



ENGLISH

Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

We aim to create the very best communicators, readers, writers and thinkers. The functions of literature and language in enabling students to lead the best possible lives are at the forefront of the curriculum. Media enables its students to explore how the world around us is portrayed through constructed representations in the popular press and broadcast industries. Through English Language, we seek to provide students with the language capacity to navigate and succeed in courses of their own choosing, as well as inspiring those students who wish to pursue more language-based careers, such as writing, journalism, speech therapy, education. Through English Literature we seek to develop students' ability to think deeply about humanity, and to discover the riches of their Literary Heritage, whilst developing the critical faculties to evaluate the ideas and the craft in these texts. In Media Studies, students learn theoretically, analytically and practically how media products are made, who makes them and what impacts they have on an audience. We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field would: to read like writers, to write like readers, to speak like orators.

Our curriculum at NHGS goes far beyond what is taught in lessons, for whilst we want students to achieve the very best examination results possible, we believe our curriculum goes beyond what is examinable. We do this by regular exposure to a wide range of the finest fiction and non-fiction texts from Greek drama to the work of the current poet laureate, from News reporting to travel journalism, exploring them through practical, creative and analytical approaches. We invest in and value spoken language skills. Furthermore, we offer a range of extra-curricular opportunities (see more below in the implementation section.)

Our curriculum in English relates directly to the school ethos statement. Examples of how our curriculum supports the ethos statement are the range of activities that demand students think inquiringly and independently, developing their ability to articulate ideas confidently, thoughtfully, and with precision, politeness and accuracy, and to listen to, evaluate and respond to the opinions of others. Enthusiasm is modelled by our staff and praised in our students who are engaged and motivated to do well. The curriculum in media is broad and balanced and shares cross curricular links with KS3 English. It allows students to develop not only their understanding but also their practical skills in photography, video editing, web design, and graphic based media production.

As a knowledge-engaged curriculum we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. As a department we define the powerful knowledge our students need and help them recall it by having a carefully planned progression through our curriculum with content and skills clearly defined in our schemes of work which have a regular focus on learned content. We are creating bespoke knowledge organisers to

accompany units. Students have access to the content they need through department-based resources - and are informed about other resources they can access.

We build the Cultural Capital of our students constantly by teaching texts in context. We ensure that the curriculum covers both key writers in the traditional canon, and examples of literature and language from a range of times, cultures and traditions. We make clear how language and literature have been and can be instrumental in changing the world we live in. We encourage wider reading and the exploration of related texts.

Further rationale behind our curriculum design includes building on the knowledge acquired at KS2, and to develop the ability to read perceptively, and write and speak expressively and persuasively. We make clear the links between language and literature and well-being. We ensure the level of challenge is high with support for students who need it. We have made some adjustments to our curriculum to support some cross-curricular links, such as teaching Chaucer at the same time as History teaches the Medieval era and war poetry when History study the World Wars.

Implementation

Our curriculum covers the different areas of reading and writing, fiction and non-fiction, media, and study of literary texts each year with the sophistication of the skills gradually increasing, and regular spiralling back to ensure key content is secure. Collaborative curriculum planning lies at the heart of what we do in the department. We both liaise with external agencies and subject specialists, and use research to inform our planning. We are committed to a three-year plan of developing our schemes of work. These are focused on embedding challenge, metacognition, memory techniques and literacy into our curriculum. Alongside our schemes of work, we are developing our use of knowledge organisers, enabling us to define the core knowledge our students need to master.

Discussion and debate are a regular feature of English and Media lessons, as is extended reading and writing. Key words are introduced each lesson and there is an ongoing drive to enhance and expand vocabulary. Lessons are well structured and feature a range of activities carefully chosen to enhance learning. Reading is often a stimulus for writing. Modelling is frequently used to demonstrate both metacognitive processes and high quality responses. We engage with real life contexts where possible to enable students to connect their learning with the world beyond, and support their well-being. Peer and self assessment are used regularly with set key pieces marked summatively across the department throughout the year. We use the google classroom to support students' learning and offer live lessons or blended learning when students cannot be in school or need to catch up on things they have missed. The googleclassroom also enables students to access resources for consolidation, independent study or revision.

