General capabilities

In the Australian Curriculum, the general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with curriculum content in each learning area and the cross-curriculum priorities, will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century.

There are seven general capabilities:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology (ICT) capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding.

In the Australian Curriculum: English, general capabilities are identified wherever they are developed or applied in content descriptions. They are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning through content elaborations. Icons indicate where general capabilities have been identified in English content. Teachers may find further opportunities to incorporate explicit teaching of the capabilities depending on their choice of activities.

Literacy

The Literacy general capability presents those aspects of the Language and Literacy strands of the English curriculum that should also be applied in all other learning areas.

Students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students in listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

Literacy is developed through the specific study of the English language in all its forms, enabling students to understand how the English language works in different social contexts and critically assess writers' opinions, bias and intent, and assisting them to make increasingly sophisticated language choices in their own texts. The English learning area has a central role in the development of literacy in a manner that is more explicit and foregrounded than is the case in other learning areas. Students learn literacy knowledge and skills as they engage with the Literacy and Language strands of English. They apply their literacy capability in English when they interpret and create spoken, print, visual and multimodal texts for a range of purposes.

Numeracy

Students become numerate as they develop the knowledge and skills to use mathematics confidently across all learning areas at school and in their lives more broadly. Numeracy involves students in recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully.

Numeracy can be addressed in learning contexts appropriate to English across Years F–10. Students use numeracy skills when interpreting, analysing and creating texts involving quantitative and spatial information such as percentages and statistics, numbers, measurements and directions. When responding to or creating texts that present issues or arguments based on data, students identify, analyse and synthesise numerical information using that understanding to discuss the credibility of sources.

Visual texts may present a range of numeracy demands. Interpreting and creating graphic organisers requires students to examine relationships between various components of a situation and to sort information into categories including characteristics that can be measured or counted. Understanding the mathematical ideas behind visual organisers such as Venn diagrams or flowcharts helps students to use them more effectively.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability

Students develop ICT capability as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school, and in their lives beyond school. ICT capability involves students in learning to make the most of the technologies available to them, adapting to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve and limiting the risks to themselves and others in a digital environment.

ICT capability is an important component of the English curriculum. Students use ICT when they interpret and create print, visual and multimodal texts. They use communication technologies when they conduct research online, and collaborate and communicate with others electronically. In particular, they employ ICT to access, analyse, modify and create multimodal texts, including through digital publishing.

As students interpret and create digital texts, they develop their capability in ICT including word processing, navigating and following research trails and selecting and evaluating information found online.

Critical and creative thinking

Students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. Critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school.

Critical and creative thinking are essential to developing understanding in English. Students employ critical and creative thinking through discussions, the close analysis of texts and through the creation of their own written, visual and multimodal texts that require logic, imagination and innovation. Students use creative thinking when they imagine possibilities, plan, explore and create ideas and texts.

Through listening to, reading, viewing, creating and presenting texts and interacting with others, students develop their ability to see existing situations in new ways, and explore the creative possibilities of the English language. In discussion students develop critical thinking as they state and justify a point of view and respond to the views of others. Through reading, viewing and listening students critically analyse the opinions, points of view and unstated assumptions embedded in texts.

Personal and social capability

Students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. The personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for and understanding of others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively.

There are many opportunities for students to develop personal and social capability in English. Language is central to personal and social identity. Using English to develop communication skills and self-expression assists students' personal and social development as they become effective communicators able to articulate their own opinions and beliefs and to interact and collaborate with others.

The study of English as a system helps students to understand how language functions as a key component of social interactions across all social situations. Through close reading and discussion of texts students experience and evaluate a range of personal and social behaviours and perspectives and develop connections and empathy with characters in different social contexts.

Ethical understanding

Students develop ethical understanding as they identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values, character traits and principles, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgment. Ethical understanding involves students in building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others.

Students develop ethical understanding as they study the issues and dilemmas present in a range of texts and explore how ethical principles affect the behaviour and judgment of characters and those involved in issues and events. Students apply the skills of reasoning, empathy and imagination, consider and make judgments about actions and motives, and speculate on how life experiences affect and influence people's decision making and whether various positions held are reasonable.

The study of English helps students to understand how language can be used to influence judgments about behaviour, speculate about consequences and influence opinions and that language can carry embedded negative and positive connotations that can be used in ways that help or hurt others.

Intercultural understanding

Students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. They come to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped, and the variable and changing nature of culture. The capability involves students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

Students develop intercultural understanding through the study of the English language and the ways it has been influenced by different cultural groups, languages, speakers and writers. In interpreting and analysing authors' ideas and positions in a range of texts in English and in translation to English, they learn to question stated and unstated cultural beliefs and assumptions, and issues of intercultural meaning.

Students use Intercultural understanding to comprehend and create a range of texts, that present diverse cultural perspectives and to empathise with a variety of people and characters in various cultural settings

Implications for teaching, assessment and reporting

In the Australian Curriculum: English, the three strands of Language, Literature and Literacy are interrelated and inform and support each other. While the amount of time devoted to each strand may vary, each strand is of equal importance and each focuses on developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and creating. Teachers combine aspects of the strands in different ways to provide students with learning experiences that meet their needs and interests.

In Year 3, for example, students might select a favourite poem and share it with the class, explaining why they chose it (*Literature*). They might explain the way particular grammatical choices affect meaning, for example the use of verbs, adjectives and adverbs in the poem (*Language*). Students might then create their own poems and present them to the class (*Literacy*). In Year 8, a teacher who

wishes to develop a unit focusing on humour might have students begin by selecting and analysing a variety of humorous texts (*Literature*), considering structure and vocabulary choices that create particular effects or nuance (*Language*). They might then change some of the words to create different effects in the text (*Literacy*).

While content descriptions do not repeat key skills, it should be noted that many aspects of the English curriculum are recursive, and teachers need to provide ample opportunity for revision, ongoing practice and consolidation of previously introduced knowledge and skills.

Students learn at different rates and in different stages. Depending on each student's rate of learning, not all of the content descriptions for a particular year level may be relevant to a student in that year level. Some students may have already learned a concept or skill, in which case it will not have to be explicitly taught to them in the year level stipulated. Other students may need to be taught concepts or skills stipulated for earlier year levels.

In Western Australia, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) is responsible for setting standards of student achievement, developing an outline of curriculum and assessment in schools and developing and accrediting courses for schools. The SCSA have developed the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline which includes the reporting policy for Western Australian schools and the Western Australian curriculum. The Western Australian Curriculum is an adaptation the Australian Curriculum to suit the WA context.

Phase 1 courses of the P-10 Australian Curriculum (English, Mathematics, Science and History) are currently being taught by some schools and will be fully implemented in **Western Australia in 2015.**

The Western Australian Minister for Education announced a revised timeline for implementation of **Phase 2** (languages, geography, the Arts) and Phase 3 (health and physical education, information and communication technology, design and technology, economics, business, civics and citizenship) courses.

This involves tailoring the content to suit Western Australian schools, developing achievement standards to assess student work, and ensuring schools have adequate time to familiarise themselves with the revised content.

The timeline for full implementation of Phases 2 and 3 is yet to be confirmed.

Teachers at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School have been engaged in the process of implementing the English curriculum of the Australian Curriculum. This process has been implemented over the past two years at the school and will be on-going through 2015.