

Tuesday 22nd April 2025

Dear parent or carer,

Getting GCSE Ready in English

I am writing to tell you about our initiative in English for Year 9, focusing on getting GCSE ready.

In order to start the GCSE course in Year 10 with a firm foundation, students need to have knowledge in five key areas. Students have already discussed this with their English teachers within the last term and have a Personal Learning Checklist for each of these knowledge areas in their exercise books. They are:

1. **technical**: students need to have mastered word class, and to have mastered a range of literary technical terms
2. **analytical**: students need to have mastered the procedure for analysing quotations
3. **textual**: students need to know the content and context of six poems
4. **comparative**: students need to have mastered the skill of writing a comparative paragraph
5. **independent**: students need to know how to revise.

Since they started covering some of their GCSE poetry content, your child should have been spending an hour per week working through a homework booklet which focuses on the technical and analytical knowledge areas.

One aspect of this homework is that students should be testing themselves on flashcards of key terms. The best method of using flashcards for revision is to look at one side and attempt to recall the other. When a student gets an answer correct, the card goes into the “right” pile, and when they get it incorrect, it goes into the “wrong” pile. Students should then retest themselves on the “wrong” pile until they get them all right. It is best to do this frequently, which is why it forms part of Year 9 English homework each week for this unit. We recommend students do the easier version of this to begin with, which is to look at the definition and try to recall the technical term; they can then progress to the harder version, which is to look at the technical term and try to recall the definition.

To support your child with getting GCSE ready in English, we would be enormously grateful if you could discuss their Personal Learning Checklist with them, and encourage them to spend the appropriate time on their booklets and flashcard learning. Students may choose to do this at homework club after school, where there are members of staff on hand to help. You may like to support your child by testing them on their flashcards and asking them about word class.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of two further recommendations in place to support student literacy. The first is [Bedrock Vocabulary](#), the vocabulary acquisition software which students use each fortnight in their Library lessons and can be accessed from home. The broader a student’s vocabulary, the easier they find the reading sections of the GCSE English Language papers, and the more impressive their own written style. We recommend that students use this twice per week, in bursts

of about fifteen minutes, to fully benefit from the Bedrock Vocabulary programme. It can be accessed from a mobile phone. If your child has not yet shown you this, do ask them to do so!

The second recommendation is personal reading. Studies have proven that reading has a huge impact on academic performance, as well as being an important habit to improve wellbeing. We encourage students to read for at least an hour per week, and use our Library lessons in school to support students with choosing books. Your child has a copy of the booklet: [100 Books to Read Before You Leave Fitzharrys](#), a PDF of which can also be found on the school website, in the [Library and Reading](#) section. Each time they read a book, they get a house point from their form tutor. When they have read ten, they should make sure to complete the [online form](#) on the website and they will be entered for a prize draw from Mostly Books in Abingdon (first prize: a £50 voucher; two runners-up: a £20 voucher). There are badges available for students who have read 25, 50 and 75 of the books on the list. We very much hope that this booklet will support students in choosing books that they enjoy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at school should you have any questions about this, or about any aspect of your child's study of English.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RTaylor'.

Mrs R Taylor

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