provide them with the tools required to read and write effectively.

English classrooms display a wide range of Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary to support effective writing, such as the use of extensive sentence stems that work alongside scaffolded writing frames.

Reciprocal Reading is used across the entire department to support and enhance students' ability to understand the texts that they study. This method, with its clear and straightforward staged structure (predict, question, clarify and summarise), means that students feel confident when faced with a new, unseen text.

### **Reading for Pleasure**

There is a growing and undeniable body of evidence which illustrates the importance of reading for pleasure and its importance for children's educational success. Additionally, it is also a proven means by which to enhance students' emotional and social wellbeing, as cited by numerous studies over the past few years. The promotion of reading for pleasure is securely embedded across our curriculum through a number of explicit means:

- The texts that we study have been specifically chosen to engage, inspire and challenge our students by providing a rich and varied diet
- Private and guided reading sessions take place, in class, for one hour a fortnight in KS3, using the library and our own 'Stringer Bookshelf' of texts selected for students to read independently.
- We are involved in a trial of Sparx Reader where KS3 students read texts that fit their reading ages and interests online for 30 minutes at least each week.
- Sentence stems have been developed and are used extensively to provide students with the vocabulary to write about the texts they read
- Tier 2 vocabulary is embedded into every unit of work so that every student's language is enriched and we continue to try and close the Vocabulary Gap
- Our text choices are deliberately diverse and we continually strive to improve this
- We are a large department of passionate readers, with a wide range of interests, who understand the transformative power of reading from our own, varied, experiences of school and later life. We actively bring what we read into our teaching and promote a school of readers.

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### **Cross-curricular**

English has a variety of implicit cross-curricular links, particular with the humanities subjects of History and Religious Studies. Many of our texts require an understanding of historical and social context at the time of writing as well as their relevance to the modern day. Examples of this include: the cultural differences experienced by migrants through the poetry of Grace Nichols; life in the trenches of World War 1 when studying conflict poetry and the way in which women are represented in Shakespearean comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*.

### **Extra-curricular**

We offer a wide and inclusive range of extra-curricular activities across the English department. We have a strong, well-attended Creative Writing Club in KS3, along with offering involvement in the Model UN and other English Speaking Union events. In addition, we offer regular theatre trips when studied texts are performed locally alongside the yearly Poetry Live event for our Year 11 students.