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**Five Case Studies the delivery of GCSE English and Maths to the 16-19 cohort**

Introduction

These five case studies were produced as part of a project to identify and document effective practice in delivering English and maths to 16-19 year old students, with a specific focus on GCSE provision. The project was commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) as part of a range of initiatives that aim to improve sector capacity and capability to deliver maths and English, to raise awareness and to directly support improved achievement in GCSE results. Research and development activities were carried out by the UCL Institute of Education between January and July 2015.

The aims of the project were:

* To identify and categorise critical success factors to achieve a strategic approach to delivering maths and English at all levels.
* To identify and categorise critical success factors to achieve a strategic approach to delivering maths and English in different educational settings.
* To identify organisations where effective and promising practice is occurring, and to engage five of these providers as partner organisations to collaborate on project outputs.

IOE worked closely with five Further Education (FE) Colleges, each of which contributed a case study on an element of their approach to GCSE English and Maths delivery. Our partners were:

* Simon Pollard, Angela Gallaher and Wendy Higgin, Accrington and Rossendale College (AccRoss).
* Tinyan Akin-Omoyajowo, Barking and Dagenham College (BDC).
* Suzanne Plaister, Emma Chatelier and Anastacia Johnson, East Berkshire College (EBC).
* Steve Fowler, Selby College (SC).
* Alex Lindsay, South Leicestershire College (SLC).

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1. The English and maths Steering Group and its role in driving a common cross college approach to English and maths.

**Accrington and Rossendale College****: an introduction**

Accrington and Rossendale College (AccRoss) is located in the East Lancashire Borough of Hyndburn, which is the 40th most deprived area out of the 326 districts in England. Deprivation is therefore higher than the national average and 57% of learners come from households with a disadvantaged postcode. In 2013, Lancashire schools Key Stage 4 (KS4) attainment (pass rate for 5 A\*-C including English and Maths) was 55.9%; however, the performance of feeder schools in Accrington and the surrounding area ranged from 43% down to 26%. Many learners join AccRoss having been unsuccessful at achieving C+ grades at GCSE.

AccRoss is a vocational FE College with provision ranging from Entry level through to Foundation degree, but until September 2015 no A-level provision was offered. Learners aged 16-19 years old follow study programmes or apprenticeships in a broad range of trades and professions, with the exception of Land-based studies and Art and design. The majority of learners join programmes at Levels 1 and 2, with Level 3 Provision being offered in the form of Edexcel qualifications such as Extended Diplomas. In the 2014-15 academic year, 960 16-18 year old learners were enrolled.

In 2009, Accrington and Rossendale College was graded “Outstanding” by Ofsted and in the 2013-14 academic year the college was in the top 6% with an overall success rate of 90.2% (excluding Functional Skills)[[1]](#footnote-1).

**The importance of a common cross college approach to English and maths**

**Background**

Prior to the introduction of the new funding condition requiring all 16-18 year old learners to study towards grade C in English and/or maths, English and maths provision was viewed as a separate qualification at AccRoss, with little connection to the vocational courses offered by the College. Learners would often be enrolled on an English or Maths qualification, depending on what was felt appropriate, to support the learner’s main qualification, but the number of GCSE enrolments for 16-19 learners improving their grades was small.

In September 2013, the College Senior Leadership Team, in recognition of the increased significance of English and Maths, both in terms of funding and of the need to build these skills in learners, through the discrete provision via GCSE and Functional Skills, and by embedding these subjects into vocational teaching, discussed the creation of an English and Maths Committee. In February 2014, following a college restructure the previous autumn, the English and Maths Steering Group was formed.

This Steering Group has provided the strategic drive to start the process of ensuring that English and maths are central to all curriculum offerings and has been responsible for driving cultural change across the College.

**The evolution of the English and Maths Steering Group**

The Steering Group’s original purpose was to “have strategic oversight of the planning, delivery and performance of English and maths across the college”. Within this remit it would:

* Ensure that students aged 16-19 are able to access high quality programmes which support the development of their skills in English and maths and the achievement of appropriate qualifications.
* Oversee other provision in English and maths, including specialist teaching qualifications and programmes for adult learners.
* Take cognisance of developments in English and maths qualifications and Awarding Body options.
* Monitor performance and direct improvement strategies.
* Ensure that funding, reporting, audit and quality assurance requirements are met.
* Review staffing models and other resources to ensure they are fit for purpose.
* Report to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Board of Governors as appropriate.

**Steering Group membership**

Since it was established in February 2014 the following staff have sat on the Steering Group:

* Principal
* Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality
* Director of Learner Services (Chair)
* Director of Quality
* Head of Funding
* Head of Faculty: English, Maths and Foundation studies
* Deputy Head of Faculty: English and Maths
* Apprenticeship Manager
* Head of Faculty: Business Solutions, Hospitality and Catering

The membership therefore represents a sizeable proportion of the College Senior Leadership Team and provides a clear steer to other staff of the Steering Group’s importance.

**What has been the impact, and how has this been evidenced?**

Given the strategic approach, the Steering Group has impacted on the College in several ways. Whilst these impacts have only been felt over the past 12-16 months they have started cultural change, through staff and curriculum, through ownership of English and maths and altering perceptions of the purpose of English and maths within study programmes. The following strategies and tactical changes have made the biggest impacts to date.

* **Switching Awarding Body for Functional Skills**

In 2013-14 a review of the College’s Awarding Body for Functional Skills was undertaken to ensure it was fit for purpose. Following this review and the results of a pilot using off-site apprentices, the decision was taken to switch Functional Skills provision in its entirety to City and Guilds. The College now experiences a maximum of 20 days waiting time for results, and on-demand, on-line testing is available. Furthermore, the method for reporting results now provides the English and Maths team and the Steering Group with data on “in year” progress, allowing scrutiny of progress, up-to-date information for learners and vocational tutors, and allowing us to target learners in need of greater support more rigorously. There are high expectations of improved results as a result of this more timely information.In the light of more learners being required to do GCSE in future years the teaching team reviewed the suitability of the new Syllabus for two year GCSEs and chose to remain with AQA for Maths but move to the Welsh board for English.

