

NHGS – 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. 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. 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, exploring them through practical, creative and analytical approaches. We invest in spoken language skills. We offer extra-curricular clubs in creative writing and debating. 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 performance 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.

Our curriculum in English forms a backbone to our 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.

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 and an "Aim Higher" section is outlined on our frontsheets for units in students' books.

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 RE teach pilgrimage and History teach the Medieval era.

Implementation

Collaborative curriculum planning lies at the heart of what we do in the department. We both liaise with external agencies, subject specialists and research to inform our planning. We are committed to a three-year plan of developing our schemes of work. These are focussed on embedding challenge, metacognition, memory techniques and literacy into our curriculum.

Our curriculum covers the different areas of reading and writing fiction and non-fiction, 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. Discussion and debate are a regular feature of lessons, as is extended reading and writing. We engage with real life contexts where possible to enable students to connect their learning with the world beyond.

Alongside our schemes of work, we are developing knowledge organisers at KS3. This is enabling us to define the core knowledge our students need to master.

Impact

We know our curriculum is working in the English department through the engagement of students throughout the school both observed and recorded in student voice across the school. The quality of teaching and learning in English has been praised during learning walks by both external and internal observers. Numbers are healthy at A-Level and have increased again this year enabling us to run two groups for both A Levels.

Students go on to a range of course options at University from English; many choose to do English Literature or related degree such as speech therapy and creative writing. Skills acquired in English also support a range of other degree courses - especially law, psychology, criminology, Classics and other arts degrees. We also run additional English to support Y11 students to ensure their English GCSE grade is as high as it can be, and is not a barrier to anyone's future career.

Examination results are good - especially in the light of the continued skew between Maths and English attainment on entry. Contributions by English and Maths made a real impact on the P8 score. The English P8 has been steadily increasing over the last three years. Our Alps scores at A Level have been 4 and above for the last 4 years and are consistently among the highest in the school. .

More importantly, students frequently express their enjoyment of the subject and their appreciation of what they have gained from English that they can take out into the world.