Key Stage 3

Transition into year 7 from Year 6 can be a challenging time for students and at North Halifax we mitigate these demands through careful planning and delivery of lessons. We engage with primary schools prior to their start at secondary school and when possible, teachers and sixth form Reading Ambassadors have visited schools and delivered English lessons akin to what they will experience in Year 7. When possible, we deliver an English session on transition day to promote summer reading - and English has formed part of the summer school transition curriculum. These sessions have been helpful in both allowing students to understand the level of work expected and in building rapport between students and teachers, making the students feel secure and supported as soon as they arrive at NHGS. It gives them an opportunity to ask any questions they may have and calm any anxieties they may be

experiencing. Year 7 schemes have some adaptations in light of the information gained from the primary transition meeting held with English teachers across the borough and we use planning models recommended by primaries and remind students of primary assessment criteria.

English Language and Literature are co-taught in mixed ability groups throughout, and language skills and knowledge are taught in all schemes. Literary texts at Key Stage 3 introduce students to a range of texts. Beginning with "The Dark is Rising", students begin to respond more analytically and build on the language skills acquired in KS2. Poetry Through Time then gives them a sense of the overview of English poetry from Chaucer through to Armitage, and emphasises the many different functions of literature - as expression of the human condition, as a response to world events, and as a source of solace. All students in Year 7 take part in the Poetry By Heart competition. War Poetry is studied in year 8 to support later study of Power and Conflict poetry, and a Poetry from Different Cultures unit in Year 9 is used to continue to introduce students to a wide range of diverse authors.

Classic texts such as *Animal Farm*, *An Inspector Calls*, and *Of Mice and Men* introduce students to range of political and social ideas and concerns, and texts such as *The Book Thief* and *Treasure Island*, are not only valuable in themselves but also provide literary context for later study of *Lord of the Flies* at GCSE. The War Poetry unit and *The Book Thief* also tie in with the History curriculum and study of World War 1 and 2 in Year 8, and enhance study on the trip to France. *Greek Tragedy* is also taught in Year 7 and a Shakespeare text is taught each year. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet* in Key Stage Three ensure students experience both comedy and tragedy, as well as exploring ideas about gender, colonialism and conflict. Modern drama - *The Exam* - is a short unit in Year 9 used to support students' wellbeing in advance of the GCSE course as well as introduce them to an engaging modern play.

Students meet a range of non-literary texts across the units in Key Stage Three. The BBC News Report unit, and the Travel Writing unit, amongst others, enable students to engage with journalism and non-fiction writing to enable them to interpret viewpoints and present their own.

We value speaking and listening skills and aim to build student confidence in this area as an important life skill across all three courses. Presentation skills, oral assessment, debating, drama and speech-making form part of the curriculum with the challenge gradually increasing as students progress through Key Stages 3 and 4 so that students are thoroughly prepared for the spoken language endorsement - as well as being able to present ideas clearly in later life.

GCSE

At GCSE, where we follow the AQA specification for English Language, chosen for the breadth of opportunity to enhance a broad awareness of fiction, and the structure of the examination which builds in challenge. We begin with the Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing, a fiction unit emphasising the importance of wide reading, as well as building on the technical analytical skills developed through Key Stage 3. We ensure a diverse range of texts from 20th and 21st century authors - from Hill to Hamid, from Buchan to Frayn - are studied, exploring not only a range of styles but of writers' concerns. Within this unit, we also cultivate our own narrative voices writing both descriptive and narrative pieces.

We move on to the comparative unit "Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives" and explore how writers present a range of viewpoints on different issues from capital punishment and imprisonment, to relationships and social customs. We study a wide range of both Victorian and modern writers making connections across the two time periods. We develop students' confidence in articulating their own viewpoints on a range of topics and in a range of genres,

and give them the tools to have a powerful impact on an audience themselves. The Spoken Language Unit is embedded within this scheme and students present on a topic of their own choice to fulfil this part of the specification and become confident and proficient speakers.