* **“Code Switching” placing more ownership with vocational areas**

At the start of the 2014-15 academic year, English and Maths sat separately from study programmes; the subjects were separately timetabled, planned for and coded through the college curriculum planning process, creating dislocation between English and maths and other components of the study programme. To rectify this and ensure the vocational teams owned English and maths performance more completely, the strategic decision was taken to “code switch”, that is, to recode English and Maths so they were placed integrally alongside the other component parts of the study programme (main qualification, tutorial, work experience). This decision was part of the College drive to increase accountability across vocational teams for all elements of a learner’s programme of study. Without the strategic support of the Steering Group and agreement on this approach from those college areas that could make this a reality, such an ambition would not have been realised in a year. Vocational teams are now graded three times a year within the college self-assessment process; this process includes tracking learner attendance for Functional Skills and GCSE sessions which means that vocational areas see the impact of English and maths for their own performance and quality scores.

* **Embedding of English and maths targets within work placement activity**

Whilst the requirement for high quality work placement opportunities is well understood within the vocational programme, it was felt necessary to provide a framework of target setting to ensure learners had explicit targets in order to get the most out of external work placement opportunities. The Steering Group requested that English and maths targets should be included in work experience planning, the actual placement and in learner reflections following placement.

The Steering Group tasked the Deputy Head of Faculty for English and Maths to work with the Head of Personal Development to provide guidance and a template (see Appendix 1 of this case study) so planning, execution and reviewing of work placement activity could include smart targets incorporating English and maths skills and experiences. The guidance required learners to consider targets for English and maths whilst on placement and to list and describe the opportunities to use English and maths skills that naturally occurred during the placement. The intended result of this initiative was that learners would be more aware of English and maths as key employability skills and to be explicit about this in their reviews of their work experience.

* **Quality focus**

Having key strategic leaders as members of the Steering Group aids cross-college implementation of new processes, providing greater scrutiny of English and maths delivery. This has facilitated the cross-college approach by specifically reporting on English and maths within the observation of teaching and learning process.

AccRoss uses a “no-notice” teacher observation process and, following Steering Group discussion, the observation form was amended to include specific feedback on the effective learning and teaching of English and maths that was observed in session, be these planned activities or naturally occurring opportunities.

This approach has provided firm evidence of the quality of English and maths teaching and learning within vocational classes and has produced a range of good practice examples that can be shared across curricula.

With the college Self-Assessment process limiting grades have been introduced for 2014/15 which focusses on those indicators which are viewed as having the most significant impact on outcomes for learners. In order to be graded as outstanding, a team must have at least a grade 2 (good) overall across a number of the priority indicators. In 2014-15 this has included observation of teaching and learning grades by team and overall learner attendance. The College is considering expanding these indicators in 2015/16 to include specific reference to attendance and achievement at English and maths sessions in order to further drive cultural and behavioural change to ensure vocational teams treat English and Maths attendance (and ultimately success) with at least the same importance as the other vocational components of the Study Programme.

Additionally, at a time when staff development budgets are tight, the Steering Group agreed a two day schedule using external consultants on discreet Functional Skills and GCSE provision. The useful feedback and occasional home truths have enabled the specialist teaching team to continually improve classroom practice, encouraged innovation and allowed for an objective assessment of the quality of teaching.

* **Greater proportion of study programme hours being assigned for English and maths**

Following results in both GCSE and Functional Skills in 2013-14 it became evident to the Faculty management team that the 2015-16 academic year would require an increased number of hours for Functional Skills and GCSE to improve results and to place these skills firmly at the heart of the study programme.

As a result of expressing this request to the Steering Group, Functional Skills hours have increased from 48 to 72 and GCSE hours from 90 to 144. Whilst there has been concern amongst staff over “English and maths are taking hours away from the ‘real’ curriculum”, the rationale and need has been understood by the vast majority of areas. Coupling this with a centralising of Foundation programmes within the same faculty will allow learners to be better grounded in English and Maths, providing opportunities for improved success rates at GCSE and allowing both subject fundamentals and innovations to have equal billing within Functional Skills.

* **Using Pastoral care to aid class and exam attendance**

The College employs a team of Personal tutors assigned to each faculty to provide pastoral support to learners. The Steering Group recognised this team would help support attendance at English and maths sessions focussing on reporting and chasing up absences and supporting exam attendance. Personal tutors are assigned English and maths classes and will check attendance and contact absent learners, reporting reasons to both the English and maths tutors and the vocational tutor. This has enabled previous lower attendance in English and maths lessons to be brought much more closely in line with that of vocational subjects, aiding learners’ chances of success in English and maths.

Additionally, within the three Functional Skills exam windows (December, March and May) and at GCSE examinations in June, the personal tutor team assist exam attendance and success in two ways. First, they organise, through the healthy FE programme, breakfast and snacks prior to exams so learners can arrive early for exams, in a calm atmosphere, be fed if necessary and exams can start in an orderly manner. Secondly the team ring learners who have not arrived in decent time to remind them of the exam, and encourage them to attend. As a result exam attendance is now better measured, the pre-examination organisation is smoother and learners achieve better results.

This is a further example that by having senior and influential staff on the Steering Group, resources can be directed to support English and maths through a whole college approach.

* **Supporting the integrity of English and maths**

Having attended a KS4 meeting with local feeder schools it was apparent to the staff attending that much of the classroom practice being discussed could be best described as “coaching”, “coaxing” and “practice paper completion” as opposed to teaching and learning. This approach was seen by staff as very demotivating and helped explain why learners enrolling at college were struggling with the fundamentals of English and maths. The message from Steering Group was unequivocal – we were to focus on quality teaching and learning enabling learners to grasp fundamentals of these subjects and providing a better grounding in the subjects, rather than merely chasing a positive outcome through more superficial methods.

**Future steps:**

**An evolving remit**

The Steering Group membership and remit have been recently reviewed with a slimmed down membership. The Principal, satisfied that the group has purpose and has achieved much of what was envisaged back in Autumn 2013, will leave the Steering Group as will the Director of Learning Services, leaving the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality as Chair. Now that English and maths is central within study programmes and following restructure of the College middle management tier the Steering Group will receive reports on English and maths progress by curriculum team. This will alert the Steering Group to areas of effective practice within the curriculum through sharing of such practice through CPD and other in college training. Where performance is below expectation, this can be addressed through the college’s “special measures” quality improvement process.

*Greater governance oversight*

English and maths is often a “hot topic” at the Board of Governors Curriculum and Quality Committee. Whilst the college has no plans to specify a governor with formal oversight of English and maths, it is likely that governors will attend some Steering Group meetings. Reports will be devised and provided to this committee as the English and maths provision steps up to the September 2015 requirements of the funding condition. The College introduced a Governor score card in the 2014-15 academic year with two of the Key Performance Indicators being for Success rates for GCSE English and maths A\*-C grades and Functional Skills English and maths. It is likely that the Head of Faculty for English and Maths will be asked attend this committee as appropriate, to report in more detail on English and maths, progress, performance and risks.

