

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 4 Curriculum Overview – English **AQA GCSE English Literature 601/4447/6 &** **AQA GCSE English Language 601/4292/3**

Curriculum Intent

The intent of our KS4 English curriculum is to equip students with the essential skills and knowledge to become confident, critical, and creative communicators, preparing them for success in their GCSE examinations and beyond. Grounded in the AQA specification, our curriculum is designed to develop students' proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening through a balanced focus on both English Language and English Literature. We aim to cultivate a deep appreciation and understanding of a diverse range of texts, including Shakespearean drama, 19th-century prose, poetry anthologies, and modern non-fiction, reflecting a broad spectrum of cultural perspectives and historical contexts. This exposure enables students to engage thoughtfully with complex themes such as identity, power, conflict, and morality, fostering empathy and encouraging critical reflection on the world around them.

Our curriculum prioritises the development of analytical skills, teaching students to closely examine language, form, and structure to interpret meaning and purpose. Alongside this, we focus on cultivating sophisticated writing abilities, encouraging students to express ideas clearly and creatively across various forms and audiences, in line with the demands of the Language Papers. Inclusion and accessibility are central to our approach; we are committed to challenging all learners while providing appropriate support and scaffolding to ensure equity of opportunity. We encourage independence, resilience, and intellectual curiosity, preparing students not only for academic achievement but also for lifelong learning, effective communication, and responsible citizenship.

Through this curriculum, students acquire transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective argumentation, which are essential for progression to further education, employment, and active participation in society. Ultimately, our KS4 English curriculum aims to inspire a lasting love of language and literature, empowering students to find their voice and confidently engage with the world.

Aims and Vision

The KS4 English curriculum, aligned with the AQA specifications, aims to provide students with a comprehensive and challenging education in both English Language and English Literature that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication. Our vision is to develop confident, articulate students who can engage thoughtfully with a wide range of texts, both literary and non-fiction, from diverse contexts and periods. Through rigorous study of key literary works—such as Shakespearean drama, 19th-century novels, and poetry anthologies—alongside the mastery of language analysis and transactional writing, students build strong analytical skills and a rich vocabulary. The curriculum is designed not only to meet the demands of the examinations but to inspire a lifelong appreciation of literature and language, nurturing empathy and cultural awareness. We are committed to ensuring that all learners, regardless of background or ability, are supported to reach their full potential through differentiated teaching, targeted intervention, and opportunities for creative expression. Ultimately, the curriculum prepares students to succeed academically and equips them with transferable skills—critical reading, persuasive writing, and confident communication—that are essential for further education, employment, and active citizenship.

Our curriculum is underpinned by the following core principles:

Our curriculum is designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that all students—regardless of ability or background—engage with a diverse and enriching range of texts and learning experiences that both challenge and support them equally. We uphold high expectations for academic excellence, particularly in literacy, by fostering sophisticated reading, writing, and analytical skills that will prepare students for success in further education and future careers. Through the study of literature, students encounter complex themes such as identity, power, justice, and morality, which promote cultural enrichment, empathy, and critical thinking. Moreover, our curriculum deliberately develops transferable skills—including problem-solving, interpretation, evaluation, and argumentation—that are essential not only for academic progression but also for effective participation in the modern workplace.

Curriculum Structure

The KS4 English curriculum is split into two strands: English Language and English Literature, both of which are assessed by AQA.

English Language: Students will develop:

The ability to read and critically evaluate a range of 19th, 20th, and 21st-century texts, both fiction and non-fiction.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Analytical skills to explore writers' methods and their impact on readers.
 Proficiency in writing for different audiences and purposes, with a focus on accuracy, style, and effectiveness.
 Spoken language skills through presentations, discussions, and role-play activities.
English Literature: Students will explore:
 A Shakespeare play, delving into language, themes, and dramatic structure.
 A 19th-century novel, examining its historical context and narrative techniques.
 A modern text (play or novel) that reflects contemporary issues and diverse voices.
 A selection of poetry, including both seen and unseen poems, to enhance analytical and comparative skills.

KS4 English Language

Below is an overview of the units for assessment for AQA GCSE English Language. The course is 100% examination and is assessed at the end of the two-year course.

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing (50% of GCSE)

- Section A: Reading – one literature fiction text
- Section B: Writing – descriptive or narrative

The exam is 1 hour 45 minutes and is worth 80 marks.

Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives (50% of GCSE)

Section A: Reading – one non-fiction text and one literary non-fiction text

Section B: Writing to present a viewpoint

The exam is 1 hour 45 minutes and is worth 80 marks.

Non-Examination Assessment: Spoken Language

Separate endorsement (0% of weighting of GCSE)

Students will be assessed on presenting, responding to questions and feedback, and their use of Standard English.

AO1: Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas; select and synthesise evidence from different texts

AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support views

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts

AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references

AO5: Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences; organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts

AO6: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation

KS4 English Literature

Below is an overview of the units for assessment for AQA GCSE English Literature. The course is 100% closed book examination and is assessed at the end of the two-year course.

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th century novel (40% of GCSE)

- Section A: Macbeth – William Shakespeare
- Section B: A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens

The exam is 1 hour and 45 minutes and is worth 80 marks.

Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry (60% of GCSE)

- Section A: An Inspector Calls – J.B. Priestley / Animal Farm – George Orwell
- Section B: Comparing anthology poetry - Power and Conflict poetry

AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts; maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response; use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written

AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Term	Year 10	Year 11
Autumn term 1	<p>Title of unit: Language Paper 1 + Spoken Language Main focus / Big Picture: Creating a convincing writing voice (including that for formal spoken language), through choice of language to shape meaning and appropriate linguistic devices for form, builds on the development of authorial intent established in KS3.</p> <p>By the end of this unit of work, students will: Understand how writers use narrative and descriptive techniques to engage the interest of readers; how to read critically and analyse writers' use of linguistic and structural techniques; how to employ those techniques effectively in their own writing according to audience, purpose and form.</p>	<p>Title of unit: Language Paper 1 (3 weeks) + Language Paper 2 (3 weeks) Main focus / Big Picture: Revision of reading comprehension skills will support their reading in all other GCSE units</p> <p>By the end of this unit of work, students will: Know and understand how writers use narrative and descriptive techniques to engage the interest of readers; how to read critically and analyse writers' use of linguistic and structural techniques; and how to garner marks on the higher tariff questions. Through exposure to and deconstruction of levelled examples, joint construction of live models, and independent construction practice students will hone their abilities and improve their confidence. Read a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic literature and extended literary nonfiction, such as reviews and journalism.</p> <p>Exam Preparation & skill development: Essay writing skills Revising key content Dramatic methods Use of mark schemes, exemplar material, indicative content and other revision resources</p>
Evidence of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading comprehension • Mock exam: Language Paper 1 AO1, AO2 and AO4 for reading AO5 and AO6 for writing AO7, AO8 and AO9 for Spoken Language	Mock exam: Language Paper 1 Language Paper 2 Literature Paper 1 AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4
Links to prior learning	Throughout Years 7 to 9, students build a strong foundation in understanding fiction texts, engaging with novels and short stories that develop their retrieval and inference skills through targeted comprehension tasks. They are introduced to key language and structural analysis techniques, such as identifying similes, metaphors, and paragraphing methods, while also developing descriptive and narrative writing skills focused on story starters, character, and setting creation.	Both Language Paper 1 (Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing) and the Spoken Language Endorsement in Year 11 build on foundational knowledge and skills developed across Key Stage 3 and earlier parts of the GCSE course. Students revisit and refine skills they have previously encountered, applying them with greater independence and precision in preparation for their final assessments.
Links to future learning	The skills developed through Year 10 English Language and Literature studies provide a vital foundation for future academic and professional success. For post-16 education, these skills underpin advanced textual analysis required at A-Level, enabling students to identify writers' techniques and analyse their effects with precision—abilities essential for close reading and discourse analysis.	Studying Language Paper 1 and completing the Spoken Language Endorsement in Year 11 provides students with core analytical, creative, and communication skills that are essential not only for GCSE success but also for future academic, vocational, and personal development. Speaking and listening skills are essential for delivering presentations in A-Level subjects (e.g. EPQ, English, Business) and in university seminars and assessments

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Autumn term 2	<p>Title of unit: A Christmas Carol</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Students will use contextual knowledge to underpin interpretations and the study of dual interpretations. Knowledge of psychology and the supernatural are key and will be revisited through the study of Macbeth and provide students with a schema with which to approach an academic response to literature.</p> <p>By the end of this unit of work, students will: Know and understand aspects of: plot, characterisation, motivation, settings, events, sequence of events, the relationship between actions or events and the significance of Victorian social, historical and cultural contexts. They will be able to identify and distinguish between themes and recognise the possibility of and evaluate different responses to a text. They will be able to use linguistic and literary terminology to analyse and evaluate. Dickens' use of language, structure and form. They will also be able to make an informed personal response to the text.</p>	<p>Title of unit: Unseen poetry and Comparative Essay</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Understanding of core metaphors, symbols, allegories and resonances in the English language will support students in approaching the unseen texts on the GCES Language papers, and provide the students with a schema for identifying the deeper levels of meaning inherent in texts, linked to 'bigger ideas'.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will: Know and understand how to analyse an unseen poem and use annotation to support understanding and the structuring of a written response. They will also know how to look for 'bigger ideas' and then use these to inform an interpretation. They will be able to compare key features such as content, theme, structure and use of language.</p>
Evidence of learning	<p>PDEA text analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x mock question <p>AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x mock question on Literature Paper 2: Unseen Poetry <p>AO1, AO2, AO4</p>
Links to prior learning	<p>Narrative and Character Study (Years 7–9)</p> <p>Theme and Message</p> <p>Contextual Awareness</p> <p>Analytical Writing</p> <p>Language Techniques</p>	<p>Studying Unseen Poetry and writing Comparative Essays in Year 11 builds upon analytical, interpretive, and comparative skills developed throughout Key Stage 3 and earlier parts of the GCSE English Literature course. This unit helps students consolidate their ability to read critically, respond independently, and compare texts effectively under exam conditions.</p>
Links to future learning	<p>Studying A Christmas Carol in Year 10 provides a strong foundation for future learning across English and other academic or vocational pathways. It develops critical reading, contextual understanding, and essay writing—skills that are essential for success in GCSE assessments and beyond.</p> <p>GCSE English Literature Exam Preparation</p> <p>Paper 1: 19th-Century Novel (AQA)</p> <p>Transferable Skills to Other GCSE Texts</p> <p>Contextual Analysis: Victorian context and social commentary link to An Inspector Calls and its critique of class and responsibility.</p> <p>Cross-Curricular Links: Reinforces historical learning from Humanities about the Victorian era, industrialisation, and social reform.</p>	<p>Studying Unseen Poetry and writing Comparative Essays in Year 11 provides students with critical reading, evaluative thinking, and comparative writing skills that are essential for academic success beyond GCSE. These skills also support a wide range of post-16 subjects and professional communication in future study and work environments. Skills developed in interpreting unseen poems are directly transferable to A-Level literature, where students are frequently asked to analyse texts they have not encountered before.</p>

