

Welburn Hall College English Policy

Mission Statement

Welburn Hall School will become recognised locally and nationally as an excellent school with ambitions for life long independence for all students.

AIMS

Within Welburn Hall College, English is taught to reflect upon a student's ability and future skills' needs whilst also enabling progression towards an accreditation in Functional Skills English for those who are capable. OCR Functional Skills English has been chosen as it is felt that the approach and flexible nature of the teaching and exam process better matches the needs and differing abilities of our students with the potential for a greater positive learning experience and accreditation outcome overall.

Students for whom a Functional Skills English qualification is an unrealistic expectation will work towards an ASDAN Entry 1 qualification in Personal Progress of which Developing Communication Skills, Developing Reading Skills and Developing Writing Skills will form their English curriculum.

Key aims of English teaching within College are to support students' ability to: -

- Re-engage positively with English studies,
- Recognise its value to them and improve their motivation.
- Link English studies into real life areas of interest applicable to the students' ages and cognitive ability.
- Acquire experience of situations and applications of English skills that may be experienced within their future adult life
- Identify formal and informal contexts, recognising and responding appropriately and competently
- Feel confident to make mistakes through viewing mistakes as a valuable learning opportunity and a means by which to make progress
- Contribute towards supporting students' potential independence.
- Transfer and use their English skills productively and effectively within other curriculum areas

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

At KS5 (Yrs 12,13,14) students who have been unable to achieve a GCSE grade C/ 4 or above have to continue with English tuition.

Functional Skills English will be offered to those students who have the ability to attain this qualification – Entry Levels 1,2,3 Level 1 or 2.

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of Functional Skills English are laid out in the Criteria for Functional Skills Qualifications Document (OfQual 2012). For those students unable to access Functional Skills English, access to an English curriculum will be through the ASDAN Personal Progress.

THE GOVERNING BODY

Regular reports are made to the governors on the progress of the English provision. This policy will be reviewed every three years or in light of changes to legal requirements.

BACKGROUND

Students enter the college with a wide spread of conditions, abilities and attitudes. Some may have already completed a form of English accreditation, others may not.

Faced with a further 3 years of study, attitudes and motivation amongst the students varies enormously. Some students have a positive outlook and accept further English studies. Some have had less positive experiences and feel reluctant to continue. The majority have difficulties that reflects their wider issues and reasons for attending Welburn Hall College over other academic institutions.

Students are streamed into 4 teaching groups – Wolds, Moors, Dales and Dales Plus. Wolds, Moors, and Dales have a level of independent reading and writing skills and are placed into classes that aim to secure a Functional English qualification by the end of their three years. Dales Plus consists of students who struggle to achieve this level of independence and for whom the ASDAN Personal Progress is a more suitable pathway.

Lessons consist of 3 x 45 minute lessons per week.

SUBJECT ORGANISATION

APPROACHES TO SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Students with communication needs will be supported to use whatever means applicable to their needs enables meaningful communication. For some students this may include high of low tech Augmented Assisted Communication.

Students are encouraged to discuss and question interactively as part of their learning experience. Discussions and interactions between students may be informal or formal and are integrated into lessons versus stand-alone activities. Students are also encouraged to introduce topics they would like to discuss and which they may feel very strongly towards or against. This is viewed as a valuable opportunity for students to experience the importance of discussion and of being able to represent themselves for future occasions in their adult life.

Extended opportunities for S&L within College also occur within the weekly College Forum, visitors invited for Q&A sessions, work experience and many more.

Assessment for OCR S&L accreditation can be approached as and when the opportunity arises or emerges and it is felt that this enables a truer reflection of a student's actual abilities to occur. A student has to participate within an informal/formal group discussion between 3-5 people and an informal/formal exchange between two people. At times lesson structure/planning may be suspended if an opportunity for 'andincognito assessment' to take place arises.

This is because many students are unwilling and/or extremely anxious if placed under pressure to speak or to relate opinions if they are feeling judged. This further intensifies if they recognise that they are being formally assessed. For some students they literally become unable to speak.

Drama and Film

College offers any students who wish to do so, the opportunity to engage in a variety of drama experiences across their three years. This can include Shakespeare in School, Rock Challenge and performances locally at the Helmsley Arts Centre.

Film is also seen as a powerful medium for teaching, allowing a wide variety of situations and interactions to be witnessed safely. Welburn Hall College is a member of FilmClub.org and students may study film and work towards writing reviews with the intention of having them published on the FilmClub.org website. A film club afternoon is held every last Friday per half term.

