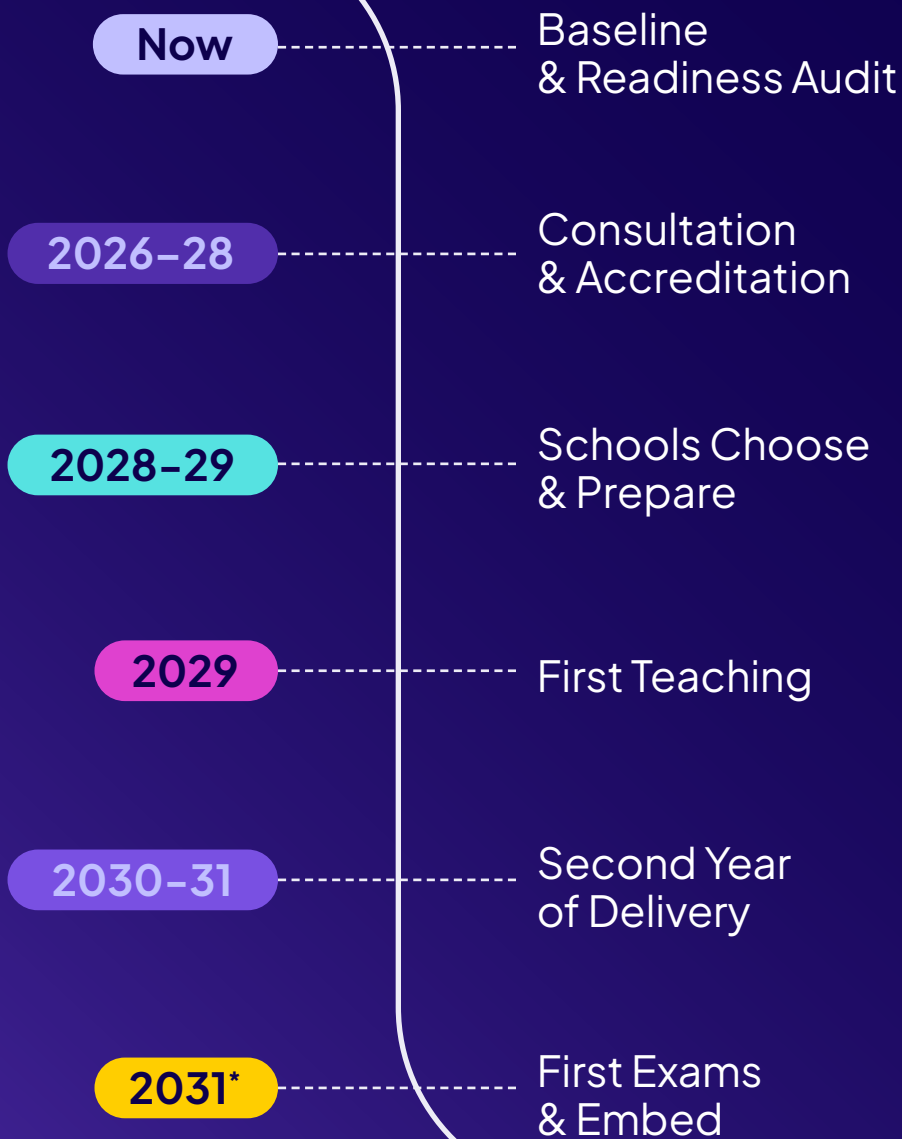


GCSE English Reform Readiness Checklist

Know what to focus on now and what comes next.

For Heads of English and Multi Academy Trust leaders preparing for every stage of GCSE English reform.



Mapped to the GCSE English reform timeline from 2026 to first exams in 2031.

Independent of which awarding body you eventually choose.

**First teaching in 2029 and first exams in 2031 represent the earliest anticipated dates based on currently DfE and Ofqual information and are subject to change.*



Now:

Baseline & Readiness Audit

Curriculum & Sequencing

- Review current KS3 schemes of work against likely reformed GCSE content
- Map where existing KS3 content and schemes of work already provides strong foundations for GCSE content, and where this could be improved
- Establish a shared curriculum review template and process across all schools, rather than each site working independently
- Nominate a lead school or subject lead to coordinate curriculum review across the trust

Workforce & Staffing

- Audit current non-specialist teaching proportion in English, by year group and subject
- Identify likely CPD needs based on anticipated content and assessment changes
- Compare non-specialist teaching proportion across your schools so investment is targeted where it's needed most
- Explore cross-school teacher deployment or timetable-sharing options where specialist capacity is thin at a single site

Engagement & Consultation

- Respond to the DfE public consultation when it opens (Autumn 2026)
- Engage with subject associations (English Association, National Association for Teaching of English, National Association of Advisors in English), other organisations like the English and Media Centre and exam boards on their consultation response
- Coordinate a single trust-wide consultation response informed by input from all schools, alongside individual responses where useful

Governance

- Name a single lead responsible for tracking reform preparedness for your department
- Link up with exam boards for key contact to stay up to date with reform news (contact allison.amos@pearson.com to set up exam-board neutral 1:1 updates and advice throughout the reform period)
- Add 'GCSE English reform' as a standing item on appropriate meeting agendas to keep team in the loop
- Establish a trust-level reform steering group with clear information sharing and decision-making processes for schools
- Open a transition risk register at trust level and ensure individual schools feed into this for a smooth transition to reformed GCSEs (advised whether switching or staying with current exam board)



September 2026 – 2028:

