



# **Philosophy and Aims of the EAL Department**

# **ACADEMIC MATTERS**

## **– Section X**

### **Philosophy and Aims of the EAL Department**

## **Philosophy and aims of the EAL department.**

The EAL department exists as part of Taunton School to offer help and support to all students for whom English is not their first language. This help is a mixture of academic and pastoral and extends to all areas of school life, as these students are learning not only a second language but also how to survive and thrive in a new culture. We cater for all international students in the school, including the IB students who are taught as a cohort in the department for Theory of Knowledge.

Our main aims are:

- to support and foster a spirit of internationalism and respect for different cultures;
- to instil a lifelong love of language learning;
- to teach all aspects of the English language;
- to provide subject-specific support in all areas;
- to provide an element of pastoral support, liaising with House and subject staff;
- to help students to achieve any English qualifications necessary for their continued academic progress.

Over the past two years, the HoD EAL has worked closely with the Admissions team in order to generate an English language assessment screening process which is practical and helpful. As a result, all international students (i.e. all those from non-majority English speaking countries) are required to sit a profile of assessments, one of which is an online English language assessment (the Oxford Placement Test), after which, if they are successful, they will be required to have a face-to-face interview with either the HoD EAL or the Deputy Head Academic (or often both). The Admissions team are aware of the 'language benchmarks' issued for each year group, and the details of online assessments are sent through to Admissions for inclusion in the student's profile/record. These results are later extracted and entered into the EAL Register, should the said student be successful in their application.

The department hopes to be able to give international students a secure base in the school, so that they feel supported and able to ask for assistance when necessary. Even the most integrated and confident of students will occasionally need more specific help than can be given in the mainstream classroom and we try to be ready to cope with any of the problems they present to us. If these students are to gain from the English education system, we must provide them with the fullest possible backing in all areas of school life, understanding the impact their respective cultures will have on their learning and their relationships. The department also acts as a link between students and subject staff, working in all subject areas to help with communication and to resolve any learning difficulties. This will include working closely with the EP department in cases of students with overlapping EP/EAL needs.

In Years 9, 10 and 11, some international students are timetabled to EAL whilst the rest of the year are studying a modern foreign language. These classes are all exam-based curriculum course (FCE and IGCSE ESL). They are designed to support and reinforce as much as possible the work being done by the students in their mainstream English classes as well as generate an internationally valid and respected certificate. All these classes have a homework requirement which fills the time allotted to a foreign language for the other students and which is set in accordance with school policy. Various 1-1 or small-group sessions are held outside of the normal

scheduled timetable so as to provide support for students with the challenges of literacy across their curriculum.

Some international students are allowed to take a second modern foreign language which means that they do not have any timetabled time in the EAL dept. While every attempt is made to keep track of their progress, there are obvious difficulties in the situation and we can only rely on subject staff, particularly the English dept., to alert us to any problems. We do see many of them while supporting in other subject areas and they are aware that they can ask for individual help at any time.

The considerable increase in student numbers in recent years means that we work hard to ensure that we track all the international students whose first language is not English by liaising regularly with HODs, subject teachers, tutors and other parts of the school where the students might have been prior to TS. There is also an EAL Register in which is compiled all the relevant data (mainly in relation to language assessments) for students at the school.

In the sixth form, those students who choose to apply for universities in the UK will need to either have a grade B (or occasionally a C) in IGCSE First language English or a valid IELTS certificate. We offer instruction for this examination as well as English for Academic Purposes, and many students take the IELTS Academic examination in Y12 or at the end of the Autumn term in Y13. The IELTS classes carry a homework requirement and all students are encouraged to spend as much time as they can reading and studying independently, taking part in co-curricular activities, watching films and so on. For many of them, their lack of background knowledge of British culture inhibits their learning as much as their lack of subject-specific vocabulary.

Outside this timetabled time, staff are always available -- providing there is room on their timetables -- to see students individually or in small groups, either for the whole year or on a 'needs-based' basis (viz. as and when needed). We also offer some degree of support in the subject classroom in a variety of areas, either on a short or long term basis. This is an area which is particularly beneficial as we can deal with problems that arise as they occur and also have a clear idea of the tasks set for the students, which enables us to reinforce the subject back in the department in a follow up session. It is particularly valuable when there are several international students in a group. The main focus of our work is to make sure that the international students remain in mainstream classes, following a normal curriculum and taking IGCSE- and A-level exams in the subjects of their choice, which will enable them to move on to university either in the UK or elsewhere. When it does become necessary to withdraw a student from a particular subject, we do our best to apply accelerated learning so that the student can return to the classroom as soon as possible.