



GCSE English 10

Pilot centre case study



Philip May

Head teacher,
Costessey High
School, Norwich.

Background

Costessey High School is a National Challenge School, currently in Special Measures for the second time. In 2008, we met the National Challenge by increasing our 5+ A*-C (including English + maths) from 27% to 36%, and increased our overall 5+ A*-C from 39% to 55%. The increase in English grades, from 35% to 56% was a significant factor and the Edexcel modular course played a significant part in our improvement.

We serve an area of relative deprivation on the western edge of Norwich. Prior attainment on intake is below average and we were an associate school in the national Low Attaining Pupil Pilot. Significant numbers were on the C/D borderline and just missed a higher grade on the final English examination. A move to modular examination looked the right move and our application to join the Edexcel Pilot was successful.

Impact/Results

Students knew that English was important. The Edexcel modular Pilot itself assisted the continuous monitoring of progress: students benefited from knowing which grades were 'in the bag'. Students pushing for A and B grades were aided by the modular course as well.

There was a strong positive impact on teachers too. Teachers could easily see where students had made secure progress and build upon it. Teachers could see where further work and improvement were required and where their advice was needed. Teachers benefited from the positive response of students motivated to achieve.

The Pilot played a crucial role in engaging and motivating learners' English. They could see where they had done well and regular 'marks in the bag' from year 10 onwards spurred them on to raise achievement. Previously disengaged students were ready to resit examinations to improve their grades. It is no coincidence that our best ever English results contributed to our best ever 'gold standard' results - and our highest ever sixth form/College staying on rates. Results at 5+ A*-G were at national average - in an attendance target school in challenging circumstances.

The English Pilot specifications and guidance material are generally good. We have had three Heads of English and three Seconds since the start of the Pilot three years ago - and a change of examinations officer! The English Pilot team and other Edexcel staff have been very helpful when new staff and I have made mistakes or needed guidance.

The bite-sized learning and assessment opportunities of the Pilot and its breadth have been fundamental to our success in raising standards and meeting the National Challenge for the first time in our history.