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Spring term 1	<p>Title of unit: Power & Conflict Poetry</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Approaching the comparison of themes, ideas and attitudes in the poetry anthology enables students to hone the comparative skills employed in the Language Paper 2 unit.</p> <p>Literature Paper 2: Poetry AO1, AO2, AO3</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will: Know and understand how to take a conceptualised approach, employing analysis of language, form and structure supported by judicious references and use of terminology. They will be able to make a critical, well-structured comparison, in which they make a convincing exploration of one or more ideas/ perspectives/ contextual factors/ interpretations. They will also be able to read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and idea.</p> <p>Key Themes: What is power? What is conflict? Where do we encounter these themes in our society and lives? Power and conflict in history? Poetic terminology – developing knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Poems to study: Ozymandias, London, The Prelude, My Last Duchess, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Exposure, Storm on the Island, Bayonet Charge, Remains, Poppies, War Photographer, Tissue, The Emigree, Checking out me History, Kamikaze</p>	<p>Title of unit: Language Paper 1 (2 weeks) and Language Paper 2 (3 weeks)</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Revision of narrative and opinion writing – form, style, tone, register, methods – allows students to consolidate and refine their writing skills and to employ the ambitious vocabulary garnered through prior study</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will: Know and understand how to employ techniques effectively in their own writing and how to match tone, style and register to audience, purpose and form, to enable convincing and compelling communication. They will know how to plan a written opinion response and how to proofread effectively. They will be able to organise a range of convincing and complex ideas and use discourse markers for effect. Write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information.</p>
Evidence of learning	Assessment 4: Compare how poets present the ways people are affected by war in 'War Photographer' and one other poem. (Past paper 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mock exam: Language Paper 1 Language Paper 2 Literature Paper 2 AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4 AO5, AO6 AO1, AO2, AO4
Links to prior learning	Studying the AQA Power and Conflict poetry cluster in Year 10 builds on a wide range of knowledge and skills developed during Key Stage 3. Students apply their earlier understanding of poetic form, language, and theme to explore more complex texts and ideas, preparing them for GCSE-level analysis and comparison. Understanding of Poetic Techniques Theme-Based Learning	Studying Language Paper 1 (Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing) and Language Paper 2 (Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives) in Year 11 builds directly on key reading, writing, and analysis skills developed throughout Key Stage 3 and earlier stages of the GCSE course. These papers consolidate and extend students' understanding of how texts work and how to communicate effectively for different audiences and purposes. Students have studied a

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	<p>Comparative Skills Contextual Understanding Essay Writing and Analytical Structure KS3 Skills: Use of paragraph structures like PEE/PEEL to construct responses to literature.</p>	<p>range of fiction texts (short stories, novels, and extracts) and practised identifying narrative structure, characterisation, and descriptive language at KS3.</p>
Links to future learning	<p>Studying the Power and Conflict poetry cluster in Year 10 provides students with critical skills and knowledge that directly support both their GCSE success and their development as analytical thinkers. The unit acts as a foundation for more advanced comparative analysis, interpretative writing, and contextual understanding across future academic pathways.</p> <p>GCSE English Literature Exam Preparation Paper 2: Section B – AQA Poetry Anthology: Students build the skills needed to confidently respond to comparative questions under timed conditions. Knowledge of these poems and themes is essential for success in the final Literature exam. Cross-textual skills developed here (theme comparison, language analysis, contextual relevance) also support other areas of the Literature GCSE, including An Inspector Calls and A Christmas Carol.</p> <p>English Language GCSE Paper 1 and Paper 2: Analysis of how writers use language and structure is transferable to unseen fiction and non-fiction texts. Familiarity with tone, voice, and perspective aids in creative writing and rhetorical writing tasks. Poetic Form and Structure Cross-Curricular and Life Skills Cultural and Historical Awareness Public Speaking and Debate Personal Development</p>	<p>Studying Language Paper 1 and Language Paper 2 in Year 11 equips students with essential reading, writing, and communication skills that prepare them for a wide range of future academic and career pathways. These papers develop core competencies in analysis, interpretation, creativity, and argumentation that are transferable beyond the English classroom. The skills of close reading, language analysis, and exploring writer's choices in fiction and non-fiction texts directly support A-Level study, where texts are studied in greater depth.</p>
Spring term 2	<p>Title of unit: Language Paper 2 + Spoken Language Main focus / Big Picture: This unit will allow students to revisit, transfer and develop the comprehension and writing skills from Autumn 1. It also builds on the transactional writing skills developed through the Year 9 Spring 2 unit. Honing of reading skills, in particular, through making comparison between texts and writers'</p>	<p>Title of Unit: Macbeth (3 weeks) and A Christmas Carol (3 weeks) Main focus / Big Picture: Revision of constructing a personal, critical response to literature will support students with all GCSE units.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will:</p>

