

The English Department at Becket Keys Church of England School

The team

We currently have a team of seven very experienced English teachers, ranging from the very experienced to those in the early stages of their careers. Our Head of Department is Rebecca Hurdle. As our school grows, we will be recruiting further teachers to join this happy and ambitious team.

Teaching area

English lessons are delivered in a suite of rooms in our Carey building, close to the school library. All English teachers have their own rooms; they are recently refurbished with new furniture, carpets, new display boards and are all equipped with brand new Interactive Whiteboards and Dell PCs.

Curriculum, Assessment & Student Groupings

English is taught in 'setted' groups right from Year 7. Class sizes average at 26 across KS3 and KS4. Students have eight 50 minute English lessons per fortnight. All Russell Education Trust (RET) schools use the same examination board (Edexcel) to allow us to share schemes of work (SOW) and resources. We work on the assumption that every student will sit exams in English Language and English Literature. Our new SOW treats Y7-11 as a single course, so we systematically develop the skills, concepts and knowledge to be assessed at GCSE right from the first term in Year 7. This means, for example, regular exposure to unseen texts, frequent practice at writing under time constraints to replicate GCSE exam demands, and systematic development of spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG).

As far as possible, our schemes promote integration, to ensure key skills are regularly developed throughout the five-year course. The department is typically good at using marking to accelerate learning, identifying 'next steps in learning', which we expect students to act on as soon as their books are returned. These include, but go beyond, SPAG errors and misconceptions, challenging students to extend their thinking and develop their abilities as readers and writers.

We are familiarising ourselves with changing national assessment systems, and as a result of our links with examiners and advisors from RET feel ahead of the curve in terms of our response to the new demands of the GCSE and A Level courses. We are very proud of our first year 11 cohort, who sat their GCSE exams in June 2017. The results were very pleasing: 91% of the cohort achieved 9-4 grades in Language and Literature. The exam reports and RET advisor guidance continues to shape our training and delivery of the course and we are working towards improving on these results this year.

We have also launched our English Literature A Level course. So far this has been very successful; we have an A-Level class who are currently studying their first units of the Edexcel English Literature, and again we are working closely with RET advisors to ensure maximum progress for our students.

Professional Development

We take our CPD seriously, as all of us can develop our generic and subject-specific expertise. Department meetings focus on sharing ideas, jointly planning lessons, moderating assessments and generally making ourselves better at teaching English. Students write regularly and we review their progress in both English Language and English Literature every six weeks, talking through strategies for addressing the learning needs of individuals, teaching groups and cohorts. We benefit from work scrutiny, learning walks, and longer observations by RET advisors and our senior team, which help us focus on what works well and where we need to adjust our practice. The RET English network provides opportunities for Trust-wide training, and for meeting our counterparts in the four other RET schools.