



English policy

Last updated by subject leader

September 2021

**Last reviewed by Principal and
Headteacher**

September 2021

Next review due

September 2022

Subject specialists

The English Department is led by Miss Carole Swynnerton who is a fully qualified English specialist at Master's Degree level. She is supported by six fully qualified teachers, all with first degrees in English, two of which are also Master's holders and one other holds an M.A. in Linguistics and teaches IELTS.

The English Department at St. John's supports learning from KS1 at the Prep. School to GCSE and A Level at the Senior School.

Lessons at Preparatory School

The point of contact at the Prep School in this subject is Mrs C. Tardios.

At Key Stages 1 and 2 English tuition is divided into 6 formal periods of 50 minutes, covering the following areas:

- Daily phonics (Letters and Sounds) and reading at KS1
 - 2 periods for essay work (this includes Fiction/Non-Fiction/Poetry)
 - 1 period for Comprehension – Reading.
 - 1 period for Literature - Class Reader.
 - 1 period for Grammar and Punctuation
 - 1 period for Spellings
- } SPAG

Pupils also receive tuition in LAMDA and Drama, each for one period a week (see separate policies for these subjects).

Lessons at Senior School

- At KS3: Four Lessons a week of 50 minutes.
Language/Literature.
50 minutes: Lamda.
- At KS4: Five Lessons of 50 minutes each.
Language/Literature.
50 minutes: Lamda.
- Key Stage 5: Six lessons a week.

Qualifications

At the Prep School:

- KS1 and KS2 national assessments.
- Lamda awards (grades 2 – 5).
- Common Entrance Examination.
- Grammar School Entry Examinations.

At Senior level:

- KS3 (Lamda Awards grades 3 -5)
- GCSE English (AQA)

- Lamda awards (grades 6-8)
- GCSE English Literature (AQA)
- A Level English Literature (AQA)

IELTS Teaching (Lower and Upper Sixth)

Led by Mrs H. Fleming.

Number of lessons per week: three 50-minute lessons.

- There is the opportunity for students to access further lessons prior to exams for individual speaking practice and feedback sessions.
- Average number of international Sixth Form students studying IELTS: 20.

Aims of the Department

- To empower pupils to become “brave” and confident learners, with a passion for literary and linguistic exploration.
- To develop pupils’ abilities in the four areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening:

Writing and speaking: to express and develop their own thoughts and feelings in a fluent, organised and appropriate way while demonstrating respect and sensitivity towards the views of others; to use conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling and presentation accurately.

Reading and listening: to understand, interpret from a variety of perspectives and evaluate writing and speech.

- To make pupils aware of the nature of language: its power, conventions, history and liberating qualities.
- To develop pupils’ understanding and enjoyment of literature and their ability to comment on it in an informed way in order that they may use it as a resource for the rest of their lives.
- To integrate Drama, Media Studies and ICT into programmes of study where appropriate.
- To meet the needs of individual pupils and enable each pupil to reach their full potential.
- To achieve excellent exam results for our pupils.
- To underpin the work of the rest of the school in achieving its academic and social aims: the use of language, spiritual, cultural and social awareness; questioning and organisational skills.
- To be mutually supportive in the department so that the above can be achieved.

This policy is complemented by complete schemes of work for every unit, located on the school's Google Drive, and an overarching learning journey tracked by year group.

All planning is reflective of the aims of the National Curriculum at each Key Stage, or the relevant qualification specifications at GCSE and A Level. Both knowledge and language skills related to English are built upon from KS2 and developed in an ordered and systematic way to ensure learning becomes embedded over time. Each topic forms a layer of understanding that will inform pupils' learning so that they have the knowledge, skills and confidence required for GCSE study.

The department works on the principle that each member of staff should teach as wide an age-range as possible. This maintains professional expertise and development and prevents stagnation.

Expertise and Professional Development

At both the Prep. School and the Senior School, all teachers are registered with the National College of Learning and receive CPD in a variety of areas of expertise.

Opportunities for professional development are also offered regularly, at GCSE and A Level where teachers attend workshops relating to their particular subject area. Team teaching, sharing good practice and lesson observations are regularly facilitated.

Liaising with the Preparatory School

St. John's has a keen focus to develop recognisable skills by the end of KS2 to build a connected and meaningful learning journey to KS3 and into KS4.

Two specialist English teachers are deployed at the Prep. School for one lesson a week to deliver bespoke programmes of study to build skills that link to the start of KS3 English at the Senior School.

The department have worked together to create a unit of study that facilitates recognisable skills that can be developed after transition to the Senior School, for example understanding the beginnings of critical writing and PEE. This can then be developed into the more sophisticated PEEZAL structure at the Senior School.