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	<p>perspectives, is a strong foundation for thematic and contextual poetry comparison in the Summer term.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will:</p> <p>Know and understand aspects of: plot, characterisation, motivation, settings, events, sequence of events, the relationship between actions or events and the significance of the relevant social, historical and cultural contexts. They will be able to identify and distinguishing between themes and recognise the possibility of and evaluate different responses to a text. They will be able to use linguistic and literary terminology to analyse and evaluate the writer's use of language, structure and form. They will also be able to read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas, evaluate different responses to the text, and use their understanding of contexts and language analysis to construct an informed, critical, personal response.</p>	<p>Know the significant ideas, events, themes and quotations from both texts. They will also reconsider the significance of different audiences and differing perspectives, and make value judgements about different readings, thus becoming both more independent in accessing alternative interpretations, and in writing academically about them. Read a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic literature and extended literary nonfiction, such as essays, reviews and journalism</p>
Evidence of learning	<p>1 x mock question</p> <p>AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4</p>	<p>• Revision quiz</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice mock exam questions with guided walk-thru <p>AO1, AO2, AO4</p>
Links to prior learning	<p>Understanding of fiction texts (from Year 7–9 units on novels and short stories)</p> <p>Retrieval and inference skills built in comprehension tasks</p> <p>Introduction to language and structural analysis (e.g., identifying similes, metaphors, paragraphing techniques).</p> <p>Descriptive and narrative writing (story starters, character and setting creation)</p> <p>Sentence variety, vocabulary building, and paragraph structuring.</p> <p>Group discussion and oral presentations (debates, book talks, assemblies).</p> <p>Structured speaking tasks with clear introductions, supporting points, and conclusions.</p> <p>Confidence in formal speaking from drama activities and presentations across subjects.</p> <p>Understanding tone, register, and audience awareness (covered in writing tasks).</p> <p>Ability to annotate and rehearse scripts or prompts from earlier speaking tasks in KS4.</p>	<p>In Year 11, students revisit and deepen their understanding of <i>Macbeth</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i>, two key GCSE English Literature texts. They will have already studied how Shakespeare and Dickens present ideas such as ambition, guilt, redemption, social inequality, and morality. In earlier years (KS3 and Year 10), students developed core skills such as using PEE/PEEL paragraphs, selecting relevant quotations, and exploring language, structure, and form.</p> <p><i>A Christmas Carol</i>: Prior knowledge of Victorian England, including poverty, industrialisation, and Christian morality, underpins deeper analysis of Dickens' purpose and social commentary.</p> <p><i>Macbeth</i>: Understanding of the Jacobean era, Divine Right of Kings, witchcraft, and gender roles helps students grasp Shakespeare's audience expectations and the political context of the play.</p>
Links to future learning	<p>Reading and Analytical Skills</p> <p>Post-16 English Language / English Literature:</p> <p>Builds the foundation for advanced textual analysis in A-Level study.</p>	<p>Studying <i>Macbeth</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i> in Year 11 prepares students for a range of future academic pathways and real-world contexts by developing their critical thinking, literary analysis, and communication skills. These texts provide a foundation not only for success at</p>

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	<p>Skills in identifying writers' techniques and analysing their effects directly support the close reading and discourse analysis needed at A-Level.</p> <p>Across Subjects: Critical reading and inference skills Creative Writing</p> <p>Future Careers: Narrative and descriptive writing supports careers in journalism, advertising, film, and publishing Creativity and clarity in writing are transferable skills in business, Communication and Presentation Skills</p>	<p>GCSE but also for further education and lifelong appreciation of literature, language, and culture.</p> <p>Students who continue to A-Level will build on the analytical techniques used in exploring Shakespearean tragedy and Victorian prose. Skills such as close reading, understanding dramatic structure, and contextual interpretation directly apply to the study of more complex texts (e.g. <i>King Lear</i>, <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>).</p>
Summer term 1	<p>Title of unit: Modern Prose / Drama</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Analysis and evaluation of character, theme, context, methods and interpretations leading to a fluent critical and academic written response, in the modern drama/prose unit, allows students to utilize the schema shared through Year 10 literary study and to refine the accompanying skill set and become more critical and evaluative in both their reading and written responses to the novel. Understanding how to construct an exploratory, critical and conceptualised response to literature through use of levelled examples and joint deconstruction and construction, prior to independent analysis, will prepare students for the analysis of poetry and Macbeth in the Summer term.</p> <p>By the end of this unit of work, students will: Know and understand aspects of: plot, characterisation, motivation, settings, events, sequence of events, the relationship between actions or events and the significance of the relevant social, historical and cultural contexts. They will be able to identify and distinguishing between themes and recognise the possibility of and evaluate different responses to a text. They will be able to use linguistic and literary terminology to analyse and evaluate the writer's use of language, structure and form. They will also be able to read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas, evaluate different responses to the text, and use their understanding of contexts and language analysis to construct an informed, critical, personal response.</p> <p>Exam Preparation & skill development: Practise structuring clear, well-supported responses to exam-style questions.</p>	<p>Title of unit: Language Paper 1, Paper 2 and final revision.</p> <p>Final Literature revision of: Macbeth A Christmas Carol Power & Conflict Poetry: Unseen Poetry</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: The Year 11 English revision programme is designed to consolidate key knowledge and exam skills in preparation for the AQA English Language and Literature GCSEs. The core focus is on improving students' confidence, precision, and performance in high-impact areas across both papers. Sessions aim to deepen understanding of key texts, sharpen analytical thinking, and develop structured, exam-ready responses through targeted practice, personalised feedback, and use of past papers and model answers. Ultimately, the goal is to equip every student with the tools and strategies needed to maximise their potential and succeed in their final exams.</p> <p>Session Types: Before-school sessions for targeted intervention. Lunchtime drop-ins for flexible support Walking-talking mocks scheduled just before final exam dates.</p> <p>Frequency: Weekly sessions per paper (Language Paper 1, Paper 2; Literature Paper 1, Paper 2), increasing to biweekly as exams approach.</p> <p>Content Focus Revision is planned around AQA exam requirements, mock exam performance, and key assessment objectives.</p>

