

# Curriculum Intent - English

## Curriculum Priorities

The English Curriculum at Nottingham Girls' Academy is designed to develop subject specific knowledge; in our curriculum, we aim to mirror our whole school priority of encouraging modern British women, women who are purposeful, democratic and able to have a stake in our diverse world. NGA is wonderfully diverse community, of which we are proud, therefore, our reading materials aim to celebrate diversity, regardless of race, class, gender or sexuality. As such, we very much appreciate the notion of 'windows, mirrors and doors.' As Sims Bishop states, "When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part." Therefore, we utilise the freedom we have, as educators, at KS3.

### Year 7

Our thematic units, which begin in Year 7, carry our pupils through the 'doors' of the English public school system, (of world of privilege and unearned entitlement, quite alien to the context of our pupils), yet the focus is on two dynamic 11 year old female detectives. On their journey through 'The Drowned Pearl,' our Year 7 readers encounter Gertrude Ederle and Jessie Owen, both of whom provide an invaluable insight in to the power of resilience in the face of sexism and racism.

### Year 8

Our pupils encounter the universal struggle of freedom versus oppression through Anne Frank's diary. They also begin to thread together the struggle and impact of women in war (usually seen as a male preserve); Mary Seacole, the Bletchley Park code breakers, the 'canary girls.'

### Year 9

The department were humbled and inspired by Amanda Gorman, American Youth Poet Laureate who of course took the world by storm with her recital of 'The Hill We Climb.' Gorman was (embarrassingly) previously unknown to us, now something of an icon for the department; we take the core ethos of her epic poem for our own; 'we seek harm to no one and harmony for all'. Of course, as Gorman suggests, women stand on the 'shoulders' of other women. Therefore, our pupils compare 'The Hill We Climb' with Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise' and her classic poem, 'The Caged Bird...'

## Knowledge

By the end of Key Stage 4 we want pupils to have:

the ability to be effective critical thinkers, readers and writers. We approach and hope to address cultural capital via our KS3 reading choices, fiction and non-fiction. In KS3, our pupils

begin a journey of discovery aimed at developing their cultural, emotional, intellectual and social understanding of the world. Our text choices and the Literature presented to our pupils plays a key role in such development. Reading at KS3 (poetry, non – fiction, the modern novel) also enables pupils to acquire a diverse contextual knowledge of the world in which they live and in doing so, the focus on cultural capital in the English curriculum aims to promote challenge, understanding and empathy. The themes of diverse relationships, resilient women and writers whom use their voices to empower and promote democracy are key intentions. We also aim to promote some of the best that has been written or spoken, within the literary cannon. We have also designed our curriculum to reflect what it means to be a young, British woman today; for our pupils to know about the struggles and sacrifices that over time has led to our own freedom and opportunities. We want our pupils to know about their heritage and culture, and that of others in our community, enabling them to celebrate and contribute to the progress of democracy as global citizens.

For those who study this subject at Key Stage 5 we want students to have:

The ability to be effective critical thinkers, readers and writers.

Our KS5 texts are of course selected from the set lists, as dictated by AQA. However, we aim to select and pair texts very carefully and in doing so, continue to instil modern ideologies; the female voice, the perception of women in the world, as mirrored by English Literary texts. Our students, in Year 13 are on the verge of entering a competitive academic world; we aim to equip them with confident, critical spoken and written voices; able to explore and debate themes and ideas in new academic settings and workplaces. Our text choices are unflinching and depict the social, sexual and emotional journey of women, from Thomas Wyatt’s ‘Who so Lyst to Hunt’, through to Duffy’s ‘Feminine Gospels.’ As Sims Bishop states, “When children (young people) cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.” This is a state of being that we aim to dismiss and in doing so, further the journey of our A Level students, towards becoming powerful and purposeful modern British women.

## Skills

The skills we aim to develop are:



Literacy & Numeracy



Communication



Problem Solving



Metacognition



Leadership



Collaboration



Physical,  
Practical &  
Technical



Digital Literacy

For example:

**Communication and Literacy** skills are developed through shared reading, writing, discussion and debate. At KS3 the thematic introduction units enable these tasks to concentrate on gaps in cultural capital and provide opportunities to explore and understand the wider world.

**Metacognition** is addressed through the overall structure of the LTPs. There are many opportunities for retrieval, both in starter activities and in through spaced learning. Thought organisation takes place through mind-maps and Cornell notes which lead onto more detailed textual analysis.

**Collaborative** learning happens during group work and discussion. This happens continually throughout our study of various themes, texts and topics.

