

The Department

English at Freman College is a popular subject delivered by a well-qualified and high profile department. The department has its own, well-resourced teaching block with light and spacious classrooms and excellent audio-visual facilities. A generous departmental budget ensures high quality resources are available to all students. Full time teachers are usually allocated their own classroom and every effort is made to timetable ECTs to minimise movement around college.

There is a strongly collaborative and supportive approach within the department with all teachers contributing to, and benefiting from, the development of shared schemes and resources. This makes it a particularly welcoming environment for teachers who enjoy sharing best practice and working together. New and newly qualified teachers are strongly supported through mentoring and all teachers benefit from department and college policies that focus on minimising workload. Whole college and departmental CPD ensures teachers are able to regularly update their pedagogical practice and understanding of the latest educational research.

All members of the department teach across the age and ability range with A Level teaching forming a considerable proportion of each teacher's timetable. Teachers value the fact that teaching timetables are weighted towards national qualifications which ensures staff develop significant professional expertise. Teachers are valued and supported and work-life balance is a significant feature of life at the college.

The curriculum

Year 9

There are nine classes, each of which has six lessons of English per cycle. All classes are mixed ability. Key Stage 3 is the remit of our middle schools and our focus in Year 9 is on developing the skills required for GCSE. The department has detailed curriculum planning in place with fully resourced, thematic schemes of work, providing a foundation for GCSE study.

Key Stage 4

There are ten teaching groups in each year; split into half-year blocks. Each block has a top set to ensure we are challenging our most able students and the remaining classes in each block are mixed ability to assure the strongest outcomes for all students. Students complete the AQA specifications for Language and Literature. Language and Literature are taught through integrated skills-based schemes which encourage cross-fertilisation between Language and Literature, exploiting best practice pedagogy. Shared curriculum planning enables the whole year group to work cohesively towards final examination preparation with common tasks like 'Writing Fridays' characterising the team ethic of KS4 teaching.

Progress (+0.6 in English Language 2024) and attainment (72% grade 5+) are significantly above national average for both boys and girls and places the department within the upper quartile nationally. As a Hertfordshire school, the College benefits from excellent support from Herts for Learning and the department staff have a broad range of examining and moderating expertise at GCSE which is shared with colleagues regularly.

Sixth Form

In both the Lower and Upper Sixth there are normally three groups. We follow the OCR specifications for English Literature, English Language and Media Studies. Take-up for all three subjects is high and are among the most popular of our A Level subjects and the department has achieved consistently strong results. Strong links with exam boards and a wealth of examining expertise inform the department's teaching and planning. A Level classes have eight or nine lessons per cycle, split between two teachers and close collaboration with teaching colleagues is encouraged. As for GCSE, shared schemes and resources are available and regular shared planning and standardising of work is conducted. Experience teaching Media Studies and/or English Language at A level or the willingness to take on one of these courses with support and training, would be an advantage.

Additional information

The English department liaises closely with subject leaders in our partner middle schools to run the Rib Valley Book Award, which is a project similar to shadowing the Carnegie Book Award. Debating is a strength of the department with students regularly participating in national competitions. Every year the department runs several trips including: theatre visits, sixth form conferences and Cambridge Literary Festival. Students are also supported to enter national writing competitions. All members of the department contribute substantially to the wider life of the college.

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