

English Department



Intent

Our vision for English at Ratton is to create an environment and curriculum that is engaging and creative, encouraging an enjoyment of a wide range of texts to broaden and develop students' understanding of their world and the world around them. Knowledge and skills are built up in a supportive and researched based way, over the five years, culminating in excellence in year 11 GCSE exams and equipping all students with the skills and confidence to navigate the ever- changing world within and beyond school.

We teach a rich, varied, and relevant curriculum that is in line with the national curriculum. Our curriculum not only prepares our students for the rigours of GCSE Language and Literature but develops their questioning and critical skills as well. We strive to evoke enjoyment from the written and spoken word. Our texts are taken from the traditional canon and from contemporary writers of both fiction and non-fiction.

We study a range of poetry in all year groups exploring ideas of identity, relationships, and conflict. The poets we study are taken from diverse backgrounds and encourage students to not only explore the written word but to question and think critically.

The novels, plays and non-fiction we study also encourage students to explore ideas about society and identity. This includes Shakespearean plays, contemporary novels, adaptations of Gothic fiction, pre 1900 non-fiction, contemporary articles and classic novels such as 'Of Mice and Men'. Students are exposed to the key concepts required to access the GCSE texts throughout KS3 and concepts are carefully mapped and sequenced to build skills and knowledge over time.

We not only encourage students to examine good quality writing and explore the effects created but encourage students to develop their own writing voice. Creative and opinion writing are taught not only in discrete units but throughout each unit taught. Our intention is to allow students to practice their craft often and to build upon skills continually rather than sporadically through the year.

We aim to offer all students the opportunity to see a live performance and have had numerous Shakespearean productions perform at the school and run trips to theatres. These cultural experiences are important to us and where we can offer enrichment activities, we do. Clubs specifically relating to English skills are run during lunchtimes and the Learning Resources Centre is open every break for students to access books and computers. Disadvantaged students are prioritised and supported in attending these events.

Our Learning Resources Centre has a rich collection of fiction and non-fiction and is a hive of activity during breaks where students can read, study quietly or access

the computers. A love of reading is vitally important to us and we actively encourage this by allowing students to read at the start of every lesson. Our intention is that all students develop an appreciation of a good book and the benefits of reading.

Implementation

Our curriculum builds up the skills of students over the five years they attend Ratton. Classes are taught in mixed ability groups across both Key Stages and students' studies culminate in 2 separate qualifications: AQA GCSE English Language and AQA GCSE English Literature. AQA English Functional Skills has been offered as part of students' alternative provision.

In Year 7 we assess students' literacy needs when they arrive through a range of internal and external information which allows for baseline assessment, enabling us to support and stretch all students (including the most disadvantaged) appropriately as quickly as we can. Strategies such as Lexia and Literacy withdrawal groups, which run throughout KS3, help develop readers who are confident, have a range of strategies to help them read and understand the impact good reading can have on their writing and performance across the school.

The skills essential to clear and competent communication and skilful reading are introduced in year 7 and the level of difficulty is gradually increased as students move up the year groups. Skills, such as analysis and comparison run throughout the curriculum and are repeated at suitably spaced intervals to ensure retrieval and the opportunity to practice what has been learnt.

Each unit of work has a focus on specific vocabulary to allow students to become articulate communicators. Many of these words are revisited in future years and learning becomes embedded. The 6 principles are embedded into the planning and teaching of each unit and staff use research to inform their approaches to specific skills, groups of students and texts studied.

At KS3 we cover a range of texts. We have introduced more diverse and contemporary fiction and poetry, such as 'The Hate U Give' by Angie Thomson and poetry by John Agard. These are read alongside more traditional books which are in the Canon, such as: 'Macbeth', 'The Tempest', 'Of Mice and Men' and classic poetry. KS3 students will also read a range of non-fiction texts from different eras, including newspaper articles, travel writing and essays.

At Key Stage 4 we teach: 'Romeo and Juliet', 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', Conflict poetry and 'An Inspector Calls'. Key concepts and skills will already have been introduced at KS3 and teachers build on this good foundation by introducing more complexity in the texts covered, the ideas explored, and the ways students express their ideas. An academic writing style is encouraged and explicitly taught.

Homework is regularly set and is used to encourage students to retrieve information, pre learn and practice skills. Homework is set on-line, and teachers set a range of tasks across the year including written responses, reading, and reviewing tasks and on-line platforms.

The Language course explores fiction and non-fiction from the 19th to 21st centuries and students are required to develop their skills of analysis, evaluation, and comparison. Students are also required to write with clarity and creativity developing their skills of description, narrative, and opinion writing.

Effective learning comes when students can reflect on their achievements and learning, and so, we encourage teachers to mark diagnostically and teach responsively. Students are formatively assessed throughout the curriculum both through written responses and verbally. The curriculum is carefully planned but the formative assessment encourages teachers to alter their teaching to respond to marking or conversations with students and to address the needs of the specific group in front of them. We employ tasks, such as tick time, to encourage self-reflection and instil a desire to improve, build skills and the opportunity to strive for excellence. As a department, we use formative assessment and diagnostic marking to allow us to focus in on the specific gaps in learning a particular class or student has and enable them to succeed in more formal assessments.

We mark using GCSE criteria for both key stages and targets reflect the skills required for students to be successful at GCSE Language and Literature.

Extra curricula clubs focus on building skills essential to become successful at GCSE but offer more flexibility and freedom of choice. Clubs range from following Book awards - reading the books, discussing their strengths, and writing focused groups.

Impact

All students follow AQA GCSE English Language and Literature courses and will have one lead teacher for both courses. The GCSE course has its foundations in the KS3 course that precedes it, so students should arrive at Key Stage 4 having a clear sense of the skills required.

Students' progress is monitored throughout their time at Ratton. This allows us to not only celebrate when students have successfully mastered a skill or written creatively, but to step in and offer specific support to allow students to continue to progress and to leave school literate and able to access the next steps in their lives.

Students are assessed termly to check the development of skills and understanding of content. At Key Stage 4 students also sit a series of mocks that cover all the topics in the final exams. These summative assessments inform teachers and students of the next steps required and will inform the students' predictors which appear on their reports.

To ensure there is consistency in the marking of students' work that informs our predictors and target setting, we regularly standardise our marking and moderate marked work. This is completed in line with AQA examiner expectations and uses resources provided by department and the exam board.

We encourage students to be confident, caring and engaged and students respond well to the ambitious standards set by the English team. We strive to enable all students to make progress, and this can be seen, not only in the GCSE results, but the improved reading and writing ages of students in KS3.

Our vision is for students to leave Ratton with an understanding of the world around them and be equipped with the literacy skills which enable them to be successful. Our hope is students leave Ratton creative and critical thinkers who have developed an appreciation, if not a love, of great writing.