



Whitby School

English

Our purpose as a department is to help children to love English.

Through a love of English we want children to develop confidence in expressing themselves, build skill in reading and exploring texts, and the ability to express themselves with flair verbally. This is because skill in English in all of its forms will help them to be successful in whatever they choose to do.

A key part of helping children to grow confidence and enthusiasm is developing their enthusiasm for reading. We have a passion for literature and love the power good fiction has to take a child to the ends of the earth and beyond – but inspiring and thought-provoking non-fiction also has a key part to play in our curriculum.

English is part of our **Core** discipline at Whitby School.

Our Intent

*“I will endeavour to be a person of great **character** who has the **courage** to realise my **ambitions**”*

<p>Courage Literate</p>	<p>English is one of the vital skills that children will require for life. Whatever employment, education, or training they progress to, we want all children to leave able to access and success in any endeavor they undertake. In addition, the growth of technology means that it has never been easier for us to share our views, communicate with others, or present to a wide audience. We want our pupils to become highly effective communicators and grow their own voice and style.</p>
<p>Character Kind</p>	<p>English helps to develop empathy and kindness because it allows them to experience, hear, and understand different voices and perspectives. The fiction and non-fiction we read in class will take them all over the world and help them to relate to others. Through creative writing, literary analysis, and in their speaking and listening work they will seek to understand the views, motives, and perspectives of others.</p>
<p>Ambition Empowered</p>	<p>English helps young people to find a voice. In raising the level of their discourse and conversation, we raise their ambition. We want children to leave Whitby School to be able to communicate and thrive in all settings and not to be excluded from any level of discourse. A vital part of this is to give our pupils a vocabulary to speak and think and so new words are systematically introduced to help them learn new, challenging and useful language.</p>

A curriculum for vocabulary

A child's expressive vocabulary (the words that they can use correctly) and receptive vocabulary (the words that they can understand) are important in determining their success in English as well as their studies as a whole. Indeed, there is strong relationship between a pupil's vocabulary size and their academic success.

Strategies deployed within the department include:

1. Teach etymology of words to show how words have been created
2. Teaching the morphology of words to help pupils understand them. So revision, for example, uses the morpheme "re" which means again or repeat and vision means seeing – hence revision is "seeing again." This strategy, as with etymology, helps children to have the confidence to decode words by looking at patterns of words they already know.
3. Give opportunities to use new vocabulary (Research shows that four uses means a word becomes part of available everyday vocabulary)
4. Teach the multiple meanings behind words

A curriculum for writing

Knowledge is also key to writing as greater knowledge, it is hardly surprising, leads to better writing. Additionally, 'discourse knowledge' is important for children to make progress. This type of

knowledge refers to the knowledge about the genre of writing, linguistic and grammatical knowledge, – as well as knowledge about how to carry out specific aspects of the writing process. Consequently, as a department we ensure pupils write about the curriculum content they have studied – interleaving creative and non-fiction writing with the topics covered for reading, for example. We also help pupils to build discourse knowledge by making sure that they understand the characteristics of texts written for specific purposes and audiences, and by providing models of effective writing to give them ideas to draw upon for their own work.

We aim for all children to become increasingly aware of how writing can be used to share new interpretations of their ideas, their reader's needs and existing knowledge, and how that reader might interpret what they write. To develop this, children write frequently, work cooperatively on the writing process – with teacher modelling and with peers – and are taught explicitly the foundational writing skills such as sentence construction and control of grammar and syntax, as well as spelling.

A curriculum for spoken language

While spoken language benefits from the instruction children receive in writing and reading, they also develop the quality of their speaking work over time. To this end, in Years 7 and 8, time allocated for drama and speaking and listening is added to the English curriculum. We aim to secure:

- physical skills (such as making eye contact and speaking clearly)
- linguistic skills (where children deploy the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary that they have learnt as well as rhetorical devices)
- cognitive skills (the knowledge of content, organisation of ideas, and tailoring talk to a specific purpose, such as to persuade or inform)
- social and emotional skills (helping them to consider the needs of different listeners, responding appropriately to others and developing the confidence to share ideas with different audiences).

A curriculum for reading

We aim to build a life-long love of reading, using STARS reading tests in lower and middle school, for example, to identify a child's reading range and tutor time activities encourage reading with praise and rewards for children who make progress in and enjoy their reading.

Over time, we build pupils' 'readiness' for future encounters with texts and critical views. We introduce pupils to texts that they would not choose to read for themselves, especially from other times and places and with a range of perspectives. This might be topic knowledge provided by the teacher to help the pupil make sense of the text or – more particularly – knowledge that the pupil can supply in their answers to comprehension questions. For example, we deliver work on classical mythology alongside our literacy curriculum to help children to use and understand allusions as well as pre-teaching concepts and knowledge they will encounter when reading Shakespeare, for example.

A curriculum for Literature

When encountering literary texts, as well as studying aspects of historical context, and aesthetics such as genre, we also develop the skills of analytical writing. These are developed systematically from Year 7. Analytical writing is, after all, a composite process that involves multiple components, some learned through studying literature and some as part of the writing curriculum. Pupils need to be able to embed evidence, use appropriate subject terminology, apply precise vocabulary and evaluate interpretations, including their own interpretations.

If pupils are to succeed at analytical writing, they need to be secure in each of these components. Our curriculum, therefore, includes a range of subject-appropriate writing activities that require the use of the components for writing that pupils have learned, culminating in them writing sophisticated, thoughtful independent essays by the time they reach Year 9.

Our Teaching

Speaking, reading and writing are not only the key varieties of English that children will study, they are also the means through which the subject is learned and taught. Consequently, teaching activities to improve speaking, reading and writing will necessarily involve activities that use speaking, reading and writing.

However, for each of these aspects of language practice of skills in itself is insufficient to help children excel – instead there is a body of knowledge that children can learn to help them make progress. Knowledge of language, which includes vocabulary and grammar, as well as knowledge of the world for comprehension, is vital to progress spoken language, reading and writing. This knowledge can also be used across each of these three modes of English – for example, they can use vocabulary learned through reading when they are speaking and writing, both in school and in their lives beyond it.

Consequently, although English is often thought of as a ‘skills-based’ subject, identifying the important knowledge – and how it will be effectively and carefully planned and taught over the course of the years – is central to our teaching. We plan our curriculum carefully to ensure this knowledge is developed in a specific, explicit and sequenced way.

We are teaching to build lasting knowledge, rather than teaching pupils to develop a good understanding of one aspect of English. We therefore use the knowledge and curriculum-related expectations to ensure that pupils can confidently analyse **all** texts they encounter, for example, not just the ones they have been taught. Therefore, when planning, we plan as a department incorporate specific connections between knowledge, concepts and vocabulary from previous lessons. Our lessons are planned to include a gradual build-up of knowledge, and the skills associated with this. Teachers clearly signal the pupil’s learning journey: where knowledge is encountered for a second or third time, we make explicit links back to this and explain how this will be built upon. Newly-taught knowledge is secured before moving on to the next piece of knowledge. If this knowledge isn’t secure, it should be clarified before new knowledge is introduced.

This knowledge is broad and wide-ranging.

How families can support

One of the most important methods of increasing confidence and ability in English is reading a wide range of materials regularly. When we read we absorb vocabulary and grammatical aspects of language that hugely benefit our ability to write and also understand challenging aspects of the written word. Encouraging the young ones within your care to read is a vital aspect of being successful in English.