

English curriculum vision

The English Curriculum at the Birley Academy is devised to ensure that pupils learn about a rich literary heritage through the teaching of canonical texts, written by seminal authors.

The curriculum enables our pupils to have a personal connection and analytical response to a range of richly written texts. Key knowledge is explicitly taught alongside the reading, writing and oracy skills needed to demonstrate learning. We want our pupils to become confident with some of determining historical contexts that have given rise to classic poetry, prose and drama. The mastery of various forms of writing – fiction and literary non-fiction – is taught with an understanding and demonstration of technique, structure and perspective.

We aim to ensure that all our pupils who are disadvantaged or have any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to a carefully planned curriculum. Our curriculum provides pupils with SEND with adaptations to ensure they have the time they need to study important subject content in English.

Design of the English curriculum

Our curriculum, with Key Stage 3 pupils following the Ark English Mastery programme, is informed by four key principles. It is designed to be knowledge-rich; academically ambitious; logically sequenced, and designed to support memory.

A rich and broad body of core knowledge is clearly and meticulously specified. Knowledge is selected for its power in developing expertise in the subject discipline. This powerful knowledge helps induct pupils into the great conversations of humankind, that they may understand, challenge and further those conversations. It empowers pupils to achieve in school and to live fulfilling lives, able to understand, appreciate, critique and, if they desire, change the world in which they live. The specific knowledge pupils should remember is precisely defined.

The curriculum provides pupils with knowledge that they are unlikely to otherwise encounter or understand without a teacher's support. The content selected is ambitious in order to challenge the most able and provide a rich and empowering education to all. The extent of knowledge provides a broad and deep grounding in subjects, so that pupils have a framework within which they can situate future learning, regardless of whether they continue a subject beyond Key Stage 4.

Within units and across the whole curriculum, knowledge is positioned to build on what has come before. The curriculum sets out a logical journey that pupils need to embark on to get better at a subject. As pupils' progress through the curriculum, they grapple with greater complexity and develop both increasing conceptual understanding and disciplinary competency. This does not mean the curriculum always starts with the 'easiest' knowledge, but with the most foundational or facilitating knowledge.

The curriculum is structured to help pupils remember, not simply encounter, the core knowledge they learn. In order to disrupt the forgetting curve, knowledge from previous units is interleaved in future units and revisited through frequent low-stakes retrieval practice.

The subject disciplines of our curricula are inherently diverse: scholars, writers performers, thinkers from across history and around the world have contributed to the ever-evolving bodies of knowledge that comprise our subjects. We support pupils of all backgrounds, experiences, and protected characteristics to access and enjoy our aspirational curricula. Our inclusive approach to curriculum aims to widen participation and engagement with our subjects long after pupils have left school.

Delivery of the English curriculum

The curriculum is delivered through expertly crafted learning sequences. Teachers use carefully selected pedagogy that best supports pupils to learn, explore and revisit knowledge. This includes a focus on the following principles:

- Acquisition of knowledge in English is, arguably, more cumulative than hierarchical, as there are fewer threshold concepts that require one component being taught before the next¹.
- Being cumulative, knowledge therefore builds on each other in broader, micro and macro elements.
- English is disciplinary and accessed through the lens of poetry, prose, drama, non-fiction as well as the study and analysis of writing.
- Substantive conceptual knowledge includes concepts, content and context as well as language, form, structure and genre.
- Substantive knowledge includes the micro elements of the study of literature and writing. These include such things as rules of grammar, plot events, character names, events etc.
- Disciplinary knowledge includes the macro elements, specific to the study of English. These include things such as writer's craft, critical response, use of linguistic methods etc.
- Disciplinary knowledge includes viewing texts and constructs and how they represent ideas and feelings relating to the author and time period in which they were produced.
- These different types of knowledge are woven together to provide context so that pupils not only know English. Not only the content, but the study of and application of strands as required.
- Knowledge is sequenced and spaced over time to allow pupils to build complexity of understanding and to embed key concepts that they can easily recall to support their understanding of unfamiliar ideas.
- Literacy is at the heart of English. We develop literacy through the delivery of a specific grammar and writing programme at Key Stage 3. This programme maps the substantive and disciplinary knowledge relevant to writing.
- Vocabulary is mapped and defined against each unit. This is taught explicitly. We teach the core concepts required for each unit repeatedly and give pupils opportunity to practice use of vocabulary in their writing.
- Common misconceptions are identified and built into curriculum planning so that potential barriers to learning can be preempted and overcome
- Composite tasks are carefully designed to maximise opportunities for pupils to demonstrate learning and receive meaningful feedback for progression