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	Language Paper 1 Literature Paper 1	
Evidence of learning	Assessment 6: Year 10 Mock Examinations AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4	Assessment 6: Language Paper 1 Reading Assessment 7: Language Paper 2 Writing
Links to prior learning	<p>Studying modern or prose drama in Year 10 builds directly on a range of reading, analytical, and contextual skills developed throughout Key Stage 3. It allows students to deepen their understanding of character, theme, structure, and stagecraft while engaging with social and political ideas relevant to both past and present.</p> <p>Students have previously read and studied plays (e.g. <i>The Tempest</i>) and explored key dramatic features like stage directions, dialogue, character entrances/exits, and tension.</p> <p>In Years 7–9, students have practised analysing how characters are developed and how themes are explored in prose and drama.</p> <p>Common themes—such as inequality, responsibility, power, and justice.</p> <p>Use of PEE or PEEL paragraph structures and embedded quotations has been practised regularly at KS3.</p> <p>Prior knowledge of historical and social issues (e.g. World Wars, class systems, gender roles, industrialisation) introduced through KS3 English and History lessons.</p> <p>Drama activities, role-play, and classroom readings in earlier years helped students build confidence with performance, tone, and interpretation.</p>	Studying Language Paper 1 (Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing) and Language Paper 2 (Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives) in Year 11 builds directly on key reading, writing, and analysis skills developed throughout Key Stage 3 and earlier stages of the GCSE course. These papers consolidate and extend students' understanding of how texts work and how to communicate effectively for different audiences and purposes. Students have studied a range of fiction texts (short stories, novels, and extracts) and practised identifying narrative structure, characterisation, and descriptive language at KS3.
Links to future learning	<p>GCSE English Literature Exam Preparation</p> <p>Paper 2: Modern Texts (AQA): Detailed knowledge of the play or novel studied in Year 10 is crucial for success in the final GCSE Literature exam. Builds confidence in responding to essay questions that focus on character, theme, and the writer's methods.</p> <p>Comparative Skills: Skills developed when exploring themes in modern drama are transferable to poetry comparison and unseen texts later in the GCSE course.</p> <p>English Language GCSE Paper 2 – Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives:</p> <p>Understanding how writers present ideas about social issues (e.g. inequality, justice, gender roles) helps students analyse non-fiction texts critically.</p> <p>Descriptive and Persuasive Writing: Exposure to persuasive speeches and emotive dialogue in modern plays supports students' own writing for purpose.</p> <p>A-Level English Literature</p>	Studying Language Paper 1 and Language Paper 2 in Year 11 equips students with essential reading, writing, and communication skills that prepare them for a wide range of future academic and career pathways. These papers develop core competencies in analysis, interpretation, creativity, and argumentation that are transferable beyond the English classroom. The skills of close reading, language analysis, and exploring writer's choices in fiction and non-fiction texts directly support A-Level study, where texts are studied in greater depth.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	<p>Textual Analysis: Students who continue to A-Level will need to explore how writers present social and political ideas through character and structure—skills directly practised in modern drama study.</p> <p>Knowledge of 20th-Century Literature: Familiarity with post-war themes (e.g. capitalism vs. socialism, gender roles, generational divides) provides background knowledge for texts such as <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>, <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i>, or <i>The Kite Runner</i>.</p> <p>Cross-Curricular Skills and Knowledge</p> <p>Citizenship and History</p> <p>Ethical Reasoning</p> <p>Critical Thinking</p> <p>Communication and Debate</p>	
Summer term 2	<p>Title of unit: Macbeth (Literature Paper 1: Play. AO1, AO2, AO3, AO5, AO6)</p> <p>Main focus / Big Picture: Students studying <i>Macbeth</i> explore the play's themes, characters, and Shakespearean language, focusing on the tragic consequences of ambition and the supernatural, and how these themes are explored through character development and dramatic structure. The development of an academic style in essay writing will support all GCSE Literature units and GCSE Language reading units.</p> <p>By the end of this unit of work, students will:</p> <p>Know and understand aspects of: plot, characterisation, motivation, settings, events, sequence of events, the relationship between actions or events and the significance of Jacobean social, historical and cultural contexts. They will be able to identify and distinguish between themes and recognise the possibility of and evaluate different responses to a text. They will be able to use linguistic and literary terminology to analyse and evaluate Shakespeare’s use of language, structure and form. They will also be able to make an informed personal response to the text.</p> <p>Key Themes: Context – historical, social, cultural; Power; Machiavelli; Chivalry; Witchcraft & Demonology; Women, Eve & Original Sin – Lady Macbeth; Treason & Divine Rights of Kings; Death of a King/Regicide – Regret; Regicide and the Circles of Hell; Friendship and paranoia; Disillusionment and conspiracy; Tyrants; The role of the witches; Slaughter of innocents; Madness; War; This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen; The form of Tragedy.</p>	

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

	Exam Preparation & skill development: Unseen poetry analysis Creative writing: 200 word in 25-minute tasks to build writing stamina for the English Language GCSE.	
Evidence of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mock exam: Language Paper 1 Language Paper 2 • Spoken Language presentation AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4 AO7, AO8 and AO9 for Spoken Language	
Links to prior learning	Most students will have studied at least one Shakespeare play in Years 7–9 (e.g. Romeo and Juliet, The Tempest) They will already be familiar with key features of Shakespearean drama, such as soliloquies, dramatic irony, and iambic pentameter. Students have identified and analysed techniques such as metaphor, simile, imagery, foreshadowing, and irony in poetry and prose.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Reading in the curriculum (Literacy & Vocabulary)</p> <p>The ability to read, comprehend, and critically engage with texts is fundamental to success in KS4 English. Embedding literacy and vocabulary instruction across the curriculum ensures students develop the skills needed for both English Language and Literature, as well as fostering lifelong reading habits. This curriculum overview outlines a structured approach to integrating reading skills, literacy, and vocabulary development within the KS4 English curriculum.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Key Aims and Objectives:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Enhancing Reading Comprehension – Develop students’ ability to understand, interpret, and analyse a variety of texts. Expanding Vocabulary – Equip students with a rich and varied vocabulary to enhance comprehension and expressive capabilities. Developing Critical Thinking – Encourage students to engage with texts in a thoughtful and analytical manner. Encouraging Independent Reading – Foster a culture of reading for pleasure to enhance literacy skills and deepen engagement with texts. Strengthening Writing Through Reading – Use reading as a model for effective writing, helping students develop their own voice and style.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Curriculum Structure and Implementation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Core Texts and Literacy Integration</p> <p>Reading comprehension and vocabulary development are embedded within the study of core texts for GCSE English Language and Literature. Strategies include:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Close Reading Activities: Analytical exercises focusing on language, structure, and meaning. Contextual Vocabulary Study: Exploring key vocabulary in relation to set texts (e.g., Shakespearean language, 19th-century literature). Reading Strategies: Teaching skimming, scanning, inference, and summarisation skills.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vocabulary Development</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tiered Vocabulary Instruction:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Tier 1: Everyday words (basic) Tier 2: High-utility academic words (e.g., ‘analyse’, ‘evaluate’) Tier 3: Subject-specific terminology (e.g., ‘iambic pentameter’, ‘bildungsroman’)</p>		

