



English Curriculum Statement

Intent

Our mission is to enable all students to flourish in English. We have designed our English curriculum so that students leave Y8 as confident and literate readers and critical and accurate writers. They will have acquired the skills to speak with confidence, listen attentively and express themselves clearly. By the time they leave Oldfields they will know more about the foundational texts in literature, will be able to remember more about English Literature's social and historical context and will be able to do more creative and critical writing.

Implementation

Our English school strategy is implemented through a coherent framework that aligns pedagogical practices, curriculum delivery, and assessment strategies with our educational intent.

What are the design principles behind our curriculum?

- First and foremost, we want to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum. Plans have been audited to ensure coverage of the requirements. Our curriculum upholds the guiding principle of the National Curriculum: to develop a deep appreciation and love of reading and writing.
- We help students develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually through the texts they study and the activities they complete. We carefully sequence tasks so that students develop a range of different skills. In Year 6 we use texts with literary merit in PSHE that encourage empathy and creativity, not just comprehension. Similarly, in KS3, rather than just focusing on analysing *Oliver Twist*, we encourage students to respond emotionally and spiritually to characters and plots.
- Students study a wide range of texts during their time at Oldfields. They read a range of contemporary fiction, classical and performance poetry, modern film units, pre- and post-1914 novels, and study two different Shakespeare plays. Reading for Pleasure also gives pupils the opportunity to study a wide range of voices and text types.
- Throughout school, in English lessons, in the library provision and in form time, high quality texts have been selected for engagement, for progression in learning and to provide a rich and varied vocabulary.
- We have a policy of pre-teaching specific vocabulary and subsequently highlighting vocabulary in reading activities.
- In KS2 classes, we teach a range of reading techniques explicitly. These include vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieving, summarising, commenting on authors' techniques. In KSs we develop these

skills further, where analytical skills are developed into longer answers and structured essays.

- A reading skills progression document is in place with copies in pupils' exercise books.
- The Accelerated Reader scheme is in place ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to read books at the appropriate level.
- For students who struggle to make appropriate progress through QFT we have a menu of interventions. These include Better Reading Partnerships, Inference Intervention, Phonics, Fluency, Morphology (that incorporates principles from The Institute of Direct Instruction) and bespoke programs that we have tailored to the needs of our students.
- In KS2 pupils study novels by established authors such as Philip Pullman and Michael Morpurgo. Time is allocated to study the background of authors to improve pupil engagement and enhance contextual knowledge. Furthermore, classic narrative poems are taught in years 5 and 6 including The Highwayman and The Raven. In KS3, students study the foundational texts of English Literature such as 'Oliver Twist' and 'The Tempest'. The defining messages of these texts, such as Dickens' desire for a fairer society, will support their future study of English and other subjects.
- In order for students to be able to read and understand a text, they need to be experts in its domain. Having a strong understanding of the text's context, plot, purpose and author enables them to make connections and solidify their understanding. Knowing that the Metropolitan Police was an emerging force during the writing of 'Sherlock Holmes' helps students understand the significance of Holmes' position in Victorian London, and how attitudes and approaches to crime and policing have evolved over time.
- Creativity and originality emerge from a deep understanding of a subject's foundations. By studying grammar and writing in KS2, students gain the foundational knowledge from which creativity can emerge. Being able to use subordinate clauses accurately enables students to compose multi-faceted narratives, articles and essays in English and in other subjects.
- Students need explicit instruction in high-utility tier-2 vocabulary to make them better readers. Reading ability is strongly correlated with vocabulary knowledge. If students know more words, they will be able to understand and access more literary texts and more challenging texts across the curriculum, and be able to do more with them.
- Our curriculum is cumulative and integrated. All of the content and knowledge is connected so that students form a firm foundation of literary and linguistic knowledge that enables them to read and write accurately and critically.
- Throughout their time at Oldfields, pupils are given frequent opportunity to speak, listen and present. Core Oracy tasks are identified through unit planning in each year group and skills are layered, linking to our Oracy Progression Map.

How are these design principles seen throughout our curriculum?