**Leadership** group work activities where pupils are leading the different discussions

**Digital literacy** we set homework on Microsoft Teams where pupils complete work either wholly or in part on a device

**Physical, Practical and Technical** technically they learn to lay out specific text types for example newspapers, letters, speeches.

**Problem Solving** for example we look at moral dilemmas and how these can be approached and considered for example choosing right path

**Numeracy** we teach about latin number roots like “quat”, rhyming couplets, numbers of syllables per line for example iambic pentameter.

## Qualities

The qualities we aim to develop are:



For example:

- **Tolerance** – this is the golden thread which runs through all our LTPs. The thematic units at the start of each year in KS3 lay the foundations for the theme of tolerance, respect and kindness which are built upon in the texts studied. In Year 9 the study of The Black Flamingo allows pupils to explore the theme of tolerance through LGBTQ+ writing.
- **Creativity** – The once a week writing sessions allow for continued creativity, both with skills and ideas. These sessions allow pupils to use the themes and ideas explored in the texts as a basis for their own writing.
- **Empathy** – The thematic units at the start of the year in KS3 allow pupils to utilise the theme of empathy with characters in the texts they study. As the curriculum is built upon the concept of windows, mirrors and doors, pupils have the chance to ‘see into’ and understand other experiences. In Year 7 pupils look at the experience

of the evacuee through the study of *The War That Saved my Life* and *Goodnight Mr Tom*. These texts also demonstrate the theme of resilience.

- **Respect** in many of the novels we teach for example “*Black Flamingo*” and “*The Hate You Give*”, respect plays a core part
- **Integrity** we explore this theme in many texts, comparing those that do with those that do not possess integrity
- **Positivity** we look at positive perception of the self when analysing and discussing key themes
- **Aspiration** we have chosen texts topics that allow pupils to break free from any potential barriers imposed by society of culture
- **Resilience** many of the characters we encounter in the course study at KS3 and 4 are fantastic role models for resilience.

## Curriculum Principles

### Sequencing, Learning and Assessment

Our curriculum has been structured to take into account the cognitive science of how we learn. Key knowledge is covered sequentially and deliberately revisited and built upon. Spaced practice and retrieval are a feature of the curriculum structure.

This is further reinforced by:

- **Learning Challenge:** a purely formative assessment to help evaluate, and then reshape learning and address misconceptions at the end of each unit.
- **Learning Consolidation:** a summative assessment, taken at a planned interval from the end of the unit, to help evaluate retention of learning in the long-term memory.

### Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is developed throughout the curriculum with deliberate opportunities for all pupils (but especially disadvantaged pupils) to experience aspects of the taught curriculum through trips, events and activities and broaden their horizons.

For example:

- Cultural Capital is taught primarily through the texts studied – the gaps in cultural capital for our setting were identified and texts chosen as a result.
- The ability to read high quality texts regularly and widely is something that not all of our pupils have had the opportunity to experience. The LTP structure has been created in order to give opportunities for this on a regular basis.
- The studying different types of text such as poetry and Victorian non-fiction which is vital in understanding some of British society’s current attitudes and values

- Newspaper articles are posted on Teams to expose pupils to the value of wider reading and investigative journalism.

## Equality

We want our curriculum to reflect what it means to be a young, British woman today; for our pupils to know about the struggle and sacrifice that has led to the freedom and opportunity they have. We want them to know about their heritage and cul

ture, and that of others in our community, enabling them to celebrate it and contribute to the progress of democracy as global citizens. We therefore regularly review and consult on the equality of our curriculum.

For example:

We have designed our curriculum to reflect what it means to be a young, British woman today; for our pupils to know about the struggles and sacrifices that over time has led to our own freedom and opportunities. We want our pupils to know about their heritage and culture, and that of others in our community, enabling them to celebrate and contribute to the progress of democracy as global citizens. As NGA is a wonderfully diverse community, of which we are proud, our reading materials aim to celebrate diversity, regardless of race, class, gender or sexuality. As such, we very much appreciate the notion of ‘windows, mirrors and doors.’ As Sims Bishop states, “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.”

## Careers and Employability

To support our pupils growing understanding of how our subject might support them with employment, we plan in explicit links between their subject area and possible career pathways. Examples of the careers and sectors we highlight are:

Journalism - taught through transactional writing in KS3 and KS4

Law – we draw parallels between the duties of a legal professional and the skills that are developed through essay writing and debate

Editing – this is highlighted to pupils when they are proofing their work, that an editor at a publication would do a similar role.

Medicine and healthcare professions – we promote the fundamental value of clear, coherent and sensitive communication which English develops in these career areas