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary: Introducing and revisiting key words through quizzes, flashcards, and games.

Contextual Application: Encouraging students to use new vocabulary in discussion and writing tasks.

Root Words and Etymology: Examining word origins to deepen understanding.

Reading Strategies Across Genres

Fiction (Novels, Short Stories, Plays), Analysing character, theme, and narrative structure, Comparing texts from different time periods, Non-Fiction (Articles, Essays, Speeches), Evaluating argument, bias, and rhetorical techniques, Recognising structural features and persuasive devices, Poetry, Understanding figurative language, form, and meter, Comparing poems thematically and stylistically.

Encouraging Independent Reading

Reading for Pleasure Program:

Implementing Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) sessions.

Encouraging participation in reading challenges and book clubs.

Choice Reading Assignments: Allowing students to explore books beyond the curriculum; Providing guided reading lists tailored to interests and ability levels

Reflective Reading Journals: Encouraging students to track personal responses and make connections across texts.

Literacy in Writing

Using Mentor Texts: Analysing extracts from literary and non-fiction texts as writing models.

Sentence-Level Literacy: Teaching sentence variety, punctuation, and grammatical accuracy through reading-based exercises.

Writing with Purpose: Encouraging students to adopt vocabulary and stylistic techniques from their reading in their own compositions.

Formative Assessment:

Regular comprehension quizzes and vocabulary checks.

Peer and self-assessments of reading logs and writing tasks.

Summative Assessment:

Analytical essays and comparative responses.

GCSE-style reading comprehension tasks.

Spoken language presentations evaluating texts.

Data Tracking:

Using literacy assessments to monitor progress and tailor interventions.

By embedding reading, literacy, and vocabulary development throughout the KS4 English curriculum, students become more confident, articulate, and engaged learners. This holistic approach ensures students are well-prepared for their GCSEs and beyond, fostering a lifelong appreciation for reading and effective communication.

Careers in the curriculum

Journalism (e.g., reporter, editor, columnist)

Publishing (e.g., editorial assistant, literary agent, proofreader)

Teaching and Education (e.g., English teacher, literacy coach, tutor)

Writing and Content Creation (e.g., author, copywriter, scriptwriter, blogger)

Marketing and Advertising (e.g., social media manager, content strategist, PR specialist)

Law (e.g., solicitor, barrister, legal researcher)

Librarianship and Archiving (e.g., librarian, archivist, curator)

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Public Relations and Communications (e.g., spokesperson, corporate communications officer)
Human Resources (e.g., recruiter, training and development officer)
Media and Broadcasting (e.g., TV/radio presenter, researcher, producer)
Creative Arts and Entertainment (e.g., playwright, screenwriter, theatre director)
Government and Public Sector (e.g., civil servant, policy analyst)
Business and Management (e.g., business analyst, entrepreneur, consultant)
Translation and Interpretation (e.g., translator, interpreter, subtitles)
Linguistics and Speech Therapy (e.g., speech therapist, language analyst)

Protected Characteristics in the curriculum

In the AQA KS4 English curriculum, protected characteristics—outlined in the Equality Act 2010—are embedded through the study of literature, language analysis, and speaking & listening tasks. While the AQA English Language and Literature specifications do not explicitly mention protected characteristics, many texts and writing tasks provide opportunities to explore themes.

How Protected Characteristics Appear in the AQA KS4 English Curriculum GCSE English Literature (AQA Specification).

Shakespeare

Macbeth – Gender roles, power, and societal expectations.

Romeo and Juliet – Family conflict, gender roles, and prejudice.

Modern Texts

An Inspector Calls (J.B. Priestley) – Class, gender, social responsibility.

Blood Brothers (Willy Russell) – Class divide, gender, and social mobility.

Animal Farm (George Orwell) – Power, oppression, and discrimination.

Lord of the Flies (William Golding) – Human nature, leadership, and social structures.

19th-Century Novels

A Christmas Carol (Charles Dickens) – Poverty, social injustice, and redemption.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Robert Louis Stevenson) – Identity, morality, and repression.

Poetry Anthology (Power and Conflict / Love and Relationships Themes)

London (William Blake) – Social inequality and oppression.

Checking Out Me History (John Agard) – Race, identity, and historical representation.

GCSE English Language (AQA Specification)

Protected characteristics are explored through reading and writing tasks, especially in Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives.

Paper 1 (Creative Reading and Writing)

Fiction extracts may explore discrimination, identity, and social issues.

Writing tasks allow students to create narratives that touch on these themes.

Paper 2 (Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives)

Non-fiction extracts often focus on social justice, discrimination, and equality (e.g., historical speeches, newspaper articles, autobiographies).

Writing task: Students may be asked to argue or persuade on issues relating to equality and diversity.

