**English Assessment Rationale**

**Purpose of assessment:**

Assessment in English is intended to help students to learn more and remember more, and to give teachers and department/curriculum leaders actionable information to support further planning. It does this by:

* Being clear about what is being assessed at each point, so that teachers and students know what to focus on for the highest leverage in learning;
* Making it easier to identify gaps and misconceptions in students’ learning;
* Helping teachers to systematically adapt their planning and lessons to the needs of their students;
* Providing information that supports leaders in strategically adapting the curriculum and associated resources to improve student progress.

**A changing approach:**

Previously, written assessments in English have often taken a ‘mini-GCSE’ approach. This is problematic for many reasons that have been written about extensively elsewhere – such as by Christine Counsell[[1]](#footnote-1), Daisy Christodoulou[[2]](#footnote-2) and David Thomas[[3]](#footnote-3). (This last reference is included because it is a particularly short but useful read: it is an opinion piece rather than ‘research’, but is a good summary of the issues that are explored in much more depth by Counsell and Christodoulou).

Our ongoing work in curriculum development in KS3 aims to separate out the component parts more, teaching and assessing these separately to provide teachers and pupils with more useful information, and to provide a more secure foundation for later success. In KS3, assessments are not intended to track linear ‘progress’ from one assessment point to the another: this approach to assessment is extremely limited in English, and often does not support learning. Students make progress in English by building a wider and deeper knowledge over time: in the words of Christine Counsell, ‘the curriculum itself is the progression model. Its mastery is progress.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

Alongside written assessments, students are assessed on discrete declarative/substantive knowledge that they should gain through the curriculum: this will include key people, dates, vocabulary and details of plot and character. This knowledge is frequently returned to at different assessment points, both within ‘formal’ end of cycle assessments and low-stakes Do It Now quizzing to support recall and retention. We recognise that students cannot write well if they do not have a good foundation of knowledge about and with which to write, and a supportive vocabulary to express their ideas. Although having this knowledge is not sufficient for good writing, it is necessary. If a student is not writing successfully, it is helpful for us to have a better understanding of their level of knowledge before we dive in and try to tackle their ‘writing skills’ in a generic way.

**Assessment strategies:**

The table below lists the different strategies used to assess in English.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Rationale** |
| **In-class assessment for learning:*** *Questioning*
* *Circulating*
 | To provide instant feedback on current knowledge and understanding, informing teachers’ next steps within the lesson and learning sequence. This information is used only by the teacher, and can be responded to either ‘in the moment’ or recorded and returned to in a later lesson.  |
| **Low-stakes quizzes:*** *DINs at start of every lesson*
* *Homework quizzes*
* *‘Quick check’ questions in SOL resources*
 | Teachers use low-stakes quizzes to assess the success of recent and past instruction, inform planning and provide (individual or whole class) feedback to students and their parents. These quizzes focus on core declarative/substantive knowledge and vocabulary that can easily be seen to be correct or incorrect. Students typically mark their own or a peer’s work, with teachers taking in scores and following up with individuals where low scores suggest that either learning strategies or attitude to learning needs to be addressed. This method of assessment is also an integral part of learning, using the ‘testing effect’ to encourage frequent recall and over-learning of core content. Teachers are encouraged to adapt all low-stakes quizzes to meet the needs of the class: if previous AfL and quizzing has revealed areas of weakness, this should be planned for and returned to in future quizzes to help consolidate the learning. This method of assessment should always be framed by low-stakes language and should be short.  |
| **Mid-cycle assessments** | Mid-cycle assessments have a similar format to end of cycle assessments, except: 1. The conditions for mid-cycle assessments do not need to be standardised across classes.
2. Mid-cycle assessments are shorter (one lesson rather than two).
3. Data from mid-cycle assessments is intended primarily to provide information for teachers, so that they can adapt their teaching to best support student learning. Areas where students struggle in mid-cycle assessments can be addressed before the end of cycle.

Content of mid-cycle assessments will often be repeated (and extended) in end of cycle assessments, because we use assessments to support students’ learning over time, not to ‘catch them out’.  |
| **End of cycle assessments** | Students complete an assessment at the end of each cycle. These assessments have the following elements in common: * A knowledge quiz, assessing the extent to which students can recall declarative/substantive knowledge from the cycle.
* In C1 assessment, the quiz will consist of only C1 content; C2 will contain approx. 60% C2 content and 40% C1 content; C3 will contain approx. 60% C3 content, and 20% from both C1 & C2.
* Written responses, with a focus on enabling students to demonstrate specific, defined components of learning from within the relevant cycle(s).

Assessment preparation is standardised through the use of common pre-test revision lessons, which will sometimes include creating a small support resource (e.g. revision notes or some planning notes) to use in the written part of the assessment. Assessment conditions are standardised between classes, with the expectation that students have the same amount of time to complete the assessments, and the same support resources. Data is collected for each student, and this is summarised and used at a class and department (and, for Years 7 & 8, trust-wide) level to identify areas that require additional work in an individual class, across the department department or for strategic development in the wider curriculum.  |

1. Counsell, C. (2018) Blogpost – ‘Senior Curriculum Leadership 1: The indirect manifestation of knowledge: (B) final performance as deceiver and guide.’ <https://thedignityofthethingblog.wordpress.com/2018/04/12/senior-curriculum-leadership-1-the-indirect-manifestation-of-knowledge-b-final-performance-as-deceiver-and-guide/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Christodoulou, D. (2016). *Making Good Progress? The Future of Assessment for Learning*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thomas, D. (2017) Blogpost – ‘How two changes to exams took the joy, and the learning, out of our classrooms.’ <http://davidthomasblog.com/2017/05/how-exams-took-the-joy-and-the-learning-out-of-our-classrooms/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Counsell, C. (2018). See blogpost referenced above. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)