APPROACHES TO READING

Students enter college with a wide range of reading ability and reading skills. Comprehension and reading strategies vary considerably. Sadly very few chose to read for leisure.

Differences in the ability to decode may impact upon a student's level of independent reading ability and consequent ability to comprehend.

To address this reading skills are revisited and developed and students are encouraged to identify areas they still lack understanding or confidence with or may have 'missed' or failed to grasp previously. These areas are then planned into the lessons. Medium term planning may be diverted to enable this to happen as the gap/need is identified.

For some students who may require specific reading support, a variety of reading scheme books with low reading age and high interest age are being introduced. For all students the intention is to also develop a selection of books available for recreational reading during tutor times. The aim is to gather a variety of fiction and non-fiction books at a wide spread of reading ages and interests. Magazines will also be sought. The focus is upon raising motivation and enjoyment of recreational reading, sharing and discussion of texts.

Additionally, the long-term intention is to expand a student's ability and confidence through reading activities and recreational reading that are realistic and reflective of everyday life. Within Functional Skills lessons students have opportunity to experience a wide range of reading from pamphlets, invoices, WebPages, TV magazines, bills, instruction booklets etc.

FONT STYLES AND VARIETY

It is acknowledged that due to the wider variety of courses and activities engaged with in college – e.g. work experience, travel training, Functional Skills texts, students will be exposed to a variety of formats, computer fonts and hand written material. Such fonts, text types and hand written material, whether printed/un-joined or cursive, can challenge some pupils especially if they are used to reading text predominantly in one computer font.

Thus in college Functional Skills texts, worksheets etc will use a wide variety of fonts, including handwritten, in order to accustom and skill students. The aim is to avoid putting the students at any further disadvantage on these courses and in their exams when fonts are used that differ from the prescribed font in main school.

APPROACHES TO WRITING

Progress in writing has been found to lead to widespread improvements in a student's reading and S&L ability and confidence – thus writing takes the key focus within the English College curriculum.

A key feature of College is for a student to be able to write independently and confidently at a level that reflects their own actual capabilities. This is challenging for many students who may have previously relied upon assistance including copying and scribing.

A variety of approaches are followed to aid writing progress. The use of colours, lines and symbols aids a student's understanding of semantics and grammar. From this students also explore understanding the contexts of Who, What, When Where, Why and How, key features of reading comprehension. Linked in with this is a greater visual support for spelling, many students having struggled to make progress with a sole dependency upon phonics. Included in this visual support approach is the use of mnemonics that appeal to the students and aid recall of spelling, grammar and semantics.

Students have opportunity to write in a variety of styles they may have need for in later life. For example writing notes, letters and emails in both formal and informal contexts. Form filling is covered and students are encouraged to use both their home and College addresses and to know their own and parents/carers contact details. They are also presented with a wide variety of fonts and handwritten material/sheets to ensure that they can read and recognise words in different presentations.

To ensure consistency of approach all College staffs are informed of students' capabilities and Functional Skills levels within the autumn term once these are established. College staffs in other subject areas are encouraged to support and expect a similar level of independent writing from students in their lessons. Many students do not transfer their learning into other curriculum areas as they may struggle to recognise it as skills that move across their life and learning. Developing this realisation can be a key factor in aiding a student to progress in English.

Handwriting

Students who may benefit and be capable of improving the ease and quality of their handwriting are encouraged and supported to do so. Revision of basic upper and lower case letters is frequent and linked in with spelling and alphabetical order tasks. It is recognised that for some students handwriting difficulties may be ingrained habits OR due to a wide variety of sensori-motor, retained reflexes or visual reasons.

If a student demonstrates that steps to improve their handwriting is impacting negatively upon their self-confidence and self image, then improving clarity becomes the focus. Every intention is given to supporting and developing a student's personal and emotional well being as well as academic progress. Respecting and acknowledging the differences and difficulties students may have with handwriting is a part of this.

For some students the use of laptops, iPads or other non-tech, suitable communication aids e.g. alphabet boards with a scribe, enables them to write and to access the curriculum. Although typing isn't formally taught, support is given to those who would benefit from being shown a more efficient means of typing.

Spelling

Spelling ability and skills varies enormously amongst students entering College. Many rely upon phonics to support spelling but struggle with this approach despite previous years of phonics teaching. Thus they are reluctant to re-engage in spelling activities.