*Deeper dialogue and closer planning with curriculum teams*

Whilst more of an operational concern, deeper dialogue between the English and maths team and curriculum staff has been a point of discussion and will continue to be so. As English and maths become an accepted part of study programmes, with greater ownership of learner attendance and greater interest in learner success at exams, it is expected that the flow of communication between English and maths tutors and the curriculum teams will need to be more regular and effective. Steps have been taken in terms of day-to-day communication and assigning English and maths “link” tutors to curriculum teams but further solidification of this is likely to feature on future agendas.

*Continued change of study programme to provide flexibilities for English and maths*

Given the raising of the participation age to 18 and the current low rates of success at A\*-C for one year GCSE re-sits in English and maths, there is the opportunity to review the college “curriculum footprint” to take account of the greater presence of English and maths in study programmes. Ideas currently being considered include ensuring that when study programmes span two academic years, the GCSE is also taught over two years. This will offer a greater chance of success without constraining the other learning activities and limiting the size of the main qualification to ensure that study programme content is manageable for learners, whilst ensuring English and maths remains central.

*Specific targets set by the Steering Group for delivery with agreed time frames*

The Steering Group has been instrumental in driving a whole college approach to English and maths and making progress in improving the measurement of progress and beginning cultural change with regards to their prominence within the curriculum. However, there is much work left to do. Key targets need to be set and monitored via the steering group in a manner which doesn’t duplicate effort or conflict with established college processes and procedures such as the Self-Assessment Review, Special Measures and the Teaching and the Learning Observation process. Once the key message that English and maths is central to the work of the college is further embedded, the Steering Group may take on a revised remit of scrutiny of performance against agreed targets and time frames.

**Recommendations for other colleges**

Given the recent experience at Accrington and Rossendale College the following recommendations can be made in terms of formulating a Steering Group:

*Ensure leadership backing*

Ensure the membership of an English and Maths Steering Group has sufficient influence to drive change through and has the appetite to do so. Given the size of Accrington and Rossendale College, this included members of SLT and the Principal. Inevitably this means decisions and action carry great weight, making roll out and delivery to vocational areas easier as a result.

*Devolve ownership through procedures and reporting*

English and maths performance needs to be owned by all staff. To drive accountability it is important that basic Key Performance Indicators such as attendance at class can be attributed to the relevant curriculum teams. The Self-Assessment Review (SAR) process has been a key driver at Accrington and Rossendale in “forcing” this accountability and making attendance rates transparent. This has been difficult for curriculum areas and the English and maths team as it can open up all teams to potential criticism. Such criticism needs to be tempered with the understanding that this is a new way of reporting and provides a starting point, from which progress can be monitored.

*Communicate, restate and overstate*

Whilst leadership support is important, decisions and changes to existing processes need to be clearly communicated to staff together with reasons and justifications. Deliverers of these messages need to be prepared to repeat, restate and overstate these messages so they are understood in vocational teams. This approach is often repetitious and frustrating but, without this, the desired changes will not occur. English and maths is no longer “somebody else’s problem”, it has shared responsibility and accountability and this requires regular reinforcement and will continue to do so.

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast” was Peter Drucker’s quote. To change culture requires attitudinal change, and we recognise that clear communication and explanation of expectations plays a critical role in achieving this.

“What get measured gets managed” is another adage. For the Steering Group to direct strategy and tactical decisions, quality data sources are necessary to provide a starting point on where to direct efforts and secondly to measure progress. It goes without say that using robust data sources is necessary in successfully driving the English and maths strategy.

**AccRoss Case Study; Appendix 1: Work Experience Placement Template**

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**Work Experience Placement – Skills Development, Learning Outcomes & Target Setting.**

Learning Outcomes should be realistic and linked to your course and planned progression. This should be discussed and agreed with your tutor prior to your placement, and may be the same as or different from other learners in your group. Set SMART targets to help you work towards your learning outcomes. Your SMART targets should be personal to you and help you achieve your learning outcomes.

Setting targets for your placement will give you specific goals to work towards making the experience more beneficial for you. This will help you get the most out of your time on placement. It will also be helpful for your employer to see what you need to achieve in placement, as this will help them to plan work for you to complete whilst you are with them.

|  |
| --- |
| Meaningful and Purposeful Experience – Identify Learning Outcomes and Expectations of the Placement  *(include vocational, employability and Maths & English skills e.g. objective setting, links to assessment, work readiness, individual and group learning objectives, expectations of the placement experience, industry terminology)* |
|  |

**Remember:** When setting targets you should always make sure they are SMART, and that each target is broken down into achievable action points.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Work Placement SMART Targets | | | | |
| What do I need to do?  What skills do I want to develop? | How am I going to do it? | When am I going to do it? | Who or what may be able to support me? | How will I know this has been achieved? |
| 1. *Personal / employability skills* |  |  |  |  |
| 2. *Vocational Skills* |  |  |  |  |
| 3. *English / maths skills* |  |  |  |  |

