

Stepney Green Sixth Form. English Literature AS and A Level. Curriculum Statement.

Intent

We immediately guide pupils on a challenging but rewarding route to becoming perceptive and assured literary critics. Students are exposed to a range of complex literary texts from across the ages which we hope they grow to love and engage with on a personal and academic level.

We teach students to articulate verbally and in writing intellectual positions on these texts and their literary periods and historical contexts. Students form coherent, assured and perceptively argued positions drawing on teacher talk, student-led discussion and secondary literary criticism.

The schemes of work are cumulative and coherently planned and sequenced towards accumulating sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment, even if these do not feature English Literature specifically for example: excellent critical literacy skills and high order critical thinking. In addition, the course demands essential skills for the job market or further study: independence, organisation, empathy and the ability to showcase confidence and flexibility in argumentation.

Implementation

The implementation of the curriculum is considered, designed and executed. In Year 12, students are introduced to their core texts for Paper 1 study or Paper 1 and Paper 2 at AS Level. These texts are taught alongside the key principles of the English classroom: coherent, thoughtful and critical discussion and detailed, exploratory essay writing skills on seen and unseen texts. The study programme builds on recall of prior knowledge of pupils from GCSE, for example: close reading and essay writing skills but demands quick progression.

Exam assessment objectives are named, discussed and decoded from the first lesson and regularly returned to to ensure students take responsibility for their own achievement and to demystify what is required from them.

Schemes of work over the next two years are divided into blocks relating to the sections that appear in their final exams building to cumulative assessment of whole papers as they would be sat in exam conditions. Year 13 introduces new texts for Paper 2 study whilst also revising Paper 1 content. Skills are developed and honed from lesson to lesson, half term to half term, and teaching staff are constantly assessing informally and formally their students' needs and reflecting on how better to teach the necessary skills and knowledge required.

All students follow the same schemes of work, but support is differentiated and whole class discussion means that all students benefit from each other's' strengths and build on each other's points of view. Where appropriate, scaffolds, live and cold class models allow students to showcase their skills and learn from others.

Life skills such as organisation, healthy and respectful debate and independent learning and going above and beyond in independent research are emphasised from the first lesson and the "why" to explain why this focus is important is crucial to teaching. Students understand why these virtues are important and how they contribute to their success in the subject and further study or work.

Impact

The quantifiable impact of the English Literature AS and A Level at Stepney Green is clear. From an average GCSE grade of 5.51, the 2019-2020 Year 13 class achieved between an A-C grade placing the cohort in an ALPS score of 1.10. The larger 2020-2021 class are on track to achieve the same with students predicted to achieve A* for the first time in the school's history. In 2020, Year 13 students went on to a variety of destinations from Architecture at UCL to Mental Health Nursing at Queen Mary.

There are high retention rate of English students from AS to A Level evidencing students' enjoyment and commitment of the subject. For example, from a Year 12 class of 16 only 3 students opted for AS Level study last academic year. Recruitment in the subject continues to improve year on year. Last year's Year 13 class was comprised of 7 students whereas the current cohort is almost at 13.

Anecdotally, students are regularly offered opportunities to give feedback as to their opinions and feelings about their studies. Students report positive feelings about their experiences in English. A current Year 13 student wrote: "Doing well in this subject relies on personal interpretations, which is a nice change from memorising a textbook! English is also the only course that you'll find which has transferrable skills that applies to EVERY other subject" and a Year 12 responded: "The reason as to why I decided to choose English as an A-level is due to the interactive lessons that we have weekly and the content that we learn is entertaining and enthralling."

