

Having read the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework 2019: Inspecting the Substance of Education (excerpts in italics below) and the proposed changes, I embrace the fact that there appears to be a move away from assessment and data and a wider appreciation of the value in a 'broad and rich curriculum.' I have also attended a number of English specific Subject Leaders Meetings at county level and exam board cluster meetings and definitely sense an air of optimism for the future. However, I can't help feeling that a more cautious and balanced approach would be prudent and wise as oppose to the gleeful abandon of ripping up the rulebook and turning our back on the past. It is after all only by learning from the mistakes of the past that we can shape a positive future.

There appears to be an overwhelming feeling that the oppressive Ofsted gloom from years gone by is lifting and perhaps a sense that this should somehow equate to some kind of revolt and cry of 'freedom!' as is often the case when a new dawn presents itself. There has been some suggestion that we should paste up pertinent quotes from Amanda Spielman and use these to defend ourselves whenever questioned about the educational value that our classroom practice offers students during the course of the next Ofsted inspection. There has been some suggestion that we should reclaim our subject and write an English Manifesto that upholds our values and beliefs and defends our practice from scrutiny and interrogation. And I admit that I rather like these ideas. But for me I never gave away 'our' subject in the first place.

Ofsted have never been at the forefront of what I do in the classroom and never will be. In fact, prior to the visit last November, I had never encountered them in my life. And whilst I have always been drawn to the idea of revolution and standing up to the oppressive forces in power and reacting to what has gone before, in the way that all major cultural changes react to the past, I also recognise that a calmly considered and balanced approach can serve us well.

Of course I have always been attracted to anarchy and chaos and revolt and disorder but that is because these things are far closer in nature to who I am as person than organisation and common sense but I also recognise that who I am as a person is only a *part* of my job. And believe it or not I am not a big fan of exams and assessment and data but even I can see that it plays an important role in monitoring and providing a snapshot of progress.

I will always firmly believe that the most important part of teaching is what takes place in the classroom and that those experiences must be engaging and stimulating and enjoyable and that learning will take place through those experiences often without students being aware of it.

It is my opinion that the most heinous crime in education is to turn students off and in the English department we aim to shape a curriculum which will engage and stimulate and prove to be enjoyable and challenging. The expectations that we will uphold in terms of what we ask for in our students will work in partnership with the expectations that they also have a right to in terms of what we offer.

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework 2019: Inspecting the Substance of Education (*excerpts in italics below*) and the proposed changes:

An English Response

Our vision is what the English curriculum is built upon and that consists of expression and empathy, expectations and enlightenment, encouragement and enjoyment.

The vision is to equip students with a desire to express their views; develop working relationships between students and teachers which share high expectations, to feel valued and to be excited about life and actively encouraged to pursue their ambitions.

“The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework curriculum defines the ‘curriculum’ as evolving it passes through different states: it is conceived, taught and experienced. The working definition was that the curriculum is:

- *the framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage (intent)*
- *the translation of that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (implementation)*
- *the evaluation of what knowledge and skills learners have gained against expectations (impact/achievement)”*

The framework has been overhauled at KS3 last summer:

- We have widened the scope of units to offer greater freedom with texts and extracts and given teachers the flexibility to teach the texts that they feel passionate about and those that are most appropriate for the ability level of their groups. After all, if the teacher is not enthused about the topic then it is unlikely that the students will.
- Assessments have been changed to reflect the language of the new Edexcel spec. exam questions so that students recognise the skills that are required. Students will also be tested in terms of reading skills and writing skills independently of each other in each unit to ensure a more detailed picture for parents and students and also to provide greater context surrounding the grades and ‘working at’ level on reports.
- The Marking Bible has been revised for Edexcel and is now being trialled. It should allow for any assessment to be marked across Key Stage 3 & 4 which will provide greater consistency and accuracy in the future. Departmental moderation will support this process and monitor outcomes.
- As part of this overhaul there has been careful consideration given to the way that skills develop across Years 7-9 and the level of challenge has been gradually increased so that by the end of Year 9 all students will have experienced the complete range of skills required at Key Stage 4.

The KS3 programme of study continues to be tweaked but it also has to be given time to bed down before it can be evaluated in a credible, instructive and beneficial way.

“As learners develop unconscious competence and fluency, this will allow them to develop skills. Progress should not be defined by hitting the next data point. Rather, if learners attain within a well-sequenced, well-constructed curriculum, they are making progress.”

The issue of sequencing needs to be considered more carefully both in terms of units and how effectively they facilitate progression and develop skills, as well as in terms of day to day lesson

sequencing. This structure across key stages is incredibly important in avoiding slumps, pitfalls and disengagement from the topic. At Key Stage 4 there is undeniably a drop off from the middle of Year 10 and January of Year 11.

There is also an issue surrounding the way we revisit texts and revise because in English the course is taught by the end of Year 10 which means Year 11 is purely revision but by reading around texts and spending more time on unseen extracts, decoding media texts, greater use of discussion, planning and drafting strategies we can widen understanding, stretch development and challenge the top end.

“We recognise and support the importance of providers’ freedom to choose their own curriculum approaches within the appropriate legal parameters.”