For English Literature, we study the AQA specification, chosen for its incorporation of core literary heritage texts. We begin with *Lord of the Flies*, an in-depth exploration of the human condition and an excellent model for students' own writing on the Language Specification as well. We encourage students to develop personal, enthusiastic and critical responses in preparation for the examination. Following this students study Anthology poetry, developing even more useful technical terminology as well as appreciating the range of viewpoints and ideas in the poems. They also begin to think more comparatively about texts, with comparison being a core skill across both Language and Literature. Study of *Macbeth* has been chosen for GCSE study not only as a popular play, but also as useful literary context for A Level Study of *Hamlet*. Our final text is the 19th century text *A Christmas Carol* - which is prepared for by the Gothic unit and the units covering poverty and homelessness at Key Stage 3 - and also provides valuable context for study of our Victorian authors at A Level. Throwback lessons form part of the Year 11 curriculum, interleaving exam practice of language skills with more in depth study of the literary texts as we approach the final exams.

Media at GCSE is an invitation-only subject, offered as an alternative to MFL for a number of students who would not be well served by further MFL study. The curriculum at GCSE Media currently follows the OCR exam board specification. In the early weeks of Year 10 students are given a series of induction style lessons focussed around core principles and the four main elements of the theoretical framework. From there we move into the content covered in the Paper 2 exam which covers Radio, Music Video, Magazines and News. We chose to begin in this sequence as the Radio, Music Video and Magazines are the smallest individual areas of study and are taught to develop knowledge and understanding of the core areas of representations and media language, which comprise of skills and knowledge needed to access the wider course. From January of Year 10 we study the largest and most complex area of study on the syllabus: News. Here we explore both print & online news. We look at ownership, political bias, digital convergence, and historical contexts alongside embedding the skills already established in analysing representations and language. This all leads to a full mock exam in Y10 of paper 2.

In the summer term we move on to the practical NEA coursework based on briefs released annually from the exam board. Here students design and produce either an excerpt of a TV show, Music video, Magazine or Website. The coursework is quite complex and accounts for 30% of the total grade. It is usually finished by early November in Y11 at which point we study the context for Paper1 where we draw all the theoretical areas of the course together learning about TV Drama and Promotional Media for Film and Video Games. All course content is complete by the beginning of March allowing for a final program of interleaving, revision, and exam practice to occur prior to students completing their studies and entering exam leave.

A Level

English Language follows the AQA specification, a stimulating course which was chosen for the blend of creative and critical engagement with a broad range of language issues. Groups have two teachers who teach distinct areas of the course but also make clear the connections and the overlapping of content across the different areas. We begin with introductions to the language frameworks as students begin to consider a range of representations. On the other side of the course, students consider the diversity of language, exploring how language can be affected by age, gender, occupation, power and geography. Students create a range of original writing so they can experiment in different genres using style models before finalising a selected piece for coursework. In Year 13 students study Child Language Acquisition and Literacy leading into the investigations where these areas are popular choices for study.

Students are given a guided choice with the investigation, giving them the opportunity to explore areas of personal interest whether that be the phonology of Shakespeare's vowels or the contrasting speech patterns of 5 and 8 year olds. Finally, students study Language Change and the evolution of English from Anglo-Saxon times to now.

English Literature follows the OCR specification, chosen for the range of texts offered and for the discursive nature of the examination. *Hamlet* is the selected Shakespeare play, chosen as being the most influential Shakespeare text of all. Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* was chosen to enable students to appreciate the comic genre as well as the tragic, and for its close connections to Rossetti's poetry. Both texts enable us to study the responses of notional "outsiders" to Victorian society on a range of themes still relevant today such as gender, power and materialism. *Dystopia* is the paper 2 topic with Orwell's *1984* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* being our set texts, accompanied by a broad range of dystopian extracts from a diverse range of authors to help students prepare for the close analysis. The American texts *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Colour Purple* have been chosen for coursework opening up students' awareness of American culture and fiction - and Duffy's *Feminine Gospels* have been chosen for close analysis.