Key transition skills include:

- inference
- evaluate how writers use linguistic techniques to create specific effects
- connotations
- terminology
- spelling and grammar (subject, object active, passive synonym, antonym ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points)
- descriptive/persuasive techniques.

Facilitating transition

Every pupil's written report at the end of KS2 is used to inform the English teachers at the Senior School of the progress made by individual pupils. This progress is recorded in pupils' English transition exercise books that they carry forward to their English class at the Senior School.

Intent

At Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, the curriculum has been carefully planned to facilitate deep learning over time so that the pupils are fully equipped and prepared to reach their full potential at GCSE for both English Literature and Language. To this end, knowledge and appropriate skills are built upon in a systematic way from KS2 and KS3 through to KS4.

Long term and medium term plans are prepared for each year and reflect how teachers build upon prior knowledge in order to expand and develop understanding further in the classroom.

Programmes of study for each half term form a solid foundation that will stand pupils in good stead for each Key Stage and GCSE. For example, at KS3 pupils study a nineteenth century text each year; this serves as excellent preparation for their understanding of the nineteenth century text to be studied for GCSE. Previous learning has already ensured familiarity for this genre and an ability to make links and demonstrate exceptional breadth of understanding. Further, they will have already been exposed to this genre, as fragments are studied at KS2.

This example is typical of the way that each component for both Literature and Language has been structured to ensure pupils' knowledge is carefully built so that they know more and remember more about a specific topic or subject over time.

By the end of each year, pupils will develop key skills to feed into the requirements for the next stage of their learning. Teacher assessment at KS1 and 2 is based upon National Curriculum guidance and GCSE assessment criteria is simplified and tailored to the ability of pupils at Key Stage 3. An awareness of the criteria used for the different Assessment Objectives is gradually introduced and developed throughout KS3, to provide a solid foundation from which to begin GCSE Language and Literature courses.

For Language units

- To identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
- To select and synthesise evidence from different texts.
- Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.
- Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references
- Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise

information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.

- Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.
- Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting.
- Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback on presentations.

For Literature units

- Read, understand and respond to texts.
- To maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response.
- To use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.
- Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.
- Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.
- Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Texts studied at First, Second and Third Form are related to the historical context and genre to those studied at GCSE in order to afford a ladder of developmental challenge leading towards the final year and formal examinations in the Fifth Form. These skills are then further enhanced in line with the assessment objectives and requirements at A level.

In order to ensure that curriculum content is ordered logically, progressively and systematically, the information generated following summative assessments is regularly scrutinised by the department and adaptations to the learning journey made to be adaptive to the needs of the pupils. Additionally, all units of study are reviewed for success, level of challenge and usefulness to the intended acquisition of knowledge on a yearly basis.

Pupils are encouraged to read widely outside the classroom, embracing the department aim for children to become, brave, confident and enthusiastic readers. Early years children are encouraged to explore literature, to discover the magic of fictional worlds, where vocabulary and literacy skills can be extended effectively on a weekly basis.

Implementation

The Curriculum is planned carefully to ensure key skills are built upon and revisited on a regular basis.

- Literature texts are chosen in a systematic and sequential way so that contexts are revisited and analytical skills developed and expanded as pupils move up the school.
- The language and grammar grounding embedded in the Prep. School comes into its own as the pupils become sophisticated critical thinkers, applying their knowledge of language in their analysis and also in their own writing.

A variety of teaching and learning strategies are employed within lessons to enable pupils to understand key concepts and information clearly and promoting appropriate discussion, outlined as follows.

Teaching strategies:

1. Whole class:
reading texts, teacher explanation, questioning, checking comprehension, starters, exercises, games, taking/making notes, planning on the whiteboard, evaluation of model answers, discussion, debate, speeches, presentations.
2. Individuals:
reading, planning, scaffolded planning grids, mind-maps, questioning, thinking time, personalised teacher differentiated activities.
3. Pairs/groups:
discussion, problem solving, planning, oral activities, peer assessment, self-assessment.

Learning strategies:

1. From the teacher:
 - Explanation and inspiration.

Teachers at St. John's aim to inspire and motivate students to reach their next stages in learning. This achieved through strategies to include the following:

- Clear lesson objectives and learning aims so that all pupils know the reason for their learning and how it will help to develop their knowledge and skills to a specified goal.

To this end, teachers use many strategies to maximise the learning of their students, to include:

- engaging starters.
 - strategic interventions based on individual learning needs to meet targets.
 - modelling reading aloud,
 - expert knowledge.
 - targeted questioning based on Blooms.
 - provision of a success criteria.
 - plenaries.
2. Support:
 - scaffolding.
 - differentiated activities according to ability.
 - individual explanation.
 - being able to ask questions required about all units/topics/texts.
 - how to learn – clues on how to comprehend text.
 - how to break down a text/task.