Instead many students are found to have a stronger ability and preference in using sight recognition of the words they have to spell. We support this and employ activities that endorse onset-rime links, colours to partition whole words into visual chunks or mnemonics to aid visualisation. Activities including TRUGS (Teaching Reading Using Games), Onset-Rime activities (via adapted Phonological Awareness training materials) and interactive spelling challenges between students are also used to motivate. The social interaction in a games approach has been found to allow students to feel comfortable making mistakes and in requesting or receiving support. Dictionary skills are also taught and revised regularly. Wider benefits from this variety of approaches have been students that are more willing to make mistakes and showing increased resilience across their learning in then correcting their spellings.

MARKING POLICY (within Functional Skills English)

Within College English a student's ability and perseverance to self-check, correct and monitor their own work is valued and encouraged. An emphasis towards independence is fostered.

Class marking

Class marking (students mark their own work as answers are discussed/given to the whole class by the class teacher) is used frequently. The value of discussion and opportunity to spot and correct mistakes whilst still in the lesson is an important learning opportunity. As many students feel uncomfortable with peer marking, class marking places an emphasis on trust and honesty coupled with fostering openness and understanding that mistakes are a natural and valuable part of learning. Teaching staff monitor for fair and correct marking and this is an effective way of assessing anxiety issues a student may have over their learning. It has also been found to lead the student into the good habit of checking and correcting work upon completion and recognising when editing is required. This needs to be a key skill for students if they work within E3 or L1.

Marking Policy – the general school mark scheme has been adopted within College. Students are aware of the coding.

Highlighting via Marking

Within College a method of initial marking has been devised using a highlighter. The concept is to highlight the error so the student is made aware of the error constructively. The student then has to analyse why there is an error and to self correct over the highlighter.

Errors are highlighted in a variety of ways:

A spelling error – the complete word is highlighted

Missing Capital - the lower case letter is highlighted,

Missing punctuation – the place the punctuation mark needs to be is highlighted

Missing word – the area above where the missing word needs to be is highlighted

New paragraph – the opening word for the new paragraph is highlighted with an opening bracket

This has proved to be a hugely beneficial approach. Students are not made anxious by an error. They are directed to recognise themselves the error they have made and to recognise or discuss with staff why it is an error and how it should be corrected. They then correct the error and can see the completed work that they have achieved.

This has proven to be an invaluable method of revising or consolidating knowledge. It also endorses checking of work, being willing and able to do this themselves without prompting and then leads to self-correction, editing and improvement. It has proven to raise writing standards and abilities and the students enjoy the collaborative approach it endorses versus a judgmental criticism of their work.

TARGETS

Students are set targets to work towards the beginning of each school year. They may be across all S&L, R or W elements or focus on one key area if this is a priority for that term. These are monitored regularly and changed when appropriate. Students have to be evidenced as capable of achieving their targets areas independently, on a minimum of 3 occasions, before being considered as competent. Only then are targets replaced. Functional Skills English relies upon students working at this level of independence if they are to achieve their accreditation.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

Formative Assessment

The OCR Functional Skills English grades Entry levels 1,2,3 (and occasionally Level 1 & 2) are used to broadly level students work internally. Within each level there is a further 3 levels – e.g. E1 low, E1 mid, E1 high if this is required. This gives a broad indication of a student's attainment.

At the beginning of each year students complete a diagnostic OCR assessment paper and an independent writing task that supports the award of an initial level. From this an Aspirational Target is set for the end of the summer term.

Detailed Internal monitoring from January 2018 will be recorded on Pupil Asset Tracker. PAT will show coverage of learning as well as depth and learning. It will then highlight where gaps are for individual students as well as the whole class. The weighted % will show how a student is performing overall and will record a summative grade.

This information will then be able to contribute towards formulation of targets for students and their groups.

Accreditation

In Year 13 or 14 those students felt capable of doing so will be submitted for formal exams with the intention of securing an OCR Functional Skill qualification. For those students for whom this would be an unrealistic expectation evidence will be collated towards their ASDAN E1 Personal Progress Qualification.

Consideration is given to a student's needs and potential issues with anxiety. Discussions with any such students then occur. A student who feels unable to cope with an exam will be supported as required in the aim of helping them overcome their issues and access the exam successfully. If necessary a student may take a lower grade exam or be disapplied from an area. All parties will be consulted for opinion and agreement.

INCLUSION

We aim for all students to achieve and apply independently real life English skills as highly as they can according to their individual abilities. We will endeavour to identify which students or groups of students are under-achieving and take steps to improve their attainment. More able students will be identified and suitable challenges provided.

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS

The long-term intention is to explore and devise areas of collaboration between the Functional Maths and Functional English curriculum where there may be an overlap of contexts and a potential opportunity for real life contexts to be devised and explored.