**Work Experience – English and Maths**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre- Placement Planning | | | | Specific E + M objectives |
| Search employers/ business | Employer search (introduce job search skills/ sites) | Knowledge of different sites/ methods of finding employers / job search  Matching skills to employer  Identify intended progression / destination / career choice | English  ICT |  |
| Use of telephone directories / yellow pages/ Thompson local | Alphabet | English |  |
| Internet search | Use of search engines | ICT |  |
| Research business / employer | Research identified employers for information about the business | Use of search engines and websites | ICT |  |
| Contact with employers | Telephone call to employer  Introduction of self and request for work placement | Preparation for call, what to say, questions to ask, professionalism  Taking notes whilst on the phone | English |  |
| Curriculum vitae | Professional layout and presentation  Comprehensive | English |  |
| Application form (if appropriate or requested) | Completion of form, following instructions, information and data sharing, upper and lower case  Hand written or work processed  Professional presentation | English  ICT |  |
| Write a letter of request for placement | Layout and presentation | English |  |
| Write a letter of acceptance and thank you for accepting placement (prior to placement) | Layout and presentation | English |  |
| Post a letter | Address envelope  Print envelope  Stamp/ franking  Information on postal services  Size of letter / cost of postage | English |  |
|  | Email letter | Email – style of communication and layout of formal email  Attach document (CV) | English  ICT |  |
| Prep for placement | Plan journey | Search for exact location of the employer  Plan route, mode of transport and plans through;  Use of maps, distance, time of journey, setting off, getting home  Transport (public transport, cost and timetables) | Maths |  |
| Plan placement practice | Identify what learning is to take place and the expectations whilst of placement  Health and Safety  Learner declaration  Learning outcomes of the placement | Read and agree to the Code of Conduct  Complete learner declaration including names, addresses, telephone numbers including doctors (may need to research this information)  Identify what skills are required whilst on placement | English |  |
| Vocationally relevant terminology | Identify key vocationally relevant terminology | Learning new words / terminology  Use of a glossary | English |  |
| Placement | | | | |
| Introduction | Initial introduction of self to the employer | Professional communication and use of language | English |  |
| Induction | Take part in the induction process  Health and Safety | Completion of documentation | English |  |
| Timesheet | Completion of daily timesheet | Time (analogue / 24hr)  Calculation of working hours, per day, per week, in total (taking into consideration breaks, lunch). Template to use all skills to be completed by the learner | Maths |  |
| Placement Diary |  | Written completion of placement diary  Reflect on learning | English |  |
| Vocationally relevant outcomes | Differentiated learning – dependant on expected and opportunistic outcomes | Personalised to the learner, placement and vocation | English |  |
| Post Placement | | | | |
| Reflection | Reflection on learning during the placement | Critical reflection on learning and completion of documentation | English |  |
|  | Send letter to employer | As previous letter / correspondence to employer | English |  |
|  | Discussion and feedback to vocational tutor  Presentation to the group | Discussion and presentation skills | En glish |  |

2. The impact of participating in research activities, with a particular focus on the development of cloud technology approaches to supporting students

**Barking and Dagenham College – an introduction**

Barking and Dagenham College (BDC) is a large further education college with approximately 15,000 students – half of whom are below the age of 19 – offering vocational and higher education courses as well as intermediate and higher level apprenticeships. It is a member of the Gazelle group of colleges, and also offers courses in partnership with Havering College of Further and Higher Education at the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence, under the name Thames Gateway College. The college achieves success rates of almost 90% making it one of the most successful colleges in the country.

Barking and Dagenham College was awarded an overall “Good” grade in its Ofsted report and was rated as outstanding for leadership and management of the student experience. The College was particularly praised for its excellence in innovation and entrepreneurship, recognising its commitment to provide students with not only the resources to learn but also the extra support and opportunities to experience the world of work and encourage the UK’s future entrepreneurs.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, where the college is situated has been identified as the seventh most deprived out of London’s 32 boroughs and 22nd most deprived in the nation. Problems of disadvantage in education, income and crime are all significant drivers of deprivation in this borough[[2]](#footnote-2) which also has the lowest level of higher educational qualification in London. A third of Barking and Dagenham’s 19 year olds either have qualifications lower than GCSE level or have no qualifications at all. In line with the profile for the borough, 59% of 16-18 year old learners who came to BDC in the 2014-15 academic year did not have A\*-C in English and 62% did not have A\*-C in maths – and in every academic session, staff are faced with the challenge of turning these statistics around.

**Action Research at BDC – the story of the beginning**

This case study focuses on how research has influenced the delivery of English and maths at BDC with particular emphasis on how our “research journeys” have led to the discovery and use of cloud technology in teaching, learning, and assessment and in student support. It also describes how the introduction of innovative approaches to the delivery of maths and English in the college is linked to our research findings, and the effect these approaches have had on staff and learners.

The last few years have seen dramatic reform in the way that English and maths sit within Further Education. GCSEs now stand as the sector’s “gold standard” in these subjects for 16-18 students and, accordingly, UK colleges have been faced with, and continue to be faced by, significant challenges in facilitating effective teaching, learning and assessment in these qualifications.

At Barking and Dagenham College (BDC) we have sought to find answers to these challenges ourselves, on the front line, through undertaking of practitioner-led action research[[3]](#footnote-3). Whilst not providing us with answers to every challenge we face, action research has allowed us to make critical, objective and informed judgements on planned interventions and strategies that have consistently honed and improved our delivery of GCSE English and maths over the last four years.

This case study aims to tell our story – how and why we got involved in action research; how our initial findings led to more research; the research processes we undertook and examples of tangible impact the research projects have led to, especially in the delivery of GCSEs and student support.

Our initial research happened because we wanted to address the impassive attitudes and disengagement of our learners from the maths and English classes. We wanted to explore different models of promoting and delivering maths and English and to identify what would be most effective in increasing the opportunities to enhance teaching, learning and retention amongst young BDC learners. The findings from this initial research – *“Get them in, get them interested? Investigating effective strategies for motivating and engaging young LLN learners*”[[4]](#footnote-4) by Tinyan Akin-Omoyajowo – were both surprising and exciting. Our learners wanted more innovative, relevant and exciting delivery. Their request led to further action research and trials which make up the story of this case study.

The Wolfe report further reaffirmed what we were already looking to do at BDC through our research projects: identify ways to enhance our learners’ maths and English skills, help them achieve the GCSE grade and take them out of the unsatisfactory statistics linked with the borough.

**Act 1 Scene 2 – more research projects**

Because our findings were linked to theory and based on a strong learner voice, presenting these and the recommendations from the first research to the college leadership team was not an uphill task as it was obvious we were not just asking for reforms based on the researcher’s personal predispositions. As we began to implement these findings, we realised that more work had to be done and this would require a lot more than “common sense”, so we engaged in more research work.

The research project *“Ups and Downs: How effective are the new strategies to enhance the teaching of Functional Skills”* by Laurence Johnson (July 2013)[[5]](#footnote-5) looked at the how effective some of the recommendations we had started to implement were. For us, it was important that we monitored and evaluated these “new” strategies and where necessary, returned to the “drawing board”.

Though some of the responses from the learners were positive – for example, more interactive delivery methods, tutors being more supportive – we were not surprised that some learners still complained about relevance and lack of active learning (this is too much like school!) and the opportunity to use relevant technology as part of their study tools.

However, a concurrent research project looking into staff development was being carried out. If learners were identifying issues with delivery methods as major hindrances to engaging and learning, then we felt it was important to look at staff skills.

Even though the college was spending a lot of time and money on CPD activities, the reality in the classroom seemed far from expectation. The research project “’*From Management with love?’: Exploring JDP ( Joint Development Practice) as an integral part of conventional CPD methods in an FE context”* by Tinyan Akin-Omoyajowo (July 2013)[[6]](#footnote-6) looked at how working together as a group of “experts” rather than getting experts in to “tell us how to do it” might improve staff skills.

