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INSPECTOR CURRICULUM

Primary English aide-memoire

A high quality primary education provides younger-aged pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for later success. The curriculum enables older KS2 pupils to start to gain expertise in aspects of English language and literature.

Contents

- ⇒ This document has been created to support inspectors undertaking a deep dive in English.
- ⇒ It provides a high-level summary of stage two training and wider guidance.
- ⇒ The six focus areas provide a structure to explain subject level outcomes as identified by inspection activities.
- ⇒ School leaders may not be able and should not be expected to articulate their intent **as it is outlined** in this aide-memoire or to provide documents which neatly provide the evidence for the focus areas.

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1. Curriculum

The school's curriculum should meet the minimum expectations set out in the NC.

Scope

Does the English curriculum enable **novice learners** to embed skills & knowledge in **reading, writing and spoken** language so that they can transition to **experts**?

Does the curriculum prioritise **fluency** in reading, writing and spoken language practices so pupils' working are freed for more complex application?

Do pupils in the **early stages of learning** gain the **foundational knowledge** they need for **future success**?

Reading

Is **fluency** in reading understood and prioritised?

Does the curriculum provide the knowledge pupils need to **access rich** texts (background/content knowledge/ carefully chosen literary knowledge/ knowledge of meta-cognitive approaches)?

Is enough emphasis placed on gaining strong **vocabulary knowledge**?

Do pupils read a wide **enough range of texts** (novels, plays, poetry)?

Writing

Does the curriculum enable pupils to become **fluent** in key **transcriptional components and grammar** so they become increasingly accurate writers?

Do older pupils compose writing in different forms/genres/styles and for a range of purposes/audiences? Is there enough emphasis on narrative?

Are meaningful connections made between reading and writing? Are models for writing rich and varied?

Spoken language

Is **sufficient focus** placed on the underpinning spoken language knowledge required for **later expertise** in reading, writing and spoken language?

Do plans break down the **Y1 to 6 spoken language goals into smaller building blocks**?

Does the spoken language curriculum planning focus enough on vocabulary and grammatical **component** knowledge?

Components & sequencing

Are decisions about what knowledge is best sequenced cumulatively and what is best sequenced hierarchically carefully considered?

Does the curriculum build **readiness** for ambitious content, including complex texts, compositions and concepts?

How effective are links between reading, writing and spoken language? Are such links planned coherently?

Memory

What content is identified for **memorisation and why**?

How does curriculum structure support **memorisation**, e.g. through **revisiting** topics/chunking/retrieval?

How do pupils who struggle with processing memorise the components necessary for complex actions, like writing and reading? Is extra practice prioritised?

Disciplinary rigour

Do pupils achieve **high levels of automaticity** in aspects of reading, writing and spoken language so their working memory is sufficient to: answer disciplinary questions, undertake key practices, make connections independently?

Do teachers of younger pupils use their disciplinary knowledge behind the scenes, e.g. in their questioning?

Early years

Is **communication and language** given sufficient **priority** as the **bedrock** of future success in reading and writing and the means to acquire knowledge in a range of subjects?

Are there high-quality interactions between adults and children with **explicit teaching** of vocabulary/language structures as well as extension of language through discussion?

Is **story-time an important part** of the curriculum? Are children immersed in a range of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction which develops their vocabulary & language comprehension **and love of reading**?

2. Pedagogy

Does teaching ensure pupils learn **subject-specific components**, e.g. through explicit explanations, guided practice and worked examples?

What use is made of models and modelling? Do pupils have enough **underpinning knowledge** to learn from them?

Is **phonics taught daily** and directly from the start of Reception? Do approaches include the reversible principle of the phonics code (decoding to read and encoding to spell?)

3. Assessment

Does curriculum drive assessment or is it the other way round?

Are **gaps** and misconceptions, **including in phonics, identified**? Are end-of-key stage assessment frameworks used appropriately? How are assessments moderated?

4. Culture

How much enthusiasm and interest does the school generate in literary/dramatic arts, including pupils' own creative writing?

How much emphasis does the school place on **teachers'/adults' language**? Are expectations high enough in relation to vocabulary choices/standard English?

Do pupils who have gained the habit of reading have free choice or are they nudged into making better choices?

5. Systems

If there are mixed-age classes, is consideration given to ensuring that younger pupils in the class do not repeat learning and/or can access learning?

Do teachers access subject-specific training and guidance, including about subject-specific pedagogies? **Do all teaching staff know about the teaching of phonics and do staff that teach phonics have enough expertise in it?**

Do links with secondary partner schools focus on English? How do they support effective **transition**?

6. Policy

How is the English curriculum overseen/ influenced and conceived of by teachers/leaders/governors?

