



GCSE English 10

Pilot centre case study



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Background

I have been involved with the Edexcel GCSE English Pilot from the start and what attracted me to this innovative specification in the first place continues to impress me.

The most important aspect of the Pilot for me, then, as now, is that of choice. English can never be an optional subject, it is simply too important for that but students find that they have myriad choices both in their everyday lives and in school. If they can choose between resistant materials, textiles, food and electronics, why do they have to keep reading all those poems when it's the writing they really like? The English Pilot has allowed pupils to choose the kind of path through this broad subject that enables them to gain credit for the skills, interests and aptitudes that they have.

Impact/Results

This is equally true for teachers; the modular nature of the course allows staff to specialise and become expert educators in their chosen field. Teachers are not forced to take on aspects of the subject with which they don't feel comfortable. On the other hand, once there are specialists for the different units within a department, it is amazing how quickly enthusiasm and expertise spreads from teacher to teacher and, before too long, increased confidence leads staff to teaching a unit on, say, video production, because colleagues are available to support and advise.

Another, extremely important aspect of this new syllabus, is the focus on language change and development. It recognises that an increasing amount of communication takes place digitally and that this will continue to grow. Students feel far more comfortable using a keyboard than a pen. Alongside the study of literature, non-fiction and media texts comes the study of the new grammars of digital technology. This isn't dumbing down, this is recognising that English as a subject has broadened and that English as a language is, and always has been, in a state of continual change.

Quite rightly, not only are young people encouraged to investigate and analyse the language of digital technologies, but they are also encouraged to write it. The practical element of English has long been missing and now, with this specification, it is possible to be rewarded for the ability to write complex video texts, web pages and podcasts that communicate effectively using these new grammars.

Above all, I have noticed an increased enthusiasm for all aspects of English in both pupils and teachers. A level uptake has increased, grades have improved and a huge amount of professional development has taken place. The brightest have been stretched and those with weaker literacy skills have been supported.