

Curriculum Ambition Statement – English

Our vision is to create a learning culture in which pupils leave Downlands as confident and highly literate citizens who are lifelong readers, able to deconstruct and make sense of the complex world they inhabit – a world in which they can articulate their feelings and opinions through the spoken and written word. In mixed ability groups, we ensure that every child makes the most of their considerable potential in order to flourish and excel.

At Downlands, we firmly believe in the value of and educational benefits that come with fostering a love of reading, both at school and at home. At the heart of the school is a vibrant and well-resourced library; our expert librarian, alongside a team of pupil librarians, support this culture.

Fundamental to KS3 library lessons is The Downlands' Reading Passport, which enables pupils at KS3 to map and cultivate their reading journey, building on their reading repertoire from KS2. DEAR time is an opportunity for reading to become a communal activity across the whole school, as well as demonstrating a model for good reading practices.

Given the value of reading at Downlands, plays and novels are taught using the 'faster read' approach. We firmly believe that this model enables all pupils to access the overarching ideas expressed in a text. It is important that pupils engage with key themes and have opportunities to discuss key concepts and address misconceptions before analysis can begin.

The reading curriculum at Downlands is broad and brave: pupils are encouraged to read texts from a range of viewpoints and perspectives and are encouraged to reach a conceptual response. By year 11, pupils are familiar with critical perspectives, and enjoy applying these ideas to reach a range of interpretations. We encourage pupils to consider the texts we study from a range of lenses. This emphasis also engages and excites those pupils who may wish to study Language or Literature at A Level.

We firmly believe that reading informs writing. At Downlands, you will see teachers of English modelling the craft of writing; you will see pupils who routinely peer assess and write collaboratively. Lessons are sequenced to build on a range of skills and registers, and metacognitive awareness means that scaffolds are gradually withdrawn. Assessment for learning plays a key role in ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to address misconceptions, drawing on the expertise of their teachers.

Targeted intervention also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all children make outstanding progress. Our core intervention teaching assistant supports exam groups in class and 1: 1, while at KS3, nurture groups follow the curriculum content, liaising closely with SEND. The pupil/teacher ratio ensures more one to one support with core reading and writing skills and a nurturing environment in which to develop self-confidence and verbal communication skills.

At Downlands you will see pupils who are engaged and highly motivated in their English lessons. At the start of every lesson, teachers will explain how to make outstanding progress because we firmly believe that every lesson and every pupil counts.