

English Department Curriculum Rationale

<p>KS3 Rationale</p> <p>We subscribe to the Ark Mastery KS3 Curriculum, which is a carefully sequenced and knowledge-rich suite of fully resourced lessons and assessments. Ark shares our vision that all students should have access to the best that has been thought, said and written in our subject. Each year involves study of a Victorian novel or short stories, a Shakespeare play and modern canonical literature, so that students can see how and why writers have addressed universal themes differently at different times. Explicit teaching of Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary helps to build cultural capital and allows students to analyse texts with confidence and precision. Units last a full term so that we can interleave study of complementary non-fiction texts and develop students' written expression. Being part of the Ark curriculum also gives us access to a national support network and shared assessments, so that we have a reliable measure of our students' progress. Indeed, research shows that students in schools that adopted English Mastery made four months' more progress than similar students in schools that did not adopt the programme.</p>	<p>KS4 Rationale</p> <p>We have chosen the AQA specifications for both GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature because there is a consistency of approach and question type across the papers. This allows us to make lots of links between the different topics, which in turn helps students to build schema and strengthens long-term learning.</p> <p>The curriculum builds on the analytical skills, writing competencies and contextual knowledge developed through Key Stage 3, and it is carefully sequenced to allow for frequent interleaving and overlearning of key content and concepts. As with KS3, all units are accompanied by carefully selected tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary. Although we focus closely on examination skills in year 11 especially, our curriculum is not just about passing GCSEs. It aims to develop the concepts and skills necessary for mastery in our subject and successful further study in general: namely, insightful analysis, critical evaluation, and confident, fluent and carefully crafted written expression.</p>
<p>Pedagogy within the classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive load - our lessons are designed to reduce distractions, so that students spend time thinking hard about what we want them to remember. • Pace - every lesson matters. Lessons are well planned and purposeful. "Do now" activities are followed by brisk and timed activities. • Long-term memory – recall quizzes and links to previous learning are used regularly to strengthen schema and boost long-term learning. • Challenge - all students are challenged to make the best possible progress, both by the content of their studies and by the questions and tasks set on that content. • Vocabulary – we love language and proudly model that in the classroom. Most lessons will involve exploring vocabulary. 	<p>Links to School Improvement Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed attainment groups – we teach in mixed attainment classes in all years so that all students can access the full curriculum and are well-prepared for the rigours of GCSE study. Following the school motto of "Aim High", we teach "to the top", whilst differentiating and scaffolding tasks effectively so that all students are engaged, making progress and growing in confidence with every lesson. • The VLE – we put all our lesson resources on our virtual learning environment, <i>Moodle</i>, alongside home learning tasks, revision resources, and extra reading and challenge tasks. Students can access this any time, from any device – helping them to catch up on missed work, to revisit topics they found challenging, to read ahead, and above all to become more independent, committed and engaged in their learning. • Extra-curricular – we promote a passion for reading and a thirst for knowledge through our dedicated reading area, our use of the library, and a range of after-school activities.
<p>Skill Progression</p> <p>When studying a text or planning to write our own, we try to focus on 3 key question stems: <i>what, how</i> and <i>why</i>. We have used these questions to identify 6 core skills areas for reading and 6 for writing – skills which are taught, assessed and monitored across KS3 and KS4. This provides a spine for our studies and a shared language for students and classes to discuss progress and next steps.</p> <p>The curriculum is carefully sequenced to allow progression within these skills areas. For example, in year 7, we focus on developing insightful inferences about characters, settings and events "within" a text, before learning to step "outside" the text by looking more closely at authorial intent and context in years 8 and 9. The structured nature of the Ark curriculum develops students' knowledge of Victorian literature, Shakespeare and modern literature over time, giving them excellent knowledge for study in these areas at GCSE. For both students and teachers, there is a clear path to mastery which takes students from year 7 to the highest possible achievement in year 11.</p>	<p>SEN</p> <p>We are constantly working to increase our own knowledge of different areas of SEN and how to differentiate more effectively. We understand the SEN needs of all students on the SEN register in the class and aim to be adaptable in teaching approaches to meet the needs of all students – not just those with SEN.</p> <p>Our high expectations and our commitment to all students are evident in our challenging curriculum and our use of mixed attainment classes. However, we recognise that some students need additional support for a variety of reasons. We assess the reading ages of all students on entry into year 7 and implement specific interventions for those who need help to improve their fluency or comprehension.</p>