In Media A-Level, much like the GCSE, we traditionally start with Induction lessons working on the assumption that many of our students have had no prior study. From there we work through the autumn term of Year 12 looking at the film industry, Music videos, Magazines and Advertising, before progressing into the Spring term examining News. This all culminates in a full Paper 1 mock exam in Year 12. From there we begin work on the practical NEA coursework which, again like the GCSE, is based on set briefs from the exam board issued annually. Here students have to produce either a magazine, TV show, Radio or music video product with matching digitally convergent websites. The end product is traditionally completed by December of Y13. Running alongside the coursework we co-teach the TV Drama and Radio topics needed for paper 2. Following this, we teach the video games topic, which is the last of our original content before arriving at a Paper 2 mock exam in the early spring. Remaining time is spent on revision, interleaving and exam practice before students embark upon study leave.

Extra-curricular

We offer extra-curricular clubs in creative writing and debating, playwriting and two reading clubs. We support productions and take students to the theatre and poetry events and work with writers both in and out of school. In activity week, workshops linked to our core Shakespeare text are used to develop students' understanding of the practical application of texts in Year 9, and Y7 experience Greek drama and slam poetry. Participation in local and national competitions is also supported and we have had students be shortlisted for the Foyles Prize, The Tower Prize, and win the Northern Young Writers Award, attend Poetry By Heart competitions as well as attend writing events at the Ilkley Literature Festival.

Reading Ambassadors are used to promote and support reading and work both with classes and individuals to improve reading skills for year 7 and 8 students where needed. Teachers run a departmental intervention programme for Year 11 to ensure their English GCSE grade is as high as it can be, and is not a barrier to anyone's future career. We also run a study clinic for the sixth form and work closely with students and parents to enable all to progress to the university courses or apprenticeships of their own choosing.

Impact

We know our curriculum is working through the engagement of students every day in every lesson. Achievement point scores are very high, showing that students engage very positively

and demonstrate the behaviours outlined in our ethos wheel on a regular basis in their English lessons. Visitors to classrooms often comment on the excellent articulacy of our students and their mannerly behaviour towards each other during lessons. Numbers are healthy at A-Level and we generally run two Literature and one or two Language groups. Participation in extra-curricular activities is good and demonstrates the enthusiasm of students.

The quality of teaching and learning in English and Media has been praised during learning walks by both external and internal observers. When student voice is conducted, students report very positively on their experiences of English. Student and staff voice are used to refine and develop the curriculum. End of course surveys of A level students in which we seek their views on the strengths and weaknesses of our delivery, include much positive feedback and comments such as, "You truly care about us AND the grades. There is always support given and the lessons are always useful and enjoyable".

Results are good at both GCSE and A-Level, and residually across the school in internal monitoring. This suggests our KS3 curriculum successfully prepares all students for GCSE study. At GCSE our outcomes are strong with the average grade being a grade 7. In English, all GCSE students achieve a minimum Grade 4 and nearly 100% achieve grade 5 or higher, ensuring that all A Level, University and employment options remain open so students can set courses of their own choosing at the end of their school careers. Our Media GCSE is running for the first time this year - monitoring data shows that outcomes for these students are residually very strong and we look forward to the first set of external results this summer.

Our sixth formers have consistently attained ALPS 3 and above with their English qualifications supporting their entrance to university. Students go on to a range of course options at University from English; many choose to do English Literature or English related degrees such as speech therapy and creative writing. Students' English and English Literature grades often help them secure places at Russell Group universities and on competitive courses. The department has also successfully prepared students for Oxbridge applications and entry. At A-Level, Media students consistently achieve highly and often pursue higher education in a media field.

Skills acquired in English also support a range of other degree courses - especially law, psychology, criminology, Classics and other arts degrees. Most importantly, students and teachers frequently express their enjoyment of the subjects and their content.