

## English

### Curriculum Principles

#### **By the end of their secondary education, a student of English at Dixons Kings will:**

- Know how to read, analyse and critically evaluate a wide variety of high quality literature and non-fiction, involving the best that has been thought and said. Fiction will allow students exposure to a range of different forms of fiction, spanning poetry, drama and prose (including short stories and novels). Students will also study a range of non-fiction forms such as letters, speeches, diaries and articles presenting to them a range of themes dealing with moral and philosophical concepts, to ensure they encounter a wide range of cultures, perspectives and contexts. DKA students of English will also know how to craft their writing to match a wide range of audiences, purposes and forms, adapting their tone, voice style, structure and grammar in order to manipulate the reader. Students will understand how to develop a coherent and cohesive argument, using supporting evidence to enhance their thesis. Students will understand how to use academic, Standard English in order to express their views and develop a detailed theory.

#### **In order to truly appreciate the subject and create deep schema, topics within English have been intelligently sequenced with the following rationale:**

In each year group at Key Stage 3, students will study a thematic scheme of work which will incorporate a variety of different texts and genres, building on the skills and knowledge from the previous year or key stage. By adopting a thematic approach, it is intended that students will have a more rounded view of English and its history and development and this will enhance their ability to develop a detailed schema. In Year 10, as students begin their GCSEs in Language and Literature, the schemes of work they study will be more distinct and text-focused with spaced retrieval and practice throughout. Gradually, as students progress through Key Stage 3 and 4, they will be exposed to increasingly challenging texts, both in terms of language, content and themes. The schemes of work will ensure mastery of the key skills and powerful knowledge necessary to be a successful student of English.

#### **Key Stage 3**

After conducting a number of visits to feeder primary schools and liaising with primary colleagues, the Year 7 English Curriculum has been designed to follow on from many of the skills studied at Key Stage 2. It was important for the curriculum at DKA to begin in this way to foster a love of English and build on existing powerful knowledge: in creating a scheme of work which enables students to build on their skills at Key Stage 2, the curriculum encourages faster learning by developing learning from Key Stage 2.

The Year 7 Transition unit begins with students being exposed to a range of texts, fostering and developing skills which begin with focussing on the ability to understand and comprehend - without this ability the students are not able to access the higher-order thinking skills required and addressed later in the cycle(s). The schemes of work do not begin with new skills explicitly at the start of the SOW but build on the basic skills addressed already. This means that the scheme of work starts with basic information retrieval and reading focussed around developing a love of English through reading challenging texts such as Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" (both in the original Middle English and modernised versions, allowing students to develop their schema concerning the development of the English language), "The Northern Lights" by Philip Pullman and "The Magician's Nephew" by C. S. Lewis. Both in terms of their language and the concepts they deal with, these texts are deeply philosophical, questioning the nature of right and wrong and the place of religion in society. The extracts allow students to get a taste of high quality children's fiction, which they can then go away and read in their entirety.

Students are then explicitly taught how to select appropriate information and textual references, which is imperative to developing a deeper understanding of authorial intent. Once this has been achieved, students are then taught how to identify different methods chosen by writers, using subject terminology. Beyond this, students are then able to access and articulate language analysis, the cornerstone of all literary criticism.

As the cycle progresses, students will also encounter analysis of structure and evaluation of texts in order to develop their own independent reader responses. This is an important topic to teach the students in Year 7 as it creates the cornerstone for learning to be built on in later cycles and other key stages.

Throughout the schemes of work across the year, the lessons develop and consolidate skills introduced within the first cycle. In Cycle 2, students will read the novel "Wolf Brother" by Michele Paver alongside extracts from other quest/adventure texts ranging from Beowulf to Greek myths and legends. These fictional texts will be further enhanced by the reading of non-fiction texts about, or by, more modern heroes, such as Emmeline Pankhurst. In Cycle 3, students will study the full text of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as well as a range of poetry, fiction and non-fiction around the theme of nature



The minimum skills which we expect students to have embedded include the following elements:

- identify and select relevant textual information
- use subject terminology when identifying language devices/word level
- use simple inference verbs correctly
- articulate associations and implied meanings of language which shows relevance
- articulate relevant ideas

The Year 8 curriculum has been designed to embed and develop the skills established in Year 7. The thematic schemes of work build on powerful knowledge and further develop their schema of how English Literature and Language have developed over time and space through the study of texts from different times and places (Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Dickens' *Oliver Twist*) and a contemplation of different futures through Dystopian literature.

