

GCSE English: Parents' Guide

ALL pupils will focus on studying **English Language** throughout year 10. Some pupils will study GCSE Literature during year 11. Pupils' results in the GCSE Language examination will determine this. Any movements between classes and further judgements about pupils' capabilities to sit the GCSE Literature exam will take place after the publication of students' GCSE Language results.

What does the English Language course look like?

The ability to communicate effectively in speech and writing, and to listen with understanding, is essential in today's world. Within an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing, pupils will be given the following opportunities:

- *to talk and listen in a variety of contexts and for a range of purposes, adapting talk to different audiences and situations and reflecting on their own contributions and those of others;*
- *to read a wide variety of literature, non-fiction and media texts, which will develop their appreciation of different genres and styles, extend their ideas and their moral and emotional understanding, and encourage independent wider reading;*
- *to write for a range of purposes and in a variety of forms, including writing for aesthetic and imaginative purposes, to inform others and to develop their thinking.*

Speaking and Listening

*Pupils will deliver **one individual, researched presentation** based on WJEC set themes. It is expected that an individual presentation will last around five minutes. Pupils will also take part in **one group discussion** which will be based on a topic set by the WJEC.*

*Due to the strict new rules imposed by the examination board, pupils will be informed of the themes/topics one week before they deliver their presentation or take part in the discussion. During this week, pupils can work under limited supervision in order to research their chosen topic by using the web, reading newspapers/magazines/reference books/leaflets, listening to radio/television programmes or asking other questions. Teachers can offer guidance and general advice but **this will be based on skills pupils need to display and not the content of the presentation.** In line with the new demands, **presentations and discussions will have to be recorded**. The exam board will then call for a sample of pupils' recorded responses.*

Reading

Pupils will read a range of fiction and non-fiction texts as well as continuous and non-continuous texts. Continuous texts could include autobiography, biography, diaries, speeches, travel writing, short stories, reviews, articles, leaflets, blogs and letters. Non-continuous texts include advertisements, graphs, diagrams, lists, tables and schedules.

Writing

*Pupils will develop their skills in description, narration, exposition, persuasion and argumentation. In addition to this, pupils will also be required to proofread and edit texts as this is a requirement on the new Language examination paper. **Half of the marks available for the writing tasks are allocated for accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.** Pupils should work through skills booklets independently and should learn key spellings.*

Important Note:

*The new GCSE English Language qualification is **UNTIERED** i.e. the higher and foundation tiers no longer exist. **ALL pupils will sit exactly the same paper.** All assessments allow candidates to access the full grade range of A*-G.*

How is the English Language course assessed?

***20%** of the course is assessed through non-examination assessment (oracy work)*

***80%** of the course is assessed in the final examinations. We will enter **ALL** year 10 pupils for GCSE LANGUAGE at the end of year 10 ie. May/June 2017.*

An overview of the key units:

Non-Examination Assessment

- **Oracy (Speaking and Listening – Unit 1) Recorded for the WJEC**

Pupils will be required to complete **two** Speaking and Listening tasks through the exploration of ideas, texts, problems and/or issues. The tasks will cover the following areas:

- individual, researched presentation or talk based on WJEC set themes (10%);
- group discussion responding to written or visual material provided by the WJEC (10%).

(Proposed timing – January 2017) Pupils will be given slots for these. Attendance at school is crucial as teachers will be taken off timetable in order to assess the whole year group during a short period of time.

External Assessment

Pupils will sit **two** written examinations in May/June of Year 10. Your child will receive a personal timetable nearer the time.

- **Unit 2- 2 hours.**

- **Section A: Reading:** pupils will be presented with a range of different texts, whole texts and extracts, both fiction and non-fiction, and tested on their understanding of them through a number of questions. Some of these questions will be multiple choice (worth one mark), whereas some will require extended responses. A total of forty marks will be available.
- **Section B: Writing:** pupils will be given one proofreading activity which will be worth five marks and will test a pupil's ability to spot spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors. They will also be given an extended writing task; they will be given a choice of two and will choose just one. Both tasks will link to the reading material offered in the reading section.

- **Unit 3- 2 hours.**

- **Section A: Reading:** this will be similar to the reading section in Unit 2, but pupils may only be presented with non-fiction texts.
- **Section B: Writing:** pupils will be given two transactional writing tasks, for example a speech and a letter. Both must be completed and each one is worth 20 marks. Each task will be linked to material available in the reading section.