What is driving curriculum development?

Do leaders of different aspects of English work with each other/phase leaders/other subject leaders on curriculum review and development?



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Secondary English aide-memoire

A high quality education in English combines language and literature, enabling pupils to read as writers and write as readers. No opportunity lost for celebrating the joys of reading literature and finding out about how language works.

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1. Curriculum

Scope: Does the curriculum match the scope and ambition of the National Curriculum? Progression is delivered through the four domains shown below and demonstrated through the modalities of reading, writing and spoken language.

Literary studies



In KS3, are pupils studying a **wide enough range of literature** (genre/form/heritage/world lit etc)? Or do they only read GCSE texts (current and past)?

Do pupils have the **background knowledge** they need to comprehend literary texts?

Does the curriculum ensure pupils **deepen their knowledge** of literary concepts and how grammar shapes meaning?

Composition



What thought is given to texts used as **models for pupils' own compositions**? Are they rich?

Is writing seen purely in terms of **composites** or are **components** embedded, e.g. handwriting, spelling & grammar?

Do pupils **develop the knowledge** needed to evaluate and edit their own writing/their peers'?

Do pupils acquire syntactical knowledge, so their sentences clearly transmit complex meanings?

Linguistics



Is the **importance of standard English** explained and understood. Including its origins?

Do pupils learn about etymology and the history of the language?

How are connections made between linguistic knowledge and other domains?

Do pupils learn about the **differences between written and spoken language**?

Rhetoric



Are plans clear about the **components of effective written and spoken rhetoric** and how pupils will embed them?

Do pupils deepen and apply knowledge of rhetoric confidently in oral and written compositions?

Do they get to read great speeches and learn how language can be utilised?

Reading



Is expertise within the department used to develop **reading for pleasure** across the school?

Do practices ensure that **pupils' reading habits evolve**? Is enough focus placed on quality as well as quantity?

Are **barriers** to reading properly understood and effectively tackled, including **gaps in phonics**?

Components & sequencing



Is hierarchical **sequencing** employed appropriately? Can the leader explain the rationale for it?

How has the need to move pupils from being **novices to experts** influenced the way content is organised & sequenced?

Are threshold concepts sequenced so that pupils are made ready for more complex ideas? **How effectively are large, complex topics broken down**?

Sixth Form

Do teachers have **wide ranging and deep subject knowledge** which they use to guide students in reading around the topic (inc. other literary texts and seminal works of criticism)?

Are exploratory approaches mediated through discussion and discursive written modes? Are these in the vein of academic literary criticism?

Are aesthetic/experiential aspects explored alongside cultural theory/liberal humanist readings?

Memory



How is content for memorisation decided?

Is memorisation tokenistic/overly focused on facts that have no relation to disciplinary traditions/concepts?

What approaches are used to ensure key grammatical/transcription components are memorised as well as tier 2 and 3 vocabulary?

Is thought given to which disciplinary processes need to be automaticised and how to achieve this?

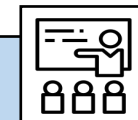
Disciplinary rigour

Does the curriculum enable pupils to acquire critical practices, e.g. debate different readings? Is scholastic thinking and writing modelled and practised?

Can pupils apply their knowledge to make interesting connections between domains?

How are over-arching disciplinary ideas introduced and deepened?

2. Pedagogy



Do teachers have **strong subject knowledge and pedagogical subject knowledge**?

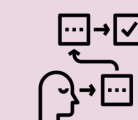
What is the **rationale** for the **activities** chosen in lessons (fitness for purpose)?

Are pedagogies generic or subject-specific? What is the warrant for subject-based pedagogies?

How are **key disciplinary modes**, such as discussion/debate used?

3. Assessment

Do **formative assessment** practices identify if pupils have **learned key components**, and whether the curriculum has defined them well enough?



It is problematic to use end-of-key stage GCSE mark schemes to track progress.

4. Culture

Does the school view access to great written and spoken texts, such as famous speeches, as a matter of social justice?



Does the school celebrate the aesthetic, experiential, emotional and knowledge-giving aspects of reading?

Does the school support teachers' own reading (and where appropriate writing)?

5. Systems

Is the school aware of subject-wide strengths and areas for development?



Do departmental weaknesses have whole-school solutions or are there mechanisms for a more subject-specific responses?

How do you go about developing curriculum plans?

How well are staff supported in developing their own subject knowledge and subject pedagogical knowledge?

6. Policy

How is the English curriculum overseen/ influenced and perceived by senior leaders/MAT leaders/ those in governance?



Are the different aspects of the subject appreciated alongside its inherent value?

How do whole-school structures like grouping/tracking/transition arrangements etc play out in English?