Within Cycle 1, students begin with the ability to identify, understand and discuss prejudice and inequality, through the above set text, chosen for its vivid characterisation and compelling plot which allows students to engage deeply with writers' craft, whilst also enjoying the text and its story. The language is challenging but not overwhelming for students to cope with, allowing them to focus their cognitive load on deeper analysis. Additionally, its significant links to the context of 1930s America allows teachers to demonstrate to students how Literature texts should be studied in relation to their historical contexts and prevailing social and political issues of the time - including racism, segregation, recession and misogyny in this specific example. This builds central cultural capital for our students and provides them with background to issues still significant today. Furthermore, the provocative characters enable students to evaluate their own cohesive and cogent opinions of the text and the themes raised within it, which is a fundamental skill to develop in studying English Literature. Writing is also supported through descriptive and narrative writing inspired by events of the novel. Students write a description of Curly's Wife's kitchen and a narrative based on her previous life and events leading up to her fateful meeting with Curly. Students are reminded, through explicit teaching, how to select appropriate information and textual reference, which is imperative to comprehension. Once this has been achieved, students are then taught how to utilise their ability to identify different methods chosen by writers, using subject terminology when responding to a focus question. Beyond this, students are then able to access and articulate language analysis. Because this is a skill addressed within Year 7, the SOW allows the students to build on those skills, allowing them to discuss and communicate multiple interpretations of the writer's language and the intentions behind them. Supplementing the key text is a range of poetry and non-fiction prose, as well as a "Speak Out" competition designed to develop students' use of rhetoric.

Into Cycle 2, students then move on to *Oliver Twist*, which gives them an introduction to pre-nineteenth century texts and an introduction to Charles Dickens, whom they will encounter again at GCSE. The expectation is, again, that students are able to revisit skills of language and structure analysis as well as evaluation, creating a thesis and developing a personal response to a literature text. The SOW focuses on both reading and writing skills, engaging students within a specific genre focus (melodrama, the Gothic, satire and social commentary). The sequence of lessons factors in, as always, visible differentiation and modelling. This sequencing reflects the skills needed during KS4, allowing Year 8 to develop them early but without specific reference to GCSE.

Finally, Cycle 3, operates as a culmination of all the skills addressed within the previous cycles and the previous years. Students will study a range of dystopian literature, mostly in extract form, as well as poetry and non-fiction prose which expand and develop the theme. Consequently, the SOW has been sequenced in order for students to demonstrate their skills, whilst providing classroom teachers the opportunity to support through focussed modelling, and intervention planning.

The Year 9 English Curriculum aims to embed basic Language analysis skills via use of engaging Literature texts in order to inspire and promote a love of reading in the subject. In Cycle 1, the theme is The Gothic and this will be addressed through a number of short stories including "The Monkey's Paw", "The Red Room", and "The Signalman". Once again, the key texts will be underpinned by a range of poetry and non-fiction. These classic stories will be used as both a stimulus for writing and a source of analysis and comparison for reading. Short stories have a number of advantages over the longer novel form. For instance, they are compact and allow students to glimpse a whole narrative structure in shorter, comprehensible form. It's easier to see the conventions of storytelling. Because of their shorter length they allow for re-reading. Only on the second read are many aspects of literary construction laid bare—the hints and statements that prove ironic when you know the final outcome. They also allow teachers to pair texts strategically to increase absorption rate. When students read one text and then another in close proximity they can compare or contrast the way the two texts use a literary device or concept. Students absorb more of a literary device they second and third time they experience it. Their comparative brevity also allows you to invest in content knowledge and let students read a wider range of author's, styles and topics.