Public Consultation & Accreditation

Curriculum

- Submit your consultation response on the draft subject content
- Monitor exam board accreditation announcements as specifications are developed
- Update your earlier gap analysis once draft subject content is published
- Begin refining KS3 content and schemes of work to strengthen progression towards GCSE requirements
- Agree the criteria which you will use to evaluate reformed qualifications from each exam board

Assessment & Data

- Capture a historic attainment baseline now, so the impact of reform can be properly measured later
- Capture students' current attitudes towards English, such as its relevance to future study or career pathways, their enjoyment of texts and their confidence with assessments
- Align baseline data collection methodology across all schools so trust-wide comparisons remain valid
- Ensure approach to student research considers individual centre contexts

Workforce & Staffing

- Commit a CPD budget line for reform-related training
- Scope your recruitment and ECT pipeline for English
- Prioritise recruitment and CPD spend where specialist gaps are greatest across your schools
- Identify opportunities for shared CPD delivery or joint training days across the trust

Digital & SEND

- Audit device and connectivity readiness to support digital teaching and learning resources (assessment itself is remaining paper-based)
- Assess staff digital literacy and training needs for new platforms or tools
- Review EAL considerations alongside SEND planning
- Flag likely exam access arrangement implications once assessment format detail is known
- Consider costs associated with digital platforms, revision resources and intervention materials that may require updating



September 2028 – 2029:

Schools Choose & Prepare

Strategic Decisions

- Review new GCSEs from each exam board, attending new qualification information events
- Choose your specification and exam board, ensuring the exam board is aware of your decision to offer the qualification, so you receive all relevant information
- Finalise KS3 sequencing changes ready for first teaching
- Review and adapt any GCSE schemes of work, curriculum plans and teaching resources provided by exam boards ready for first teaching
- Agree a trust-wide position on exam board choice, or confirm deliberate flexibility, and the rationale either way

Workforce & Staffing

- Finalise staffing plans and recruitment for the September 2029 start
- Confirm your ECT and specialist training pipeline is in place
- Engage with exam boards to understand the support, resources and training available to support qualification adoption
- Check what teaching preparation events are offered by exam boards, and identify any additional training, support or CPD opportunities available beyond these
- Finalise a trust-wide CPD calendar and any cross-school deployment plans agreed in 2026–27

Governance & Communication

- Report reform progress as a tracked risk to SLT and governors
- Develop a parent/carer communication plan for qualification changes
- Update careers and HE guidance for any university entry-requirement implications
- Report reform progress as a tracked risk to the trust board, not just individual local governing bodies
- Agree a consistent trust-wide parent communication approach, adapted locally as needed

Resourcing & Finance

- Confirm procurement of new texts and teaching resources once your specification is chosen
- Check the free teaching and learning resources provided by your exam boards, including workbooks, revision guides, digital text anthologies, exemplar materials and online resource hubs, to identify opportunities to reduce implementation costs
- Explore government funding and resources, including inclusion bases and SEND initiatives, and literacy and accessibility resources from exam boards, then plan for any remaining gaps
- Coordinate procurement across schools ahead of trust level budget-setting

Legacy Planning

- Plan arrangements to manage any cohorts partway through legacy specifications at the point of transition
- Ensure management of completing legacy qualifications is consistent across all schools

= Actions specifically for Multi Academy Trust leaders



SEPTEMBER 2029 (earliest): First Teaching

Delivery Readiness

- Complete a Day 1 provisioning check: resources, staffing and timetabling all in place
- Redesign your internal assessment calendar to reflect new content and paper structure
- Realign your mock exam strategy to the new specification
- Confirm exam access arrangements are updated for the new assessment format
- Consider the additional support offered by your exam board, including mock assessments, moderation support, training and student-facing guidance

Trust Coordination

-  Keep a close eye on delivery across your schools in the first year, and act quickly on early issues
-  Share early delivery learnings across schools to support consistency, particularly where staffing or resourcing gaps were identified during 2026–28



 = Actions specifically for Multi Academy Trust leaders



September 2030 – 2031:

Second Year of Delivery

Polishing Delivery

- Deliver GCSEs to new year 10 cohort and first year of teaching year 11 scheme of work
- Keep in regular contact with your exam board to ensure your needs are being met and that you are aware of available support, resources and training
- Engage with training provided by exam boards that supports consistent application of mark schemes for mock assessments
- Make use of additional exam board support, including mock assessments, moderation services and student-facing guidance

Student Experience

- Capture students' attitudes towards the new English qualification, including relevance to future study or career pathways, their enjoyment of texts, and their confidence with assessments, to review against the baseline set in 2027-28 student research
-  Share early student engagement learnings across schools and identify opportunities to improve the student experience of English, for example piloting alternative texts in centres with low text enjoyment



 = Actions specifically for Multi Academy Trust leaders



Summer 2031 onward:

First Exams & Embed

Results & Review

- Prepare for first results day under the reformed qualification, including staff and student expectation-setting
- Review outcomes against the pre-reform baseline captured in 2026–27
- Refine curriculum and resourcing based on the first cohort's actual experience
- Update careers and HE guidance based on any confirmed university response to new grading or content

Trust-Wide Learning

-  Reflect on how results varied across your schools, and where further support might help
-  Capture and share lessons learned across the trust ahead of Phase 2 GCSEs (from September 2030) or subsequent year groups
-  Identify opportunities to use exam board training, moderation and support resources to build staff expertise and support improvement



 = Actions specifically for Multi Academy Trust leaders

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