Spoken Language Endorsement

Students present speeches on topics of their choice, allowing discussions on protected characteristics, discrimination, and inclusion.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Safeguarding including safety in the curriculum

Safeguarding in the KS4 English curriculum (AQA) ensures that students engage with texts and discussions in a way that is safe, respectful, and supportive. English lessons often cover sensitive topics such as violence, abuse, discrimination, and mental health, so teachers must provide a safeguarding framework to protect students' well-being.

Key Safeguarding Considerations in AQA KS4 English

Sensitive Themes in Set Texts

Many GCSE English Literature texts explore topics such as: Abuse & Violence – Macbeth, An Inspector Calls, Blood Brothers; Poverty & Social Injustice – A Christmas Carol, London (Poetry); Mental Health & Identity Struggles – Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Lord of the Flies; Prejudice & Discrimination – To Kill a Mockingbird, Checking Out Me History

GCSE English Language texts often include:

Real-life news articles about discrimination, abuse, or trauma.

Autobiographies discussing oppression (e.g., Malala Yousafzai, Maya Angelou). Persuasive writing tasks on social issues (e.g., domestic violence, mental health awareness).

Digital and Online Safety in English

Researching texts online – Ensuring reliable sources, avoiding harmful content.

Online discussions (if used) – Preventing cyberbullying and misinformation.

Teaching media literacy – Evaluating bias and detecting harmful narratives.

Values across the curriculum

Holywell School's **core values** (e.g., **respect, kindness, responsibility, perseverance, honesty, and inclusion**) align well with the **KS4 AQA English Curriculum**, as English encourages students to explore ethical, social, and moral issues through literature, language, and discussion. The KS4 English curriculum is underpinned by core values that resonate closely with key Christian principles, fostering not only academic growth but also moral and spiritual development. Central to the curriculum is the value of respect for all individuals, reflected in the diverse range of texts studied that explore varied perspectives, cultures, and experiences—mirroring the Christian teaching of love and dignity for every person. Through the exploration of themes such as justice, redemption, forgiveness, and compassion found in literature like Macbeth and A Christmas Carol, students engage with moral questions that encourage empathy and self-reflection, aligning with Christian ethics of mercy and reconciliation. The curriculum also promotes truth and integrity by encouraging students to seek meaning, question ideas critically, and express their own viewpoints honestly, embodying the Christian commitment to truthfulness and wisdom. Additionally, the focus on community and service is fostered through collaborative learning, respectful discussion, and oral communication skills, preparing students to participate constructively and compassionately in society. Finally, perseverance and resilience—key Christian virtues—are nurtured as students tackle challenging texts and refine their skills, emphasizing the importance of growth through effort and faith in their own potential. Overall, the KS4 English curriculum aims to develop well-rounded individuals who are not only literate and articulate but also guided by values of kindness, justice, and respect, preparing them to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

Holywell Values Reflected in GCSE English Literature (AQA)

Respect: An Inspector Calls – The importance of social responsibility and treating others with dignity.

Kindness: A Christmas Carol – Scrooge's transformation from selfishness to generosity.

Responsibility: Macbeth – The consequences of unchecked ambition and moral responsibility.

Honesty: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – The dangers of deceit and living a double life.

Inclusion: Checking Out Me History (Poetry) – The importance of representation and cultural identity.

Holywell Values in GCSE English Language (AQA)

Respect: Analysing respectful vs. biased language in persuasive writing.

Kindness: Writing tasks that encourage empathy and understanding.

Responsibility: Non-fiction texts exploring social responsibility and activism.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Perseverance: Structuring arguments effectively in writing and speaking tasks.

Honesty: Understanding media bias and distinguishing fact from opinion.

Inclusion: Studying diverse voices and perspectives in non-fiction extracts.

Holywell's values are naturally embedded in **KS4 English (AQA)** through the study of literature, persuasive writing, and ethical discussions. Teachers can reinforce these values by **choosing discussion topics, setting expectations for respectful debate, and highlighting positive character traits in texts.**

Spirituality in the curriculum

A theologically rooted Christian vision emphasizes values such as compassion, justice, integrity, forgiveness, and stewardship, which align closely with the themes explored in GCSE English (AQA). The curriculum encourages students to reflect on moral dilemmas, human nature, redemption, and the power of words, which are all key aspects of Christian teaching.

Christian Values Reflected in GCSE English Literature (AQA)

Compassion & Kindness: A Christmas Carol – Scrooge's transformation into a generous, caring figure.

Justice & Social Responsibility: An Inspector Calls – The call for collective responsibility and care for the vulnerable.

Moral Integrity & Truth: Macbeth – The dangers of unchecked ambition and dishonesty.

Forgiveness & Redemption: Blood Brothers – The impact of choices, fate, and reconciliation.

Stewardship & Care for Others: London (William Blake) – A critique of social injustice and neglect of the poor.

Spiritual Development in GCSE English Language (AQA)

Spiritual development in English comes from the ability to express ideas, explore deep questions, and reflect on human experiences.

Paper 1 (Creative Writing & Fiction)

Encourages students to write stories that explore morality, faith, and hope.

Fiction extracts often deal with themes of personal growth, resilience, and ethical decision-making.

Paper 2 (Writers' Viewpoints & Perspectives)

Non-fiction extracts explore injustice, human dignity, and social responsibility, all of which connect to Christian teachings.

Persuasive writing tasks allow students to argue for compassionate, faith-driven perspectives on issues such as poverty, equality, and community service.

Speaking & Listening Endorsement

Students present speeches on moral and ethical issues, fostering spiritual and philosophical reflection.

The KS4 English AQA curriculum naturally fosters spiritual development and reflects a Christian vision by encouraging students to explore moral dilemmas, the human condition, and ethical storytelling. Teachers can enhance this by making links to Christian values, encouraging reflective writing, and guiding discussions that explore deeper questions of faith and morality.