In Cycle 2, students consolidate and continue to develop language analysis skills through the prism of fictional Literature by studying "The Lord of the Flies" under the umbrella theme of "The Nature of Good and Evil". The differences in genre and context to The Gothic unit of work allows students to explore writers' craft from an alternative perspective as well as introducing them to a range of psychological and philosophical theories from some of the West's greatest thinkers. In particular, these include: Freud's Theory of the Personality, Maslov's Hierarchy of Needs, Darley and Letane's Bystander Effect coupled with ideas about Democracy and Fascism. Non-fiction and poetry will also be studied in conjunction with the key text: current theories of the intrinsic nature of humans can be explored, from Dawkins' The Selfish Gene to Rutger Bregman's Humanity.

Cycle 3 comes under the heading of "Love and Relationships". Key knowledge of dramatic features utilised in Shakespeare's play is developed, alongside an appreciation of the wider structure of a play and significant ways Shakespeare structured his plays in order to affect and manipulate the audience. Furthermore, a contextual understanding of Elizabethan England is developed which will be later hugely useful for students to know in Year 10 when they come to study "Macbeth", in addition to the genre of tragedy. In addition, a key focus for this scheme is the development of extended written essays based on a literature texts, focussing on students presenting a clear thesis in their responses in order to have a clear and coherent argument. To further build engagement, a range of mainly contemporary poems will be studied; however, there are also historical poems included in order to encourage a thematic understanding across time. Knowledge of key poetic terms is built in order to support with other unseen analysis in Year 10, as well as their study of the Power and Conflict anthology in Year 11. As fundamental Literature analysis skills were developed during Cycle 1 and 2, this scheme presents an opportunity for students to present their own creative and original analysis in order to develop more conceptualised and thoughtful responses.

Throughout all Cycles, students will receive one lesson per week of grammar, to develop their understanding of the mechanics of the English Language. They will also be taught about the development of the English Language, looking at the origins of English, from ancient Greek and Latin roots, to the influence of various invading forces from Europe and later, the impact the spread of The British Empire. English Language and Literature skills are continually recapped through Do Nows and spaced practice.

Assessment in years 7 and 8 has been coordinated through the English Cross Cutting Team, which has developed age and ability specific assessments that are not just watered down GCSE papers, but ones which test the specific skills we want the students to have developed across the year.

Homework in years 7 and 8 is centralised and practises both reading and writing: students will read a short text (online) and then respond to a number of prompts, culminating in a short piece of writing in the style of the original (200 words). Always mindful of teacher workload, these are then peer assessed.

## GCSE

Students begin their GCSE course by studying three Literature texts. By studying these texts at the beginning of the course, there are then lots of opportunities to revisit them throughout the rest of the course through retrieval and spaced practice. Starting with "Animal Farm" affords the opportunity to read a novel as a class which is accessible on several different levels - as a fable, an allegory and a blistering critique of power, its uses and abuses in the wrong hands. This is followed by "A Christmas Carol" (in the build up to Christmas itself) which allows students to obtain Cultural Capital by learning about traditional British customs and traditions surrounding this festival. However, it also presents the opportunity to study a text which is essentially about the concept of redemption and presents a fine contrast to the somewhat bleak outlook of humanity presented by Orwell. In Cycle 2, "Macbeth" has recently replaced "Romeo and Juliet" as the set text as it was felt if offered more opportunity to produce high level analysis of language, structure and form. After students have studied these three texts, they then begin to focus on English Language examination preparation. Having already studied a wealth of great literature enables them to transfer their skills of analysis to the unseen texts presented in the Language assessments.

Common misconceptions when studying "Animal Farm" can include an inability to understand the concept of an allegory and just read the story as a tale about animals. Students can also often become distracted by the historical context of the novel and write a history essay instead of an analysis of a piece of literature. Historical context can also become a distraction with "A Christmas Carol", with students writing about the social conditions of the poor in the nineteenth century instead of the novella. With Macbeth the commonest misconception is that "Macbeth" is not responsible for his own downfall and that it is the fault of his wife and/or the witches. Students can fail to grasp that, according to the conventions of a tragedy, the tragic hero is brought down by his own hubris.

As students progress through the first year of their GCSE course, they build on skills that they have practised from year 7 onwards and especially from year 9 when they have been taught how to answer the English Language questions and how to build up a personal response to a literature text, developing a thesis and clear argument.