Pupils will work through specimen papers with their class teachers.

When will the English Language course be assessed?

The individual presentation and group discussions for the Unit 1 speaking and listening non-examination assessment will be filmed / recorded. Pupils will be advised of specific topics and time slots. (January 2017)

External exams – summer 2017. There will be opportunities to resit GCSE Language to improve grades in year 11.

How will I know how my child is doing?

You will receive a progress update via the assessment markers. This will give you information on your child's attainment and effort. Due to the fact that the WJEC has not released any information about the grading system for this new English Language course, teachers will use professional judgement in order to estimate grades. Written work is formally banded from 1-5 on the GCSE Language mark schemes and these have not (as yet) been officially matched to GCSE grades. All schools across Wales are in the same position when it comes to reporting or estimating English Language grades. You will receive a yearly written report and have an opportunity to speak to your child's teacher at parents' evening.

What can I do to support my child in his/her study of English?

The best piece of advice we can offer you is to read with your child. Listen to him/her read aloud, then read aloud to him/her. Read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction and discuss what you have read – the content and the style. We understand that this activity is time consuming, but research has proven that spending even a short period of time each day improves fluency and comprehension, and improves the accuracy, content and style of written work. Many parents stop reading with their children once they begin to become competent readers in primary school; however, reading together is an activity that benefits children of all ages and we would like to hear of more secondary school children reading with their families. Beyond this, you may like to consider the following:

- ✓ Encourage your child to pay attention to the accuracy of his/her work in **all subjects** – not just when completing work for English. Legibility of handwriting is also important.

- ✓ *Encourage your child to set aside 5-10 minutes after completing a written task to proofread his/her work in order to check for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and expression.*
- ✓ *Ask them what they're reading. A-block library is filled with wonderful fiction! (Really useful for narrative writing ideas or for some escapism!)*
- ✓ *Encourage your child to begin revising for each English examination at least 4-6 weeks before the examination; they will complete sample papers in class and must revisit these at home.*
- ✓ *Encourage your child to examine and analyse the ways in which language is used in the world around us – how we are persuaded/informed/entertained, for example.*
- ✓ *Ensure that your child completes the homework that has been set to a good standard and on time – if no formal written homework has been set, then pupils should be reading and/or correcting or redrafting marked work. Year 10 pupils will bring home a GCSE spelling list this week.*
- ✓ *Become familiar with the question types that will appear on the examination paper. Please note that if you have older children, these are **very different** to their reading / comprehension questions. It would be great if you could engage in a meaningful discussion about them with your child. Ask them to tell you about 'text types', how to write a summary, a comparative answer, etc.*

I need further information; who can I contact?

Further information can be obtained from your child's English teacher, Mrs Llewellyn (Head of KS4/Second in Faculty) or Mrs Victor (Head of English Faculty)

What does the English Literature course look like?

Pupils will study English Literature

The ability to be a critical, insightful reader and to respond to a variety of texts is of huge value to all students. Whilst studying English Literature, pupils will be given the following opportunities:

- to read, understand and respond to a wide range of literary texts, to appreciate the ways in which authors achieve their effects and to develop the skills necessary for literary study;*
- to be aware of social, historical and cultural contexts and influences in the study of literature;*
- to construct and convey meaning in speech and writing, matching style to audience and purpose.*

Non-Examination Assessment (Shakespeare Essay Poetry Essay) 25%

Pupils will study a Shakespeare play for this assessment and write an essay on a theme specified by the WJEC, analysing the text and providing a personal response. They will also compare and contrast poems by selected poets.

Unit 1 Examination- Different Cultures Prose and Contemporary Poetry. 2 hours 35%

Pupils will study study "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck and answer 2 questions: an extract question, which requires close reading of a short section of the text, and an essay question, which tests their understanding of the whole text.

Pupils will also be asked to write about an unseen poem. They will study a range of contemporary poetry in preparation for the unseen poetry element of the examination. (Pupils read this text at the end of yr 9)

Unit 2 Examination- Drama and Prose. 2 hours 40%

In preparation for the second Literature examination, pupils will read and study 'A View from the Bridge' (Miller) and 'Lord of the Flies' (Golding). They will answer an extract question and an essay question on each of these texts.

Pupils are not permitted to take copies of the texts into the English Literature examinations.

How is the English Literature course assessed?

25% of the course is assessed through non examination assessment (Shakespeare and poetry comparison)

75% of the course is assessed in 2 examinations.