- Our Literary Heritage curriculum in KS3 ensures students know more and remember more about the texts' historical and social contexts. Students complete cumulative fortnightly multiple-choice quizzes that itemise key knowledge and check students' understanding. This helps ensure the key knowledge is transferred to students' long-term memories.
- We break the complexity of English grammar down into cumulative items of knowledge. Because students learn these deeply in isolation, they are able to remember more and do more with them in the future. We pay close attention to working memory so that students are not overwhelmed. For instance, the complexity of commas is gradually introduced over a number of lessons. This ensures students are able to master and then use this knowledge in their own writing in a range of contexts. We use 'Do Now' activities at the start of each lesson to activate prior learning and prepare students for a new layer of understanding.
- We foreground tier-2 vocabulary throughout each curriculum strand. We follow a research-informed narrow and deep model: students learn and remember a small number of powerful words in depth. Words such as 'vulnerable' and 'naïve', which are introduced in 'Oliver Twist', are referenced throughout later texts such as 'The Tempest' and our dystopian transition unit.
- In terms of Oracy, pupils in Year 5 are all tasked to learn poetry by heart. Those poems are then recited to a variety of audiences. Additionally, 'class raps' have become a fond favourite for some groups. In KS3, all pupils are tasked to write and present a speech on a given topic, building on the skills developed in years 5 and 6. Drama is often used to bring learning to life and in all lessons, pupils are encouraged to speak using standard English and full sentences.

How is our curriculum integrated?

- We want students to leave the school as articulate and literate English experts. To do this, they need to be able to write about texts and ideas accurately and precisely. They know more and remember more about literature from the units we teach and from the order they are taught units. Themes raised in Y5 when studying Clockwork are returned to in subsequent units and links between novels are explicitly taught. This approach ensures working memory is not overloaded and helps students transfer knowledge to their long-term memories.
- Reading for Pleasure is prioritised at Oldfields. We can give students knowledge about texts and grammar, but we also want them to be confident and eager readers. Reading for Pleasure gives students the time to develop this. Our library policy sets out our intent in detail, but this approach is based on the research that reading for pleasure is the key determiner of future academic success. However, placing a book in front of students is not enough. We also need to share the knowledge and experience of reading a text for pleasure to foster a lifelong enjoyment of reading.

How is knowledge selected?

- Knowledge is carefully selected due to its power and future use. We explicitly teach and test the knowledge that will support students' understanding of future texts in the English Literary canon. For example, in 'Oliver Twist' students learn about why poor families were sent to workhouses and what the conditions were like there. This is knowledge worth learning and remembering because it helps students understand that overcoming adversity is an important structural feature of literature.

How is knowledge cumulative across the curriculum?

- In our curriculum, knowledge is cumulative to ensure students know more and remember more. Each strand, each unit within each strand, each lesson within each unit, each activity within each lesson builds on what has come before and acknowledges what is to come.
- For example, students' understanding of Victorian society is developed and enriched throughout the three-year curriculum. In Years 7 and 8, students look in depth at Victorian London and the interaction between different social classes in the city. At our local high school, this domain is expanded and enriched as students learn more about Victorian society in their study of A Christmas Carol then later, in An Inspector Calls. Students' interaction with this domain becomes increasingly complex as they read more original extracts and sources.

How do we know how our students are doing?

- In KS2 we assess pupils' reading ages termly using Accelerated Reader. We also assess 3 times per year using SATS style tests for SPaG and Reading in years 5 and 6. This is enough to ensure that misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed following gap analysis after each round of tests. In KS3, fortnightly quizzes help students memorise the key knowledge. We select the most important knowledge from the curriculum and then test them on it every two weeks. At the end of each unit in KS3 pupils write an essay to display their understanding of the text studied and pupils also complete a piece of extended creative writing. All pupils complete STAR reading tests three times per year so that we can track improvements in reading age throughout their time at the school. Transfer tests have been created across the middle schools with the high school so that we send consistent and accurate information that informs setting and planning for Year 9.

Impact

The impact of our approach is measured through both qualitative and quantitative indicators, demonstrating a positive trajectory in students' academic development.

- **Outcomes:** the results of key stage 2 national assessments show that our students consistently perform at or above the national average in English, indicating effective teaching and learning. Our ex-students are well-

represented in the higher groups at our partner high school, indicating that effective teaching and learning continues in key stage 3.

- **Positive School Climate:** Our comprehensive approach results in a school climate where students feel valued and are motivated to contribute positively to their environment. Pupils are invited to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities that nurture their interest in the subject. Reading surveys and pupil voice activities show an overwhelmingly positive attitude to reading and learning in English. The elder pupils who are given roles such as reading ambassadors, peer counsellors, spelling champions, speak fondly of the opportunities offered to them, and many continue in those roles when they move to their next phase of learning.