Students study Power and Conflict Poetry at the start of Year 11 as the last set text in preparation for their English Literature examinations. The skills involved in this unit require a comparative element which adds greater complexity to the question, examination approach and essay style. Poems are studied chronologically in order to develop an understanding of how ideas have changed and developed over time in response to the changing social, political and cultural climate. This particular chronological approach also helps to develop students understanding of different "movements" in literature which is essential if students are to become experts in English. Historical links can be made between Victorian attitudes expressed in Tennyson and Dickens and thematic links such as oppression and tyranny in the Romantic poetry of Blake and Shelley, Shakespeare's Macbeth and Orwell's Animal Farm.

The most common misconception when studying poetry is students' inability to separate the poet from the persona they may have created to "speak" in the poem. Before studying each poem, students are introduced to the poet and the times in which they were writing in order to enable them to appreciate how the poet has used language, structure and form to create meaning. Developing analytical thinking further enhances students' ability to produce coherent and cogent arguments when responding to their other literature texts as well as Paper 1, Question 4.

#### **The English curriculum at Kings has been influenced by:**

- Lemov, Driggs and Woolway's work on Reading with rigour, independence, precision and insight.
- Key Stage 2 National Curriculum - focussing on developing and consolidating skills acquired at primary school.
- An awareness of (but not explicitly mentioned or linked to) the AQA 9-1 English GCSE in both Language and Literature.
- The need for students to be empathetic, mature, and engaged readers and global-citizens.
- The need to develop and enable the skills addressed in Year 7 to continue, but at a 'deeper' level across years 8 to 11.
- A common love for hugely influential Literature texts that are regarded as canonical which both explore a wide range of powerful ideas that children invest in.
- In addition, the poetry choice in Cycle 3, Year 9 was decided to have a more contemporary focus in order to expose students to more current and modern texts to engage them in writing happening across the world today.
- The GCSE English Literature curriculum forms a cohesive study of power and its corrupting influences across time. This provides students with opportunities to develop their own sense of morality and integrity, in order for them to grow into productive and well-rounded members of society. The texts are chosen for their accessibility to students across the ability range and their literary merit. The choice of Power and Conflict poetry was made in part due to the passion of the Head of Faculty for the Romantic and War poets and their anti-establishment views. More experienced members of the Faculty have a wealth of experience teaching a number of these poems for previous GCSE specifications.

#### **Our English curriculum ensures that social disadvantage is addressed through:**

- Why is this subject so important in challenging social disadvantage? What disadvantage would a child / adult have if they didn't understand this subject? What is done in the subject through lessons / intervention / planning to address inequalities between students? What opportunities does the subject provide that students may not experience elsewhere?

English Language and Literature are crucially important in challenging social disadvantage for a number of reasons. The ability to communicate effectively both in writing and speech is essential to further academic study and career prospects. However, English is not just a gateway subject: it also leads students to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to construct well-reasoned arguments. Without high level English skills students are unable to access the world of academia and the world of work and may find themselves not being able to contribute effectively to their families and their communities and be productive, engaged members of society.

As a faculty, we ensure lessons are differentiated to meet the needs of all our students, from those who are the most academically gifted to those who need the most support. Intervention plans are thorough and rigorous and are tailored to the needs of every student. Intervention also takes place during form time for year 11 and this consists of support for lower ability students and stretch and challenge for the most-able. Reading Plus is increasingly used as an intervention strategy for high prior attaining students to develop their reading speed, comprehension skills and enrich their vocabulary. Plans have been made for this to be part of Form Time intervention for some students.

Within the English faculty, a library lesson is timetabled for each class within KS3; this practice is continued in Year 8. This enabled students to become independently selective of challenging books, and engage with a wide range of activities (through an interactive library booklet) which enables students to read a plethora of text-types, genre and fiction. In order to boost their cultural capital, students also study a series of Greek Myths, reading a story every fortnight and completing comprehension questions on it. This is followed up by Do Nows to reinforce their learning of concepts such as an Achilles Heel and a Trojan horse. This culminates in developing each and every year 8's Literacy ability, appreciation of reading and of learning - opportunities which students may not be exposed to at home/in other schools.