Based on an earlier work by Fielding et al (2005)[[7]](#footnote-7) and the findings during this research, the main recommendation to the college was that practitioners should be given the space and time to share and learn from each other; discuss and experiment new ideas, current trends and changes, resources, and experiences in a safe and supportive environment without fear of grades and judgements and to eliminate the feeling of isolation. Again, because this recommendation was based on theory and research findings, management was happy to approve a “JPD time” for members of the maths and English team.

A joint practice development methodology allowed our tutors to work with each and make use of the abundance of existing expertise we have at BDC. This methodology empowered our tutors and gave them a sense of ownership in their continued professional development – not to mention making the budget holder happy. Suddenly, there was a hunger for innovative delivery and everyone wanted to share resources and ideas – but some of these still needed testing which led to the next round of research and ensured we had a good Ofsted report, especially with regards to our delivery methods, student support and willingness to improve practice.

But we knew we still had a long way to go - and more issues to address.

One such issue was the need to ensure learners were properly assessed and placed in the right study group. While recognising the strengths and need for the online initial assessment tools, as a college striving for excellence in delivery, we knew we needed a more robust form of assessment if we were to ensure our learners got the best support and learning experience.

*“Make them laugh, make them cry; reimagining the initial assessment of GCSE English skills”* byPaul Roberts and Michael Smith (2014) [[8]](#footnote-8) was the research that was used to explore that challenge.

The purpose of this research was to explore some of the possibilities and practicalities of developing a more holistic and creative approach to initial assessment of GCSE English students. We wanted to move away from learners undertaking a “free writing” task just for the sake of it; the restriction in what could be measured and valued as well as the demotivation created by a dominant and impersonal nature of an ICT-based approach to assessing English skills.

It was obvious from the findings and recommendations of this research that the learners were not the only ones who wished for a change – or at least an adaptation of the initial assessment – the tutors wanted to try out this new tool. Without doubt, there were questions about the practicality of a tool that was not “easy to mark, easy to print and easy to show Ofsted” but again the new cultural shift toward encouraging practitioners to “find out through research, experiment, reflect and feedback” seem to be working!

These action research projects – their findings and recommendations – the new wave of JPD and everything else had two major impacts at the centre – outstanding learner experience and staff professional development. We kept reminding ourselves of the beginning and purpose of this journey – getting learners engaged and helping them become independent and successful. We kept going back to the initial recommendations and assessing how far we have met the learners' needs and requests.

We continued to take part in projects that would further enhance our innovative delivery and were not afraid to try out new ideas. Some of the ideas we tried out include team teaching – and we produced a training video[[9]](#footnote-9) that can be found on the Excellence Gateway website. On review, we realised that this idea, though laudable, was a very expensive model. We have now revised this and are currently embedding our maths and English skills within vocational subjects as well as using familiar and readily available technology to support our learners in and out of the class.

One of such technology is the google apps. We started the campaign “Let google drive your classroom” based on the work done by some members of the team. Practitioners and students are encouraged to enter the cloud space and virtual classrooms where they can share resources and ideas. Google classrooms can be accessed anywhere and on any device, making it easy for tutors to set, monitor and assess work and for learners to engage with their peers as well as submit work online.

This idea was further developed when the GCSE maths tutors decided to look at how to use cloud technology to support their disengaged and discouraged learners.

*“93% D-G what the* *‘Flip’ do we do? Can flipped learning improve the delivery of GCSE Maths in Further Education?”*[[10]](#footnote-10), an action research project carried out by Bilal Bobat and Danielle Watts saw an investigation into what our learners were doing when they left our classrooms versus what they could be doing. Podcasts, videos, google forms and forums sprang up as consequences and so did the “flip classroom”. Lessons were a continuation of the podcast or videos learners had been asked to watch. The result was that students were sometimes seen on the bus doing “homework”, preparing for the next lesson – and they were prepared. If they got stuck, they had access to their tutors and peers through the classroom! Using the flipped classroom also meant using less paper.

In summary, as a college, getting involved in research has helped us achieve the following:

1. We are now developing maths and English professionals who:
   * are now proactively leading on their own professional development;
   * are not afraid to share and learn in a safe and non-judgemental environment;
   * want to try new ideas and are bold to take feedback from learners;
   * are not “afraid” of research and the theory that supports their pedagogy.
2. Our learners are more confident in giving feedback because they know the college will respond.
3. Great support of the college leadership team.
4. Increased collaboration between maths and English specialist and vocational colleagues – leading to a more robust curriculum for learners.

And, in the words of Cathy Walsh (OBE), the Principal and CEO of BDC

*“Practitioners need to convince SLT that they not only have good ideas but these will have an impact on the classroom- and that's what you did.”*

Implementing our research findings not only continues to improve our learner engagement but our retention and success rate.

Our story continues…

**





*The English and Maths HUB was born in response to learners’ recommendations. It is a dedicated, devoted and independent area where English and maths are highly visible. Here we give 1-2-1 support and learners are able to access new technology and online resources for independent learning. It is a creative, innovative space with no walls – a place our learners can feel free to explore and learn*.

“Giving staff the opportunity to take part in research has led to dramatic changes in the teaching and learning of maths and English at Barking and Dagenham College. For instance, listening to how students want to learn has led to embracing the use of cloud technology so learners can improve their skills on the move in ways that suit them. They can write assignments on the bus home, get immediate feedback and use web-based activities independently. Through a series of action research projects, staff have taken time out to reflect on how they teach and how it really meets the needs of their learners. I am in no doubt this will lead to better engagement, improved retention and higher achievement in these subjects.”

***Sue Southwood, Programme Manager at the ETF and BDC Governor***

We cannot end our story without mentioning how the opportunity to participate in research does for us as a college. More than ever, we being invited to share our experiences and discoveries with other through conferences[[11]](#footnote-11), seminars & workshops – and sometimes we get to take our learners with us!

Some of our resources and examples of using cloud technology to support the delivery of English and maths are being used for teacher training[[12]](#footnote-12).

We know we are on a journey – and continue to improve on what we do.

**Key messages to other colleagues**

* Do not be afraid to test and try new things – base your actions on research and theory.
* Make your professional development your responsibility – be proactive. There are many opportunities out there – find them.
* Be learner-centred – talk to learners, listen to them and act – link your response to research and theory
* Money spent on staff development is well worth it – colleges should be bold and let their staff be experts too!!!
* Give your learners the best experience – you can only know what that is through research.

