

Cambridge Secondary 1 English

Key Changes from 2011

Cambridge
Secondary

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Purpose of this document

This document aims to provide an overview for teachers of changes to the Cambridge Lower Secondary Programme and Cambridge Checkpoint curriculum.

From 2012 onwards Cambridge Checkpoint assessments will be aligned to the revised curriculum.

Progression tests aligned to the revised curriculum will be available from September 2011.

Cambridge Secondary 1: English

General Statement

Two different sources of information have informed the changes to the Cambridge Lower Secondary/Cambridge Checkpoint English curriculum framework; the first is feedback from schools during training sessions and through evidence from exams; the second builds on continually developing research based on an understanding of how lower secondary school children can become more proficient in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The aim in revising the framework at lower secondary level was to make the stages more explicit by which the students progress to the standard expected at the start of the International GCSE or O Level which most of the students go on to take. The standard required in the Cambridge Checkpoint English tests remains the same as it was, and the overall approach also remains the same.

The good news is that changes are mostly in emphasis and clarity rather than in content and standards. Most of the resources that you are currently using should continue to be appropriate for teaching the new syllabus and planning should not need significant changes. Crucially the standards that students are expected to reach, year on year, have not substantially changed. Most changes have been made to reflect the way that teachers were already delivering the programme.

Terminology in the new programme

The new programme covering English, Mathematics and Science will be known as **Cambridge Secondary 1**. This will support the revised Cambridge Checkpoint tests available in each subject from May 2012 just as the previous Cambridge Checkpoint or Cambridge Lower Secondary curriculum frameworks did before it.

Each school year will be referred to as a '**stage**' because the ages at which students start their Primary and Secondary education varies around the world.

What were previously referred to as 'statements' in the existing curriculum framework will be known as '**Learning Objectives**' in the revised version.

Changes to Content

Teachers who know the Cambridge Primary English curriculum framework, will recognise that many of the statements in the new Cambridge Secondary 1 framework specifically build on their primary counterparts. Progression has been made clearer with more structure and detail provided through the three Stages 7, 8 and 9. It is hoped that teachers will find these useful in planning their courses and in making their own assessments of their students' progress. As before, the programme remains flexible enough to fit around your own national and/or school curriculum or other national tests as required.

The use of English, unlike the other core subjects, is a creative and holistic process. The breakdown of these processes into a curriculum framework is specifically to facilitate the management of its delivery by the teacher. Students draw on both knowledge and skills across multiple stages and functions (reading, writing, speaking and listening) in order to communicate. Some learning objectives allow students to explore and practise aspects of communication especially those associated with speaking and listening. Though not tested on paper, the results of this work will affect the quality and depth of students' understanding of reading and writing. For this reason you will see that opportunities for speaking and listening have been broadened and deepened.

As to particular changes, please find these outlined below:

Phonics, Spelling and Vocabulary

Within the curriculum frameworks the former strand called 'usage' has been split into two discrete sections; 'Phonics, Spelling and Vocabulary' is now separate from 'Grammar and Punctuation' (previously these were subsections of usage).

Grammar and Punctuation

This section has been divided into 'Reading' and 'Writing' in recognition of the fact that students need to learn to recognise increasingly complex sentence structures and punctuation in their reading before they start trying to use them in writing. These learning objectives have been clarified by introducing greater detail at the primary level and are extended here.

Reading and Writing

The reading and writing sections are divided into 'Fiction and poetry', and 'Non-fiction'. Generic skills are listed in the 'Fiction and poetry' section and are not repeated in 'Non-fiction', which has only the objectives which relate explicitly to developing increased competence in using non-fiction texts.

A significant development is the introduction of a list of the recommended range of fiction and non-fiction text types. The recommended range is very similar to that used in the majority of published schemes, so any resources you use will probably continue to be appropriate. Understanding genres and text-types has always been tricky for students in the tests but by explicitly defining the range of text types, teachers can ensure that this aspect of the curriculum is well supported in the classroom.

Speaking and Listening

Because it is not directly tested, schools tend to focus less on developing speaking and listening. Objectives here are clearly aligned with developing skills essential for reading and writing. Role play and drama now play a bigger part, as does an understanding of the way in which people talk in different contexts and the need to adapt the content and style of talk to meet the needs of a listener.

Teaching the Framework

Teachers need to:

- Review the new curriculum frameworks and note any areas that will need to be worked into existing lessons.
- Spread work on Speaking and Listening throughout the curriculum.

There is no change to the pedagogy itself. Cambridge Secondary 1 English is written to support a classroom in which students are actively involved in their learning and they and their teachers explore and enjoy a rich and diverse curriculum content.

As before, the curriculum framework defines the objectives, not the activities. You are free to create and adapt stimulating activities which meet your school's social, cultural and religious context and the learning needs of your class.

This curriculum framework describes a developmental progression in each of the areas identified. As with the previous curriculum, objectives from more than one stage at a time may be needed in order to meet each learner's developmental needs.

Changes to Testing

Progression Tests

Progression tests are being revised to align with the new curriculum frameworks and will be available from September 2011. As previously Progression tests will be available for stages 7 and 8; new tests are available for stage 9.

Cambridge Checkpoint Tests

English will be assessed using 2 papers. Each will be taken in sessions of 1 hour 10 minutes.

Paper 1 is based on two information texts of different types.

Paper 2 is based on one fiction text.

Both papers will contain short, structured questions totalling 50 marks each.

The test which assesses skills and knowledge from Stages 7, 8 and 9, has been adjusted slightly to reflect the more specific clauses in the framework and now includes some explicit questions on punctuation, sentence grammar and the writer's effect. The layout of the papers aims to encourage candidates to show their planning for the summary and the writing pieces. This was not previously the case.

Texts used in the papers are now based on authentic texts (that is to say from published books, newspapers, magazines or websites etc.).

Cambridge Checkpoint will assess knowledge and skills from all of stages 7 – 9 and will offer a range of difficulty of questions.

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