With the introduction of a reading log (used during form time once a cycle) students are actively encouraged to be reading their books, formulating their thoughts and reviewing the books they are reading across the year.

Beyond classroom intervention, one of the ways the most disadvantaged students (along with the most underperforming students) are targeted is with specific interventions in relation to skills. This intervention is informed by question-level-analysis data from the most recent assessments, and is correlated in order to address skills, not GCSE questions. Students are given the opportunity to address these gaps through classwork or homework, allowing them to independently develop their skills whilst building on their powerful knowledge.

English gives students unique opportunities for personal response and encourages them to develop their creativity and imagination, expressing their ideas and opinions in response to both literature and non-fiction texts.

**Our belief is that homework is used for deliberate practice of what has been taught in lessons. We also use retrieval practice and spaced revision to support all students with committing knowledge to long term memory.**

- Homework tasks include: Seneca, responses to reading (essays, exam questions, reviews) , preparing flashcards, producing essay/exam question plans, reading articles/extracts, written responses to practice different text types, purposes, forms, Y11 A3 homework sheets
- Students are expected to spend 1 hour per week on homework in years 7, 8 and 9 but 1 hour and a half at GCSE level. In Year 11, A3 sheets allow students to retrieve information and practice key skills in language and literature every week. Seneca is used more widely at GCSE as the literature texts they study are covered extensively on the website.
- From September 2021, all year 7 homework will be accessed using Teams as part of the development of the on-line learning platform. This will be based around developing reading and comprehension skills, as well as widening knowledge about the world around them and building cultural capital.

**Opportunities to build an understanding of social, moral and ethical issues are developed alongside links to the wider world, including careers. We fully believe English can contribute to the personal development of students at Dixons Kings through:**

- English gives students unique opportunities for personal response and encourages them to develop their creativity and imagination, expressing their ideas and opinions in response to both literature and non-fiction texts. By the end of year 11 it is envisaged they will be experts in critical thinking.
- Through a variety of non-fiction texts students have the opportunity to build their understanding of a wide range of contemporary issues such as aspects of social injustice. Literature texts are selected for both their literary merit and for their ability to provide a lens through which to view contemporary issues. For instance, "Animal Farm" not only illuminates Russian history throughout the twentieth century but allows students to recognise the corrupting influence and consequences of power.
- Whenever possible, students are afforded opportunities to visit the theatre or we will invite a theatre company in to the school. If watching a Shakespeare production to develop students' understanding of a text, we will endeavour to watch a recording of a stage production, rather than a film version of the play.
- Writers often visit the school to speak to students about the writing experience and demonstrate their own creative writing skills. Students in various year groups are able to engage in a multitude of enrichment activities. This includes First Story, where a published writer works with students over several sessions in order to create a published anthology including all students' edited pieces. This allows students to create creative pieces with their own focus and ownership - although often, we see works inspired by the literature texts they have been studying, focused on themes such as isolation.
- By taking part in First Story and other writing competitions, students gain the opportunity to consider being a published author as an achievable career path.
- Friday lectures afford the English Faculty opportunities to go beyond the GCSE specification and broaden the scope of students' knowledge. So far, students have encountered Allusions in "Macbeth" and in the future will be exploring the history of the English Language and how Literature has developed over time.
- The history of the English language and the literature has been used to create is rich and varied and this is explicitly taught from year 7 onwards from Shakespeare through to the present.
- Several non-fiction text types students will encounter at both Key Stage 3 and 4 will prove useful and transferable such as letter and report writing, as well as evaluating using their critical thinking skills developed in English.

Remote working in our subject supports students to access the full curriculum in the following ways:

- A clear whole school strategy has been implemented and followed in English where, if a student is at home and self-isolating, they can join the lesson on Teams and the class teacher will connect the Jabra speaker to enable the student to view the board through their home computer.
- Work completed by the students should be emailed to their class teacher at the end of the lesson to be checked.
- Class teachers will complete the centralised spreadsheet listing the names of students who are self-isolating on a Monday morning. This allows teachers to track who is completing work and which students need to be followed up.

**Further Information can be found in:**

- Long term plans
- Schemes of work
- Knowledge Navigators