



## Hope Valley College Head of English post, February 2012

The English department is a team of enthusiastic, experienced teachers who are well regarded throughout the College. Our particular strengths are reflected in our students' excellent performance in speaking and listening, non-fiction writing and in practical media work.

We need the full time equivalent of just under five teachers. Currently we have three part-time staff and a total of seven teachers involved, including the Deputy Principal, but this may change upon the appointment of a new Head of English. At present the team is led by two joint Heads of English, both of whom are Heads of House, taking a leading role in the College's distinctive pastoral system. This arrangement has been successful but was designed as a temporary solution. We are now looking to consolidate and bring a sharp focus to the Head of English post. We work closely together, sharing ideas and supporting one another every day. In addition, we currently meet formally every fortnight to discuss new developments, to share good practice and to focus on students' progress.

All of our teachers work across KS3/4 and across the ability range. In Year 7 and 8 students currently are in mixed ability classes. There is the possibility of reorganising Year 8 classes into bands to enable more personalised learning. This may change over the coming years, as the College reviews its approach to KS3. In Years 9, 10 and 11 students are set by ability.

Some 1-1 and small group tuition is used in KS3 and KS4 to improve students literacy. We are fortunate in having a number of colleagues we can draw on for this, which is currently extra to the normal departmental teaching time. However the College has included English Support as one of its Option choices for Years 9 and 10 next year and a significant number of students have indicated a preference to choose this. Overall English teaching time will therefore increase slightly next year.

We are fortunate enough to work in four good-sized English classrooms and we also have a dedicated English office to use as a department base. All of our classrooms have a digital data projector and Smartboards. Every member of teaching staff is provided with a laptop. The use of IT is central to the way we work and English classes have the opportunity to work in one of the College's three dedicated computer suites.

Reading is at the heart of what we do and the department is very well stocked with literature as well as non-fiction teaching resources. At present, we are expanding our stock and developing new schemes of work for Key Stage 3 students, with an emphasis on enjoyment and on the development of literacy skills.

We have welcomed the changes to Key Stage 3 English brought about by the end of the SATs. We use APP to ensure we are rigorous and consistent in the assessment of students' work. We are excited by the opportunities to ensure that students can apply their learning in real contexts, an area that the introduction of Functional Skills nationally has made more relevant than ever. Year 9 students are currently working towards Functional Skills assessments this Summer (many of them gain Functional Skills in ICT in Year 9).

At Key Stage 4, we teach the new AQA GCSE English, English Language and English Literature specifications, as well as Functional Skills.

All Year 11 students have completed the 'English' GCSE exam in January and are awaiting results. Students are now preparing for either English Literature or Functional Skills examinations. We will review results in March and adjust our teaching and groupings accordingly.

The College actively encourages departments to review their approaches to exams and we have looked at moving to the iGCSE for English Literature in future. No decisions have been made on this but we are committed now to the GCSE AQA English/English Language specifications in the short-medium term.

As well as this, we are contributing to the teaching of Media Studies as an Option, currently through the BTEC pathway: this will continue next year but we have not confirmed the qualification pathway.

Previous GCSE results were gained using the legacy OCR syllabuses and have been broadly disappointing in terms of the progress students have made. English has a very supportive Link Governor who recognises the efforts we have made to address this with the new specifications but it is undoubtedly true that the department will continue to be under intense scrutiny concerning student progress.

Outside the classroom, we run a range of exciting activities. For example, Year 8 students have taken part in a News Day in which they plan, write and then present a news programme. Year 9 students last year had the chance to write comic monologues with assistance from a stand up comedian. We aim to ensure all students have a chance to experience a professional theatre performance. We have also run a weekly film club and a monthly reading restaurant. The College has a thriving Library, which is open to the wider community, and there are successful reading events at whole College level, including a Carnegie Award reading group each year.

As part of the wider College curriculum review students in Y7 next year follow a “skills for life” course, which will use elements of programmes known elsewhere as Learning to Learn, but focus on skills such as teamwork, perseverance and creativity rather than content. The English Department has contributed significantly to this course although this is unlikely to be part of the teaching of the successful applicant. However we believe the biggest gains within English are likely to be made through a whole College push on Literacy. We are therefore seeking a flexible creative professional who is committed to English teaching but can see possibilities for improving students’ literacy in all sorts of situations.

If you come and work with us, we can offer you high quality professional development. We run successful middle leader programmes in conjunction with other schools and have a track record of supporting staff in accessing national programmes at middle/senior level.

Improving outcomes in English is a whole College priority. As such:

- we will support you in developing the department into a team with a consistent and clear focus in whatever way we can, but we will monitor your work regularly and closely;
- we will support your ideas to develop practice across the College that will improve literacy – and outcomes for English – but we will challenge you to demonstrate how effective these will be/have been;
- we will support you in making sure *all* of your students make good progress, but will look to you for answers when this does not happen.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

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