3. The importance of learner motivation and self-belief

**East Berkshire College: an introduction**

East Berkshire College is a medium sized college with two centres, Langley and Windsor. The Windsor campus acts as the Sixth Form College and Creative Arts centre while Langley is the vocational and adult education centre. For this project, we worked with staff form the Langley centre only. Currently, East Berkshire College has a high success rate for GCSE – around 80% for both English and maths.

East Berkshire College has been judged by Ofsted to be good with outstanding features. The report praised the quality of teaching and the high proportion of students gaining employment or progressing on to higher levels of study. Ofsted also found the College’s provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to be “outstanding”, reflecting the high success rates.

**Overview**

*Motivation*: A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. Stimulation of interest and enthusiasm.

*Self-belief*: Levels of self-belief are not set in stone; not unchangeable. Life experience teaches us to limit ourselves or the ideas we have about ourselves.

At East Berkshire College we have an inclusive student body and have tried to create an ethos or culture of motivation and self-belief through a variety of approaches, from redevelopment of the environment and outstanding teaching and learning, through the development of a DNA of teaching and learning which champions the use of Evidence Based Teaching to develop a growth mind-set, to the passionate and knowledgeable staff who care. The college has a “can do” approach for both staff and learners. We strongly believe that English and maths are fundamental skills for all of our learners and are part of their human rights. English and maths is a collegiate responsibility where we all need to work together to motivate learners to attend English and maths lessons and subsequently to develop skills and achieve their full potential.

Learners attending English and maths classes often lack motivation and self-belief. In the majority of cases, this is because they have previously failed at one or both of these subjects and, afraid of continuing the cycle of failure, they do not want to attend classes and retake exams. Learners can bring their previous negative learning experiences or negative perceptions of their own ability with them, and these act as barriers to learning. These barriers need to be acknowledged by all in order for learners to overcome them. Inspiring teaching that challenges learners to question ideas and reflect on their own ability ultimately motivates, and enables them to discard many of the limiting ideas or barriers to learning that they have.

**Headlines**

* English and Maths is a collegiate responsibility.
* Redevelopment of learning environment.
* Use of ILT/mobile technology.
* Development of a learning culture based on mutual respect and high expectations.
* “Expect to be challenged” model of teaching.
* DNA of Outstanding Teaching and Learning.
* Central English and maths department.
* English and maths integral to all courses.
* Embedding of English and maths skills into vocational courses.

**Redevelopment of Langley – a college for the 21st century**

In 2012, as part of a commitment to continue to raise standards, East Berkshire College embarked on a £30m improvement project at the Langley Campus, with three phases over three years. The refurbishment has provided state-of-the-art learning facilities, which include some internal remodelling and extension to the existing main building to provide more spaces that are social and study areas for students, a new Learning Centre, enhanced learning environments and improved landscaping.

The first phase of improvements saw the development of the Hospitality and Catering Academy and a new multi-purpose Sports Centre. The new bigger sports hall has provided a more comfortable environment for GSCE and Functional Skills exams.

Phase Two saw the development of new commercial Hair and Beauty salons, enhanced facilities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a simulated hospital environment for Health and Social Care and a brand new Innovation Lab. The two existing lecture theatres were also transformed into a single spacious lecture theatre, which has been used for GCSE revision sessions and has enabled us to teach bigger groups using a variety of learning technologies.

**Impact**

The development of the learning environment at Langley has boosted learner enrolment numbers and meant a larger cohort of learners needing English and maths courses. The new classroom facilities allow learners to learn in a more conducive environment that enhances the learner experience as they feel valued, motivated and inspired to learn.

**Learning Resource Centre and Mobile technology**

As part of the redevelopment of Langley College a new modern Learning Resource Centre was created in 2013 which incorporates individual learning zones, collaborative learning areas and use of mobile technology. Learners have flexible access to exciting and enabling mobile technology that allows them to complete independent learning activities anywhere within the college. This facility was particularly useful for learners revising for GCSE English and maths exams and made it possible for us to provide flexible and personalised revision workshops.

*Information Learning Technology*

In 2014 the college developed a new ILT content developer and advisor role. It was initially a one year project but has now been extended to two years. There are five of these posts across college, one within each curriculum area. The role is managed by the respective Director of Curriculum, with additional monthly meetings with both the Deputy Principle for Curriculum and Quality and the Director of Quality and Innovation.

The roles were designed to enable curriculum areas to meet the following targets from the ILT strategic plan:

* Develop the use of Moodle across all areas with the target of having 10% of all teaching and learning online.
* Develop the ICT/ILT skills of all staff to at least intermediate level.
* Ensure all learners have access to ILT/ICT through the implementation of mobile devices.

**Impact**

Within the English and maths department the focus has been on developing the design and accessibility of the English and maths Moodle pages. In the next phase we will develop more interactive content and activities with voiceovers added to PowerPoint resources and add more video clips of actual class teaching to enable learners to revisit lessons as part of their revision or to develop independence in catching up learning that was missed.

The ILT content developer has also worked one-to-one with lecturers to develop their use of technology, in particular the use of Excel, Moodle, Surface Pros and iPads. This aspect has worked particularly well, with the ILT content developer viewed as an integral team member, sharing the same office as staff thus enabling informal sharing of ideas, practice and some impromptu training and development. This has helped staff to overcome previous barriers to ILT and incorporate more ILT within lessons to engage learners.

**App of the week**

The implementation of specific apps for teaching and learning such as *Socrative*, *Padlet* and *Educreations* through “app of the week” training sessions has had the biggest impact of the various ILT changes. As a department, we held an ILT workshop to look at three different apps and how they could be used within teaching to motivate and engage learners through interactive activities. The training motivated staff to see the benefits of these apps, but another step was needed to ensure staff integrated these apps into their teaching. The idea of running an app of the week training programme over six weeks was developed. Staff attended a one hour training session arranged and run by the ILT content developer on Monday afternoons, where they were shown how to use the app for that week. They were then given time to familiarise themselves with the app, share practice and ask questions. They then had to implement the use of the app within lessons for the remainder of the week.

**Impact**

At the end of the week staff evaluated the use of the app within lessons looking at benefits, what worked well, what didn’t work and what they would do differently next time. Staff feedback indicated that the training was really beneficial as it made them embrace technology but in a way where they could see the potential benefits for both the learners and for their teaching environment.

