

# Netherhall School

## English Department



This is an exciting time to join Netherhall School, rated “Good” in all categories in the Ofsted inspection of February 2018.

*‘Staff and pupils say, without question, the Headteacher has been an inspiration, giving them belief that all can achieve. Throughout his tenure, the Headteacher has demonstrated passion, integrity and highly skilled leadership. This school has been transformed in a remarkably short period of time.’* Ofsted, February 2018.

*‘Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and teachers are enthusiastic about teaching. Pupils love coming to school.’ ‘Pupils have considerable respect for their teachers because they believe their teachers are doing a great job.’* Ofsted, February 2018.

*‘Relationships throughout the school are excellent. There is great mutual respect between adults and pupils.’* Ofsted, February 2018.

Netherhall School’s English department is an experienced, committed, and most importantly, a cohesive team. The department currently consists of six full time teachers and two part time teachers, with a variety of additional English responsibilities held within the team. We are largely based in an English block that consists of six classrooms across two floors.

The team has a strong commitment to language development, both written and spoken, through the study of a wide range of texts, alongside developing an appreciation of all forms of literature. We pride ourselves on keeping abreast of the ever-shifting changes and demands of the national curriculum and offer a curriculum that enriches students’ lives through its variety and challenge. The department aims to instil confidence in all of our students as they develop as communicators, readers, writers and thinkers. The functions of language and literature in enabling students to lead the best possible lives are at the forefront of the English curriculum. Through English language, we seek to provide students with the language capacity to navigate and succeed in courses of their own choosing, as well as inspiring those students who wish to pursue more language-based careers, such as writing, journalism, speech therapy, and education. Through English literature, we seek to develop students’ ability to think deeply about humanity, and to discover the riches of their literary heritage, whilst developing the critical faculties to evaluate the ideas and the craft in these texts. We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field would: to read like writers, to write like readers, and to speak like orators.

We have recently revised and updated our curricula to ensure it contains progression, challenge, interest and embedded literacy development for all. While we regard what we offer at Key Stage 3 as the cornerstone of success, our approach to Key Stage 4 is rigorous and proactive, regularly informed by data analysis and unrelenting support for students in their final examination years. We deliver the AQA syllabus for English language and English literature, with a small number of children entered for AQA Step Up to English.

At Key Stage 5 we offer AQA English language and our results are consistently excellent, performing at the highest end of the ALPS scale. A level groups are small and students benefit from the close monitoring that this allows, with many of our A level students going on to pursue English at leading universities. Building on the success of the English language course at A level, from September 2021 we also now offer A level English literature as a choice in Key Stage 5, which has proved very popular. We follow the Edexcel specification for this course, with students having the opportunity to study a rich selection of texts, including William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, alongside a diverse selection of classic and contemporary poetry.

In addition to the curriculum offer, we provide a range of cultural enrichment activities, including visits by authors and poets and extra-curricular visits to Dove Cottage, Grasmere for writing workshops and entry into national competitions. We give our students access to celebrated writers, including poetry workshops led by Mancunian poet Mike Garry. The department recognises the value of theatre trips and strives to ensure students are given regular opportunities to watch a live performance of their set texts on the stage.

In English, every lesson seeks to develop students' ability to articulate ideas confidently, thoughtfully, and with precision, politeness and accuracy, and to listen to, evaluate and respond to the opinions of others. Enthusiasm and a love of literature is consistently modelled by our staff and praised in our students, who are engaged and motivated to do well. Teaching colleagues have access and make frequent use of an impressive range of CPD opportunities, including unrestricted membership to the National College and the Prince's Teaching Institute, as well as engagement in twilight sessions provided by the English and Media Centre. In recent years, the department has taken advantage of bespoke INSET sessions focused exclusively on improving the Teaching and Learning experience for our learners, including workshops on improving creative and analytical writing, led by published author and excellent classroom practitioner, Jennifer Webb.

As a knowledge-based curriculum, we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. As a department, we define the specific knowledge our students need, and help them recall it by having a carefully planned progression through our curriculum, with content and skills clearly defined in our schemes of work which have a regular focus on learned content. High level skills of analysis and evaluation are developed through our approach to becoming an insightful, critical reader. Expanding student vocabulary is of paramount importance and we have embedded the use of resources, such as *Never Heard the Word* grids and online platforms such as *Bedrock Learning* to ensure students continue to develop their understanding of subject-specific lexis as they make their way through the programme of study. *Big Write Fridays* have been introduced to ensure our students develop a stamina for writing in their formative years with us. Fundamentally, we look to challenge every student in our care, as well as providing differentiated support for those in need of it.

Engagement and challenge are prevalent throughout the English curriculum at Netherhall School. We are fiercely ambitious for our young people and constantly reflect upon and refine our curriculum offer, to ensure that all of our students receive the best possible education in this subject.