- how to generate/build up ideas.
- how to structure ideas.

3. Peer support and assessment:

Peer assessment is used with regularity. Pupils critique each others' work, using criteria from the relevant mark schemes at each key stage, related to specific units of study. Pupils will assess a model and then apply the criteria to their own work, or partners. Models are frequently used so that pupils are know what the highest levels look like and how these meet the assessment criteria. Gaps in their own learning can be effectively addressed and strategies devised to meet these.

For GCSE, the assessment objectives and marking criteria are used from AQA. Learning is also achieved through discussion, motivation and quality assurance.

4. From texts:

- critical ideas/theories
- advanced vocabulary
- critical style (PEEZAL structure)
- a wide range of sophisticated ideas

5. Extra-curricular:

Book clubs are run from KS1 to the end of KS3 to nurture and inspire the pupils at St. John's to develop a love for reading for pleasure.

- Early years: one book club weekly
- KS1: Two book clubs weekly.
- KS2: One book club weekly.

At KS3, a weekly book club provides familiar territory to those transitioning from the Prep. School, allowing pupils an environment where books can be celebrated, shared and enjoyed

Impact

Learning is assessed on a regular basis, both summatively and formatively.

Assessment

All teachers regularly check pupils understanding via a triangulation of verbal questioning, classwork and Prep work during and following lessons. Furthermore, at appropriate points during a lesson, teachers will use a range of assessment for learning strategies to check understanding. Any misunderstandings can be identified within the lesson and rectified with the individual or class, as needed. Additionally, feedback given to pupils after classwork and Prep work will present pupils with personalised learning targets and methods to use to in order to progress further.

To ensure that pupils have embedded key concepts in their long-term memory and can continually apply them, summative assessments and the revisitation of skills are regularly carried out across the course of the learning journey.

Questioning

Questioning is key in the department to establish the impact of teaching and learning. All teachers loosely use the Blooms framework to be effective in their monitoring of knowledge acquisition. Pupils regularly demonstrate “lightbulb” moments through carefully scaffolded and differentiated questioning. The positive and productive environment at St John’s ensures these moments are frequent and underpin the enthusiastic attitude and approach pupils regularly demonstrate in their English lessons.

Discussion

Pupils at St. John’s thrive in discursive activities; classroom conversations provide a stimulating and fruitful environment for pupils to explore their understanding with the teacher and each other. Learning is evaluated in a structured and positive learning environment. This growth in understanding is also evident in written assessments and activities.

Formal Assessments at the Prep. School.

- End of module tests
- Winter Examinations.
- Summer Examinations.

Formal Assessments at Senior School

Pupils are assessed every six weeks via:

- Mini-tests (every half term).
- Winter Examinations.
- Summer Examinations.
- Fifth Form and Sixth Form Mock Examinations in January.

Regular Reading Assessment

Pupils at the Senior School are assessed for their reading age termly. This allows literacy development to be monitored and facilitates personalised reading programmes tailored to meet individual needs.

- The Phonics System is used at the Prep School.
- Accelerated Reader used at the Senior School.

Homework Evaluation:

A variety of homework tasks are given to form the basis for weekly assessment at both the Prep and Senior school. These include:

- Reading.
- Vocabulary and grammar.
- Diary Entries.
- Letters.
- Newspaper articles.

- Creative writing.
- Analytical writing.
- Past G.C.S.E. questions (KS4)
- Past Language and Literature Questions.

The impact of teaching and learning is effectively monitored through the robust systems in place at St. John's, where pupils are fully aware of the expectation for quality work. This high standard is facilitated by 50 minutes at the end of each day dedicated to the completion of homework and enabling independent learning and exploration related to topics introduced in class.

Monitoring

Pupils develop the confidence to move forward with their learning as a result of regular feedback given by their teachers. Weekly grades, targets and comments in exercise books reassure learners of their understanding and signposts the next stage for development.

Teachers regularly monitor progress and understanding through assessment of both class and homework. Weekly monitoring allows teachers to review learning and ascertain if personalised targets have been met. The class teacher continues to monitor progress closely through improvements in pupils' written work and through activities in class, allowing targets to be modified and refined.

Learning goals

Lessons are designed so that knowledge is developed fluently towards a specific learning objective and outcome. Pupils are made aware of the learning objectives of each lesson and task and understand the learning goal, so that they are aware of why they are doing it and how it will help their progress in English, both towards GCSE examinations and in their understanding of the wider world.