**Inspirational quotes**

A feature of the new building improvement project was the use of inspirational quotes in the interior design with the aim of motivating and inspiring learners to achieve their full potential, and to reinforce the learning culture at the college.

The image below is of the main entrance at Langley College and is the first inspirational quote that the learners are greeted with. It emphasises the college’s main mission statement, which is to have high expectations of all learners and for learners to have high expectations of themselves.

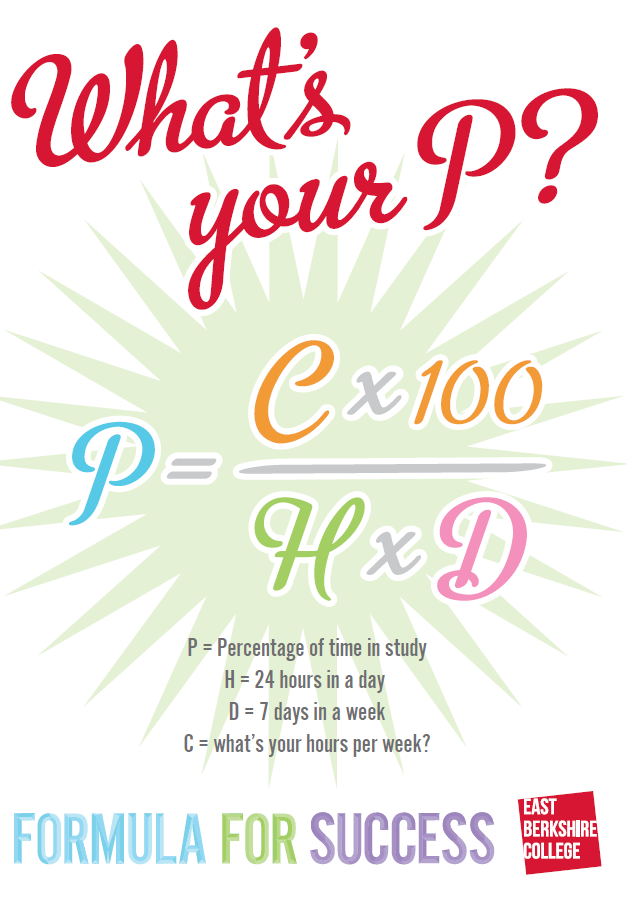
**Learner expectations**

The high expectations of learners cover success on course, as well as good behaviour in preparation for the world of work. The civility code, which is symbolised as a civility tree around college, was launched in 2012-13 as a standard interaction for staff and students and has now been embedded into college culture; learners on all courses and levels contribute to a culture of mutual respect.



*“What’s your P?” promotion*

To encourage learner motivation and independent learning, one manager shared an activity that he completed with his learners during induction. The idea is for learners to calculate the actual amount of time they spend actively learning. As a College Management Team, we felt that this was an important activity for all learners, and so, from September 2014, all learners now complete this activity during induction. Posters are displayed around college and their percentage of study time is followed up within tutorial activities. This was also a good opportunity to introduce formulas and further embed maths into everyday activities.



**DNA culture and development of Teaching and Learning**

In 2010 the college introduced the concept of “Stand Out Teaching and Learning” embracing all the qualities and concepts needed for outstanding practice. Stand Out champions were introduced to share practice and develop staff through training and development. The idea was to create a consistent and standardised approach to teaching and learning. All staff received training on Outstanding Teaching and Learning and attended training delivered by Bradley Lightbody.

In 2012 the college created and introduced the DNA Model of Stand Out Teaching and Learning (EBC own model of teaching excellence based on Geoff Petty’s Evidence Based Learning – see resources ) This model was designed by expert teachers and managers and contains tried and tested teaching methods that work. The DNA Model of Standout Teaching and Learning (see Appendix 1 of this case study) brings greater transparency to what constitutes good to outstanding Teaching and Learning as well as the best strategies to use; it supports staff to refine their practice. This concept was further supplemented with the use of the DNA lesson plan that draws on the ideas of Bradley Lightbody’s diamond lesson approach (see <http://www.collegenet.co.uk/download/Big_lesson_plan_notes.pdf>).

**Impact**

Posters of the DNA of Teaching and Learning are displayed around college as part of the “Expect to be Challenged” model of learning, to reinforce the role that learners play in their own learning and development. Learners are encouraged to become independent learners inside and outside the classroom and are encouraged to practice skills and then reflect on progress within every lesson, to enable them to set themselves challenging targets and take ownership of their own learning. Within English and maths learners are encouraged to identify areas they need to develop and then discuss and agree these with their teacher. Learners are then set work on *My Maths* [www.**mymaths**.co.uk](file:///C:\Users\suzanne\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.IE5\FVFY20YM\www.mymaths.co.uk)or *Khan Academy* [www.**khanacademy**.org](http://www.khanacademy.org) for areas they need to develop.

In 2014 the college profile for Outstanding Teaching and Learning moved from a static 7% to 16%. All curriculum areas have a minimum target of 20% outstanding teaching and learning. In English and Maths the grading profile for outstanding teaching and learning is 31% and our profile for good and better teaching and learning is 88%.

**Creation of a central department for English and maths**

In 2011 the college created The Learning and Development Academy, a central department in English, maths, Tutorials and Additional Learning Support. This new department needed 20+ posts for English and maths. Staff for these posts were mainly recruited from the Life Skills department which had 35 members of staff. Staff within Life Skills had delivered either in-class or one-to-one support with some delivery of discrete English and maths provision, or they delivered purely discrete English and maths classes to adults. The majority of these staff had an honours degree in either maths or English, A levels and a Level 4/5 Subject Specialism. The majority also had a theoretical understanding and experience of supporting additional needs and tackling barriers to learning. This background experience and knowledge of how to overcome barriers to learning through application of support strategies has been hugely effective in developing learner motivation and self-belief.

In subsequent years the college has adapted its delivery model for English and maths with staff moving away from a central staff room location to being placed within curriculum areas and teaching English and maths to specific curriculum learners. The current model is one with a central English and maths department, housed in one main staffroom, which is responsible for central delivery of GCSE and Functional Skills. There is a central grid position where all subject areas are required to timetable around agreed slots. Last year Foundation Tier GCSEs were deleted and all learners were offered Higher Tier GCSEs in English and maths. The primary reason for this was to improve value added for learners and enable them to achieve their full potential through stretch and challenge.

**Impact**

In 2013 -14, 372 learners were enrolled onto English and Maths GCSE. 60% of these learners achieved a high grade on both subjects.

