

Key Stage Three Curriculum Overview for English

Curriculum Intent

- 1) **Develop a secure and contextual understanding of the English Literary Canon**, exploring its historical and cultural significance and its influence on contemporary literature.
- 2) **Communicate with confidence, clarity, and control**, adapting language and style across a range of forms, audiences, and purposes.
- 3) **Synthesise knowledge and skills to engage critically and purposefully** with a wide variety of texts, demonstrating analytical insight and independent thought.
- 4) **Foster a lifelong love of reading**, encouraging curiosity, empathy, and intellectual exploration beyond the classroom.

How does the KS3 curriculum build on that from KS2?

We consolidate and build on students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary through our KS3 'mastery' lessons. These lessons are fortnightly and are focused on developing students' literacy. Through extending and applying the grammatical knowledge from KS1 and 2 programmes of study, students are equipped with the tools to read and analyse more challenging texts.

We continue to master a range of other skills introduced at KS2: making inferences; making predictions; summarising; identifying how language, structure and form contribute to meaning; comparing characters, setting and themes; and making reasoned justification for views and opinions of texts.

We will also provide students with more challenging opportunities of transcription and composition developing their knowledge of how to write in different forms, for different audiences and to achieve different effects.

What do students do with their acquired knowledge and skills?

Students will become increasingly confident approaching unseen texts, prose, poems, non-fiction and drama. These will include analysing language and its impact on the audience or reader; comparing historical contexts and influences; discussing how structure within a text is used for effect and how it helps to impact writers and their work. Students will also learn how to use language and structure to argue their own point of view successfully as well as write compelling narratives and descriptions.

How does the curriculum align to and go beyond the National Curriculum?

We ensure that students read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a diverse coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors. In line with the National Curriculum, students are exposed to English literature, both pre-1914 and contemporary. However, we go beyond this through our offer a wider variety of texts –we offer students the opportunity to explore how people receive canonical texts, but also media texts and texts written by marginalised voices.

We also teach vocabulary explicitly, ensuring that students leave school able to read and use subject specific vocabulary.

The curriculum aligns to the National Curriculum as students write for a range of purposes in a range of contexts. Furthermore, there are regular opportunities within our curriculum for students to speak, listen and debate.

What new knowledge are students taught?

Term	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Autumn	IGNITING THE CANON: Students develop a sound understanding of the literary canon starting with classical literature and moving through the notable literary ages. Students are also given the opportunity to respond creatively to these movements, emulating the voice of famous writers.	SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES: Students grapple with another genre of Shakespearean text, which offers increasingly challenging material to that of earlier extracts explored in Year 7. Students explore the plot, setting, themes and characters of Richard III, whilst knowledge such as iambic pentameter, blank verse, soliloquys etc. are also consolidated. Students are also, for the first time at Witchford,	NOVEL – <i>RUN REBEL</i> : An innovative YA verse novel, students develop their ability to read extracts from a range of YA fiction critically, making inferences and referring to evidence from the text, in order to make critical comparisons. Students are given the opportunity to see beyond their immediate context and appreciate a world beyond their own. Like 'A Monster Calls' this novel develops students' emotional literacy

	PROSE – <i>A MONSTER CALLS</i>: Students read a text with a complex emotional theme, providing them with a mature basis on which to develop their analytical skills. They are taught how to make inferences, and how to write critically.	introduced to expository essay writing, being familiarised with organisation methods and relevant formal discourse markers/signposts. PROSE – <i>A CHRISTMAS CAROL</i>: Students explore this 19th century text in order to track and analyse the development of characters over the course of the text. Students develop and progress their critical writing skills in order for them to compare extracts from the beginning and the end of the novel.	and encourages them to question the world around them. NOVA FICTION: By the end of this unit, students will have mastered how to write concisely within a given time frame. The focus is on technical accuracy and structure: sentence types, narrative perspective, cyclical structure and ambitious punctuation. In Y8 students will have learnt how to craft a short story and in Y9 we make space for students to hone those skills on a smaller scale.
Spring	SHAKESPEARE’S COMEDIES: By the end of this unit, student will have a clear grasp on what constitutes a Shakespearean comedy through the study of the key conventions. Students will have the opportunity to explore many elements of Shakespeare’s craft within this genre including verse/prose, iambic pentameter, rhyming couplets and stage craft. Students will also develop their understanding of Elizabethan England. POETRY: Students study a number of poems, recognising a range of poetic conventions and forms, and	SHORT STORIES: By the end of this unit, students will be able to structure an effective short story. The unit is deliberately sequenced to guide students through the craft of writing a story: what does a good short story do? What does a compelling opening look like? How do writers build towards an effective climax? How can an ending be satisfying? There is a balance between reading stories by experts to inspire students and model the process, and extended writing time for students to produce and refine their own stories.	POETRY – <i>BEING HUMAN = BEING HEARD</i>: Students develop their knowledge of poetic techniques (caesura; dramatic monologue; visual / aural / olfactory / gustatory / tactile imagery etc.) and broaden their knowledge of poetry as a means of expression whilst exploring Human Rights. Poems studied have a particular focus on BAME and LGBTQ+ poets including Maya Angelou, Carol Ann Duffy, Dean Atta and Kae Tempest. This unit also equips students with the skills to be able to approach and analyse previously unseen poems.