Adapting the curriculum for SEND

We aim to ensure that all our pupils who are disadvantaged or have any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the same carefully planned curriculum as their peers. Our curriculum aims to provide pupils with SEND with explicit systematic teaching and rehearsal of knowledge. We also ensure that these pupils have the time they need to study important subject content in English.

We know that successful teaching is successful for all pupils regardless of background or prior attainment. To that end the curriculum is adapted to suit all learners in the following ways:

- Learner confidence is built by making lessons accessible and offering all pupils the opportunity for success. The curriculum is available through a traditional and foundation curriculum at Key Stage 3.

Both curricula share the same core knowledge and are assessed using the same rigorous formats. The foundation curriculum provides greater opportunity for a staged approach and revisiting and embedding foundational knowledge which is key to success in the subject.

- Lessons begin with specific knowledge retrieval activities to return to and embed fundamental ideas
- Complex concepts and abstract ideas are organised through easy to follow explanations; core vocabulary is explicitly taught, explained and modelled.
- Live modelling is used often to explicitly narrate expert thought that pupils can replicate
- Links between ideas are made explicit so that learners can build and strengthen their schema
- Scaffolds are provided to support oracy and literacy activities with a plan in place to reduce reliance on these scaffolds over time
- Further activities that aid retention and quick recall of spaced content are embedded within every lesson

L.E.A.D. Academy Trust

Our vision

Through outstanding leadership we, at the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, will provide the highest quality education to enable every pupil to realise their full potential.

Our principles

To achieve our vision we prioritise the four core principles for which our name stands:

Lead - *to show the way; to be first or foremost*

In every aspect of life the ability to lead is essential. Strong leadership is the key to the success of our schools. We will develop leadership skills in everyone who attends one of them, ensuring the development of pupils as leaders of their own learning.

Empower - *to give power to; to enable*

At L.E.A.D. Academy schools pupils are empowered to have high aspirations for their futures. We nurture and challenge pupils to take responsibility, make decisions and work together so they grow into confident and resilient young people.

Achieve - *to accomplish; to get or attain by effort*

We believe in achievement in its broadest sense and that enjoyment of learning is crucial to success. We continually look for and reward achievement in every individual in our schools. We also know that a strong command of English and maths is vital as a foundation for the whole curriculum and prioritise learning in these core subjects.

Drive - *to cause and guide progress; to impel forward*

We will provide the very best education and training for every individual in our schools and will ensure that this is delivered. We value excellent teaching, underpinned by high quality professional development and will constantly move forwards, using and instigating the best ideas and practice.

We also understand that children need to be motivated if they are to succeed in life and we will provide a stimulating curriculum and environment which will prepare them for their futures with confidence and determination.

Glossary of key terms

Word	Meaning
Learning	A lasting change in long-term memory
Substantive knowledge	Established facts (content)
Disciplinary knowledge	Methods that establish the substantive facts (skills)
Conceptual knowledge	Knowledge of concepts, theories, principles, models etc. "Know that..."
Procedural knowledge	Knowledge of how to perform specific tasks "Know how to..."
Conditional knowledge	Knowing when and why to use conceptual and/or procedural knowledge
Discipline (Disciplinary)	A branch of knowledge e.g. Mathematics, Geography, Drama etc.
Sequenced	Arranged in a particular order to aid learning
Spaced	Knowledge repeated at certain intervals to aid learning
Misconceptions	A view or opinion that is incorrect based on faulty understanding
Modelling	The process of learning by copying the behavior of an expert
Literacy	The ability to read or write effectively within a specific discipline
Oracy	The ability to express oneself effectively within a specific discipline
Pedagogy	The method and practice of teaching. The 'how' of the classroom
Schema	A cognitive framework of knowledge that helps us interpret new information