

english language

A Level

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Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

In English Language we study the full range of ways that language is used to communicate out there in the 'real world'. Unlike in English Literature, everything can be considered a 'text' worth studying, and spoken language is as important as written language.

In a typical week in English Language you might find yourself confronted with texts like websites, recipes, problem pages, letters of complaint, birth certificates, a political speech, a stand-up comedy routine, transcripts of children speaking to each other, football match reports, text messages, romantic novels, adverts from the 1930s...almost anything! It is this variety that makes English Language such a fascinating subject to study.

What will I study over the two years?

Over the course of two years, you will study how children learn to speak and read, how texts are shaped by context, how speakers and writers use language to represent their identity as well as the differences between spoken and written language. You will also study the development of English since 1550. You will undertake an in-depth investigation into an area of language such as The Language of Charity Advertising or Multicultural London English; finally you will write coursework which involves writing creatively in a genre of your choice.

How is the course assessed?

Assessment is by 3 written exam papers (worth 80% of the total mark) and coursework (worth 20% of the total mark), which is written in the second year.

What skills will I develop in this course?

By the end of the course English Language students will have developed an impressive array of transferable skills including critical analysis, structuring arguments, selecting evidence, debating theories and of course a thorough understanding of linguistic terminology and theories.

What does this subject offer for higher education and future careers?

This subject is considered a competitive one in terms of university entrance. It attracts a lot of applicants for university as it combines the academic, creative and analytical skills which are so valued in many careers. The skills are transferable to a range of disciplines and careers, including Publishing, Journalism, Psychology, Law, Advertising and Marketing.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve at a minimum of a:

- Grade 4 in GCSE English Literature
- Grade 4 in GCSE English Language

What extra support/enrichment is on offer?

Subject tutorials from our teachers are available. We also have strong links with the Learning Support department, which offers specific help when needed, perhaps with technical skills, planning essays or improving reading skills. We run courses in creative writing as a complementary study and also at the end of the year during Wider Skills Week. English Language is well represented on our Enrichment programme of talks and seminars, and we have frequent visits to the theatre and cinema.

What courses might combine with this subject?

English Language is a highly valued subject and combines well with a wide range of other subjects. It should only be combined with English Literature if you are committed to studying English at University.

What is the difference between English Language and English Literature?

These subjects are radically different courses that involve practising very different skills. English Literature is about reading, analysing and evaluating texts such as poetry, drama and novels, looking at the ways that writers use techniques to create effects. English Language is the study of spoken and written language taken from everyday sources. It focuses on how values, attitudes and purposes are revealed through choices of language. This is very different from English Language at GCSE.