	understanding how these have been used. Many of these are consolidated from KS2 (onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, personification) whilst some are new to students such as assonance, enjambment, cacophonic and euphonic sound. Students define and identify these in the work of others and apply these techniques in their own work.	PROSE– <i>THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME</i>: This unit explores the power of unusual narrative voice, focusing on the unique perspective of Christopher, the novel’s protagonist and narrator. Through close engagement with Christopher’s perspective, students develop a deeper understanding of how voice shapes meaning. We are passionate about hearing from different voices and points of view, and this unit celebrates that. The final assessment takes the form of a piece of creative writing: students are challenged to emulate Christopher’s distinctive narrative voice, which requires them to think carefully about vocabulary, punctuation, and syntax—not only as technical features but as tools for creating tone, meaning, and emotional impact.	RHETORICAL COMMUNICATION: Students define, identify and apply Aristotle’s three modes of persuasion: ethos, logos and pathos, including hyperbole, direct address and rhetorical questioning. Students are given the tools to analyse rhetorical communication in many of its forms, as well as write their own.
Summer	WRITING IS FIGHTING: Students study a range of non-fiction texts answering a big question: what is the role of nonfiction in understanding the world? Not only do students study historically rich nonfiction texts, such as Martin Luther King’s famous speech, they also study how modern	DRAMA – <i>BLOOD BROTHERS</i>: The purpose of this unit is to deepen students’ understanding of how context shapes meaning within a dramatic text. Through focused study of <i>Blood Brothers</i>, students explore how historical, social, and cultural contexts influence character, theme, and audience interpretation.	SHAKESPEARE’S TRAGEDIES: This unit serves as an introduction to Shakespearean tragedy, focusing on the key conventions of the genre—including fatal flaws, fate, conflict, and the tragic ending. Through the study of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, students begin to understand how Shakespeare crafts complex characters and explores universal themes such as love, violence, family, and destiny. Students start to engage

	forms, such as blogs and vlogs can inspire change. Students also build a foundational knowledge of persuasive devices that will be built upon in the Y9 Rhetorical Communication unit. READING VISUAL LANGUAGE: Students read <i>The Arrival</i>, and <i>The Red Tree</i> by Shaun Tan as well as <i>Thornhill</i> by local writer, Pam Smy. New vocabulary is introduced to allow students to articulate their understanding of this literary medium fast-growing in popularity: panel, caption, compositional flow, gutter balloon etc. Students respond creatively to these works whilst also considering their place in the literary canon therefore building on the work they did in Autumn 1.	The unit also builds students' ability to analyse the presentation of character through language, form, and structure, while introducing and reinforcing key dramatic features such as stage directions, dialogue, tension, and dramatic irony. By the end of the unit, students will be equipped to make informed, analytical responses to a play text. MODERN FILMS AND MEDIA; SUBVERSION IN ANIMATION: Students explore how the Media, particularly animation, has changed over the past decades and is now a force to be reckoned with as it challenges expectations. Students are introduced to different literary theories such as Marxist, Feminist, Psychoanalytic etc.	with <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> exploring the key themes and characters. CREATIVE WRITING – THE HORROR GENRE: How do writers create horror, tension and suspense in their writing? Extracts from notable texts explored include Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, George Orwell and Stephen King. Students draw on their knowledge of these 'horror greats' to enhance the impact of their creative own writing.
We conclude each KS3 year with a dedicated oracy project: Year 7: Storytelling Year 8: Spoken Word Poetry Year 9: Debate These projects are designed to develop students' confidence, articulation, and ability to express complex ideas verbally—skills that are essential across the curriculum and beyond. The projects provide structured opportunities for students to refine their speaking and listening skills in creative, critical, and purposeful ways. Each project is carefully chosen to align with their developmental stage, ensuring a progression from narrative expression in Year 7, to performance and persuasive language in Year 8, and finally, structured argument and critical thinking in Year 9.			

How and where do students build knowledge through KS3?

Our curriculum has been carefully curated and thoughtfully sequenced to take students on a coherent journey from Year 7 to Year 9. Clear threads run through the three years, ensuring that knowledge and skills are consistently revisited, deepened, and built upon.

One such thread is the development of students' ability to craft writing for impact. In Year 7, students experiment with emulating a range of poetic voices, gaining an appreciation for how writing can take diverse forms and serve various purposes. This foundation is extended in Year 8 through the study of short stories, where students explore narrative structure and learn how to shape ideas with greater control. These skills culminate in Year 9's Nova Fiction unit, where students are challenged to write with ambition, precision, and stylistic maturity.

The complexity of texts also increases across the key stage, enabling students to engage with more demanding ideas and grapple with 'bigger questions'—about identity, society, morality, and human experience. As a result, their personal responses become increasingly nuanced and sophisticated, reflecting both their growing confidence and their deepening understanding of literature.