How we track your progress

In KS4 English, tracking student progress is a systematic and multi-faceted process designed to provide a clear picture of individual development and to support targeted intervention where needed. We use a combination of formative and summative assessments, including regular classwork tasks, homework assignments, mock exams, and formal GCSE-style assessments aligned with the AQA specification. Teachers carefully evaluate students' performance in reading comprehension, writing accuracy, analytical essays, and spoken language tasks to monitor growth in key skills such as textual analysis, vocabulary use, sentence structure, and communication. Progress is recorded using detailed tracking grids and data management systems that compare current performance against baseline assessments and expected grade trajectories. Regular feedback is given to students through written comments and one-to-one discussions, helping them understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, personalised targets are set to motivate and guide learners toward achieving or exceeding their predicted grades. Throughout the year, progress reviews involving teachers, students, and parents ensure that everyone is informed and engaged in the learning journey. This robust tracking approach enables timely support, tailored interventions, and the celebration of achievements, all aimed at maximising student outcomes in English.

Holywell School Curriculum Overview

Parents/Carers can support their child by:

Encourage Regular Reading

Help your child develop a habit of reading a variety of texts: fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, and poetry.

Discuss books, articles, and poems they are reading to improve comprehension and analysis skills.

Discuss Themes and Characters in Set Texts

Talk about the themes, characters, and moral lessons in GCSE literature texts (e.g., *An Inspector Calls*, *Macbeth*).

Encourage discussions about how these texts relate to real-life issues and values.

Review Exam Specifications and Resources

Familiarize yourself with the AQA English Language and Literature specifications.

Help your child understand what is expected in both the literature and language exams, including assessment objectives and mark schemes.

Support with Writing and Essays

Encourage your child to plan their essays before writing them. Help them organize their thoughts clearly and coherently.

Provide feedback on their writing and suggest ways to improve structure, clarity, and vocabulary.

Practice Speaking and Listening Skills

For the Spoken Language endorsement, discuss ways to improve presentation skills, such as confidence, tone, and body language.

Have practice conversations about topics they may choose for their presentation, encouraging them to speak clearly and persuasively.

Use Revision Guides and Past Papers

Provide access to AQA English revision guides or practice questions to help your child familiarize themselves with the exam format.

Work through past papers together to practice answering questions within time limits.

Encourage Critical Thinking and Analysis

Encourage your child to analyse texts critically by questioning why characters act in certain ways and how the author conveys messages.

Help them to understand literary techniques and how these contribute to meaning (e.g., symbolism, imagery, irony).

Review Feedback from Teachers

Go over feedback from your child's English teacher on essays and assessments.

Discuss ways to improve based on teacher comments, focusing on areas like analysis, argument development, and writing style.

Promote Good Time Management

Discuss Social and Ethical Issues in Everyday Life

Engage in discussions about the themes in texts, such as social justice, morality, prejudice, and human rights.

Relate these themes to current events, helping your child connect what they are studying to the real world.

Celebrate Successes and Offer Encouragement

Celebrate progress, even small achievements, to help build your child's confidence.

Offer encouragement when they are struggling, reminding them that improvement takes time and effort.

Sustainability within the subject

Sustainability can be approached from various angles within the AQA KS4 English curriculum through themes, texts, and writing activities that highlight environmental, social, and economic issues. While sustainability is not explicitly mentioned in the AQA specification, many topics and discussions within English Language and English Literature lend themselves naturally to exploring themes of environmental conservation, climate change, social responsibility, and ethical living.

1. Sustainability Themes in GCSE English Literature

In literature, sustainability can be explored in terms of human relationships with the environment, the consequences of unsustainable actions, and moral responsibility. Here are some examples of how sustainability can be explored through the study of set texts:

Environmental Sustainability and Nature

Poetry Anthology (Power and Conflict / Nature):

"The Prelude" (William Wordsworth): Discusses the relationship between humans and nature, exploring how the natural world shapes human identity. It can spark conversations about the need for environmental preservation and respect for nature.

"Ozymandias" (Percy Bysshe Shelley): Explores the impermanence of human achievements, encouraging students to reflect on the environmental consequences of power and industrialization.

Social Responsibility & Ethical Choices

An Inspector Calls (J.B. Priestley): Themes of social responsibility and moral choices align with sustainability. The play critiques the consequences of capitalism and unsustainable practices that lead to the exploitation of the vulnerable, including the environment.

Impact of Human Actions

Blood Brothers (Willy Russell): Focuses on poverty and social class, and while not directly about environmental sustainability, it provides an opportunity to discuss the sustainability of social systems and the impact of inequality on communities.

Frankenstein (Mary Shelley): Explores the consequences of unchecked scientific ambition, touching on the dangers of unsustainable human progress without ethical consideration. It raises questions about the responsibility we have in advancing science and technology.

2. Sustainability in GCSE English Language (AQA)

Reading and Analysis:

In GCSE English Language (Paper 2), many non-fiction texts explore themes related to social justice, environmental activism, and sustainability. Students may read persuasive texts, speeches, or articles that focus on issues like climate change, conservation, social inequality, and corporate responsibility.

Examples could include: Articles on Climate Change – How humans' actions are impacting the planet and the urgency of change; Speeches by Activists – For example, Greta Thunberg's speeches on environmental sustainability or David Attenborough's documentaries. These texts can help students analyse persuasive techniques used to argue for sustainable actions.

While sustainability is not a core theme explicitly outlined in the AQA KS4 English curriculum, the themes of social responsibility, ethical decision-making, and human impact on the world are inherent in the texts and writing tasks. Teachers can effectively use the curriculum to promote discussions and critical thinking about environmental issues, ethical responsibility, and sustainable living.