Achievement

Pupils' work in this subject, including those with SEND, is of a consistently high standard. The department works hard to make sure that needs are met. For example, one student diagnosed with dyspraxia recently achieved a grade 8 in both English and English Literature after provision was made for him to use ICT in the classroom as a reasonable adjustment. This revolutionised his capacity to produce quality to a high standard on a regular basis.

The department is very proud of its success at every key stage and in particular at G.C.S.E. and A Level where pupils typically achieve exceptionally well in both Language and Literature.

Pupils at St. John's enjoy creative writing and often invite their teachers to proof read ideas for books and stories they write for their own enjoyment.

Cultural capital

The English Department is responsible for trips to the theatre for every pupil each year. This is to enrich and extend their awareness of drama as it is meant to be experienced.

Pupils not only enjoy productions, but can experience first hand the ambience and atmosphere of the theatre.

Plays are chosen bespoke to specific age groups and are aimed to complement the units of study. Appreciation of the theatre is developed from the First Form and pupils enjoy attending performances in London throughout their time at the school. Typically, pupils can expect to see at least one of the following plays each year:

KS3: Matilda.
The Play That Goes Wrong.
A Christmas Carol

KS4: An Inspector Calls
Macbeth.

KS5: Hamlet
The Mousetrap.

The English Department also plans trips to Stratford Upon Avon to support A Level teaching of Shakespeare.

IELTS Teaching at Lower and Upper Sixth

Aims and Objectives

To provide IELTS training to enable international students to take the IELTS exam and achieve the required IELTS band for university, in most cases this will be band 6.5 or 7.0.

To facilitate learning of A level subjects by improving the level of English for all international Sixth Form students

Teaching Strategies

Students at Lower Sixth will be introduced to the four components of the IELTS exam: reading, writing, listening and speaking and the exam style tasks in each category.

Students in Upper Sixth continue to build upon the skills learnt in Lower Sixth and have a greater focus on practicing exam questions.

Reading – students must read a considerable amount to prepare for IELTS to improve their reading speed and skimming and scanning techniques. This is achieved by studying IELTS reading texts and question types in class. In addition, reading a variety of texts from sources such as the news is essential and students are expected to read the BBC news daily. Students discuss what they have read in the news in class each week and share new vocabulary learnt. Students are also encouraged to read a book each half term and share reviews.

Listening – IELTS listening techniques are taught using an IELTS course book and exam practice materials. Lower Sixth students begin by learning how to answer each question type and progress to taking a full listening practice exam each half term from January. In Upper Sixth students take a full listening practice exam every few

weeks from September. All students use a number of online materials in class to develop simultaneous reading and listening skills.

Writing – students study the two different exam writing tasks in the IELTS exam. They are taught the structure of formal essays and how to write in an academic tone. Lower Sixth students regularly revise grammar to develop advanced writing skills. In Upper Sixth students study model answers and mark schemes for writing tasks 1 and 2 to develop an understanding of how to achieve band scores 6 and 7. In both Lower and Upper Sixth regular timed writing practice takes place in class to prepare for the time limits in the exam.

Speaking – each week students study a particular topic from the IELTS speaking list. These include the environment, health, the media, the workplace, travel, the arts and many more. Students learn vocabulary associated with each topic which they can then use in the speaking tasks.

Homework – students are set one written task each week and one additional task which may be vocabulary preparation for a reading task or learning vocabulary for a test.

EXAMS – Students can take the IELTS exam at any time during the academic year. However, it is advisable for the Lower Sixth students to take the exam at the end of the Summer term or during the summer holidays. Upper Sixth students are strongly advised to take the exam before they begin their A level exams, ideally at the end of the Autumn term and at Easter.

English Support for Second Language Students at KS3 and 4

Aims and Objectives

To support international students to improve their English to facilitate improvement in all subjects.

As these students are usually taught individually or in pairs the focus is on their individual needs. In the first instance, liaising with the English teachers takes place to identify the needs of the student to improve in English Language and Literature.

Writing and Vocabulary - students review sentence structure rules and the tenses used in English. A particular focus is on using narrative tenses to improve their writing skills. In addition, students increase their vocabulary knowledge to improve both descriptive writing and reading skills. Vocabulary may be from reading tasks or vocabulary topic word lists. Each week students choose a word of the week from their newly learnt vocabulary which is then posted on the classroom notice board and used for word quizzes.

Reading – students read short, abridged stories in class such as the Sherlock Holmes stories to encourage reading skills, improve reading speed, key word recognition and general comprehension.

Listening – class reading books such as Sherlock Holmes are often with an audio accompaniment. This helps students learn new vocabulary by simultaneously hearing and reading the words and providing pronunciation and spelling support.

Speaking – students are taught how to pronounce and use correct intonation with new vocabulary and remedy any existing pronunciation problems. Reading aloud can support this.