

English 'fundamental' to pupils' educational success

News story

Ofsted has published the latest in a series of reviews into different subjects across the curriculum. Today's review looks at English.



This review explores a wide and diverse range of research relating to English, to identify factors that can contribute to high-quality curriculums, pedagogy, assessment and schools' systems for managing the subject. Ofsted's education inspection framework (EIF) and the research underpinning it are the lenses through which we have considered, framed and presented the research literature.

English is a complex subject that combines the disciplines of English language and literature. Studying English is vital to understanding the rest of the curriculum, as well as for educational success beyond school. But more than this, English allows pupils to explore the power and beauty of literature and language.

Today's review highlights teaching approaches that could raise the attainment of pupils in English, starting from early years education. A core theme of the review is the importance of progression in reading. It notes that reading a broad range of increasingly complex and whole texts gradually increases pupils' 'readiness' for the ambitious literature that is the end point of the national curriculum.

The review discusses how curriculum content and sequencing, as well as subject-specific pedagogy, best enable pupils to achieve the national curriculum aims for English. It identifies themes that contribute to an effective education in English, including:

- strong foundational knowledge for reading, writing and spoken language as essential aspects of the early years curriculum
- developing vocabulary is fundamental to pupils' progress and narrows the word gap between pupils who are word-rich and word-poor

- an effective reading curriculum ensures that pupils read large amounts of text and focuses on providing pupils with the knowledge they need for comprehension
- a reading curriculum incorporating carefully chosen texts of increasing challenge
- the English curriculum for novices, who are likely to learn more effectively through direct instruction, is structured differently in many aspects from the curriculum for experts

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman said:

More than any other subject, English – and especially reading – is fundamental to pupils' educational success. But English is so much more than the gateway to success in other subjects. Through studying literature, pupils' eyes are opened to the human experience; they explore meaning and ambiguity as well as the beauty and power of language.

We hope that this review helps teachers and school leaders raise the quality of education in English and inspire a love of literature and language in all young people.

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