We will evolve and reshape in accordance with our own beliefs through discussion as a department and with the benefit of wider reading. A curriculum in any school shouldn’t be a carbon copy of a curriculum in any other school. This school is unique and just as our new Literacy Policy will be unique to The Lakes School so should our curriculum – it *should* reflect our culture and values as an institution and it should reflect the beliefs of the people who work here and make it what it is. But it should also respect and uphold the beliefs and values of the inspecting body that makes judgements on the quality of educational provision in our school.

Media units are on the agenda for Year 8 and 9 to offer more breadth and a possible link into Media Studies at A level. The world is changing and students are familiar with multimedia texts – it is the language in which they receive the vast majority of information and the way that they communicate. Think about the value in studying multimedia texts and the way that they are challenging the conventions of traditional genres, the way that they are blurring the definitions of fact and fiction. We need to be using challenging texts that are confusing and not easily identifiable such as docu-dramas, docu-soaps and reality television which contain elements of both fiction and non-fiction.

Not only will this improve dynamic reading skills but also provide an insight into the wider meaning of visual literacy in the 21st century whilst the current drive on the more traditional meaning of it across the whole school will shape a more consistent focus on literacy as a vehicle for student expression and understanding through oracy. The aim is for this is to support written expression and emerging social skills for the individual.

Through an increasingly sharp focus on whole school approaches to teaching and learning in the future we can eliminate barriers to learning (including SEND and PP), develop resilience (including attendance and pastoral issues), improve marking accuracy, refine strategies for writing, strengthen links home with insightful reports and increase push and challenge for the most able.

“When reaching the quality of education judgement, inspectors will continue to consider the outcomes that learners achieve, using valid, nationally collected, data. However, inspectors will focus on what is taught and how, and will draw the outcomes that learners achieve into that education-focused, rather than data-focused, conversation.”

We believe in delivering an accessible English curriculum that engages students by breaking down the learning and providing clear direction in structured steps. Flexibility and freedom for staff and students within this framework ensures that learning is personalised, enjoyable and progressive.

By closing the gap that exists between reading and writing and Language and Literature, we can raise engagement, understanding and expression. Imaginative writing can be a teaching tool in enabling students to unlock meaning in Literature texts and equally close reading skills and decoding multimedia texts can be valuable in improving and drafting original writing. We can teach Language through Literature and vice versa, and we can teach writing through reading and vice versa. In this way we can also close the existing gap that exists between student understanding and their ability to express it.

By promoting the benefits of discussion and the spoken word in all lessons through directed use of Speaking and Listening we can facilitate the development of general social skills as well as specific English skills. Supporting extended writing and embedding those skills will allow for greater understanding and expression across all subjects including planning, recognising purpose and audience, drafting and the emergence of increasingly independent learners.

Opportunities for learning experiences outside the classroom such as a proposed Media outing to Media City or the London trip for History and English Literature at KS5, theatre trips for Blood Brothers and Shakespeare at KS4 as well as Dove Cottage poetry trip in Year 7 should be encouraged. So should Writing Workshops held in school courtesy of the Wordsworth Trust and opportunities for students to prosper in the real world through local and national writing competitions (the Alfred Hubermann Award which Edward Lilley won last year and the Underwater Poetry Prize which closes in March – 1st Prize of £3000). These opportunities build on the work in our classrooms and are fundamental to providing depth in a 'broad and varied curriculum' but it is the experience in the English classroom that must always remain the primary focus.

In short, we propose to take a holistic approach to considering the quality of education rather than artificially separating the leadership of the curriculum from teaching, and separating teaching and the use of assessment from the impact this has on the outcomes that learners achieve... We have seen an industry develop around assessment and tracking of young children. What children learn is too often coming second to the delivery of assessment information. The education inspection framework will put more emphasis on the quality of education and care. It will ensure that we consider children's experiences and how they are being developed, alongside assessments.

Assessment will continue to form an important strand of the English curriculum but it is incidental to the learning experiences and serves as a monitoring method. We recognise the insight that assessments provide and they are invaluable if revisited so that steps can be taken by students to improve work. Furthermore, the value that assessments provide us is only evident because of the build up to it, our knowledge of the students, their strengths and weaknesses, attendance, pastoral issues, whether they are disadvantaged, apathetic, demotivated, lazy, disruptive etc. Assessments are stations along the journey and they are only useful if we have travelled for the duration. The day to day teaching and learning shapes the assessment outcome (and if not we know why) and the assessment outcome reflects the input and quality of teaching and learning that led up to it.

"We propose that inspectors will not use schools' internal performance data for current pupils as evidence during an inspection. Inspectors will, however, ask schools to explain why they have decided to collect whatever assessment information they collect, what they are drawing from this information and how that informs their curriculum and teaching."

The way that we use assessment is currently under consideration so that it does not only provide an end point for the unit but offers opportunities for students to engage with staff and reflect on the successes and failures in discussing, through Student Voice, the way that units are delivered.

In line with more specific reporting for reading and writing at KS3 (mentioned above) and Language and Literature at KS4 we can also (thanks to Arbor) develop a far more credible English Tracking System which will be linked to reports and which will enable us to track Assessment Objectives across Year 7-11 in a colour coded format. As a department this is invaluable when tracking and monitoring progress and also informing targeted intervention for students with specific skill deficiencies.