In 2014-15, 800 learners were enrolled onto English and Maths GCSE. 91% attended both exams.

**Embedding of English and maths**

In 2014-15, we decided to make English the main subject on all Level 1 programmes. To achieve this we decided first to embed Speaking and Listening. As all curriculum areas use professional discussions and presentations as a way of assessing the subject knowledge of learners, developing these underpinning skills would enable an effective link between GCSE and Functional Skills and vocational areas and also enable learners to be more productive and effective in these assessments.

We started by visiting all curriculum team meetings to give staff an overview of the project. Curriculum areas then highlighted all vocational teachers working on Level one programmes and training then focused on working with individual teachers. The project manager and vocational tutors worked together to discuss schemes of work and identify areas and topics where speaking and listening skills could be developed within the main curriculum area. Vocational teachers were paired with English teachers for their groups so they could work together to develop activities that would reinforce and underpin speaking and listening skills that would enable learners to communicate more effectively.

**Impact**

The project has raised greater awareness for both staff and learners. For vocational staff it has reinforced the need to develop underpinning skills and has also created a greater understanding of GCSE and Functional Skills and how they link to their main programme. For learners it has helped them to see English and maths as an integral part of their programme rather than just a qualification. This is an important aspect as it helps to motivate and engage learners to attend and achieve as they can see a clear link to their curriculum subject and achievement of this as well as subsequent achievement of wider goals.

The project has also aided the development of working relationships between English and maths staff and vocational teams. This visible liaison is important for learners as it further reinforces the notion that English and maths is an integral part of their main programme. The majority of vocational staff have also been willing and positive and some have thoroughly enjoyed participating in the project. Learners view all staff as possible positive role models so vocational teachers being clearly motivated by English and Maths enables them to form the same links and engage more effectively with the subject.

Starting the embedding process with speaking and listening has enabled vocational staff to build confidence with the subject to then enable further embedding of English and maths skills through mini projects based within curriculum subjects.

**Future Development**

Further embedding of English and maths will continue in 2015-16. Training from the English and maths department will focus on interpretation of new BKSB assessments and how this information informs individual lesson plans to enable each learner to develop or reinforce English and maths skills within activities. Training will also focus on how to develop differentiated and personalised underpinning activities for English and maths within vocational theory classes and identify areas within the scheme of work where this can take place. This training event will also enable collaboration on areas of the English and maths curriculum that can be embedded more easily by vocational areas.

For English there will be further embedding and development of underpinning reading and writing skills. Embedding of maths began primarily in areas of sport and construction. This will be built on within 2015-16 through further development across college with a focus on maths skills within all Level One and Two programmes.

**Curriculum design of English and Maths GCSE**

In English GCSE delivery there was a logistical struggle with controlled assessments and learners were performing less than expected. In 2013-14, we changed to the iGCSE English syllabus and delivered the Edexcel Certificate in English Language. The course is anthology based and is assessed through two exam papers; paper 1 is worth 70% of the final mark and paper 2 is worth 20% of the final mark. A further 10% is based on three speaking and listening assessments. Learners liked the fact that they were not studying *Of Mice and Men* and that it was a different course to what they had previously studied at school. This definitely aided motivation and engagement within classes. Learners also liked that it was anthology based and covered extracts from nineteen different texts. This meant that if they did not engage with a text one week they were motivated by the idea of a different text the following week.

The texts cover a wide range of topics and key themes and enabled teachers to create useful and relevant learning links to concepts that learners would relate to. For example, “A Hero” looks at the topic of fears, so a starter activity linked the idea of fear to the “I’m a Celebrity” TV series.

For both English and maths GCSE, we have focused on creating a scheme of work that has a balance between developing underpinning skills and teaching the content of the syllabus. We try to enable learners to identify their individual starting point within the subject and to discuss previous learning experiences. It is important that learners can identify what areas and strategies worked well and what did not work so well last time as this is key to enabling success this time with English and maths. We also emphasise what learners know and what they can do and use these as building blocks to then build subsequent skills. Clear target setting based on individual needs is used to inform activities for lessons.

In maths, learners are taught to identify different types of questions within the Higher Tier paper so that they can navigate through building on their individual strengths and knowledge of different topics.

Within lessons staff use a mixture of learning activities from flash cards, *tarsia puzzles*[[13]](#footnote-13), use of My Maths and Khan Academy, as well as the use of interactive learning technologies. Learners are also encouraged to do an hour of maths homework a week using online learning resources.

Activities for English have been quite collaborative to facilitate learner exploration of a text through group discussions where learners are developing knowledge and understanding from each other. *Padlet* was used to facilitate the feedback of group discussion and encouraged more participation in this part of the lesson.

Within English we have trialled the theory of “double decker” lessons (Geoff Petty concept) where both the course content and the teaching of evaluative and analytical skills take place at the same time. This concept has worked exceptionally well in enabling learners to understand texts and course content within lessons but has also enabled them to apply these new found evaluative skills within their main programme.

English and maths teachers have also developed a culture of open communication with learners through reflective bubbles at the end of lessons and communication via email and Moodle outside of the classroom. This has allowed learners to ask questions to facilitate independent study but has also enabled staff to keep learners attending if there is a problem. One of the maths team created a “Whats App” group for his maths class where they could discuss maths topics, collaborate over homework and problem solve questions as a group. This developed a collaborative approach to maths where learners found mathematical problems interesting and also encouraged learners to keep attending as there was open dialogue.

**Recommendations to ensure learners are motivated**

Challenges that can affect learners’ motivation, and solutions to overcome these are:

* Be clear about staffing needs and ensure prompt recruitment – plan when to advertise. We did not get this right last year as we struggled to recruit established members of staff, and had to rely on temporary members of staff, which resulted in some learners having different teachers throughout the year. Consistency is important in ensuring learner motivation and subsequent success.
* Have a clear training plan for new GCSE staff. What has worked for us is encouraging collaboration on lesson planning and sharing of resources and ideas.
* Timetabling – having a central grid system for English and maths classes, coupled with a clear timetabling strategy that all vocational staff timetable around English and maths first, is crucial. However, spending time on training and having regular meetings with vocational staff about timetabling is also needed to ensure that everyone is clear on the process. We did not invest enough time in training and checking of understanding of vocational teams concerning timetabling GCSE and Functional Skills slots. The result was that both GCSE and Functional Skills slots appeared on individual learner timetables and curriculum areas had not fully considered the impact on their own timetable where there were mixed group of learners needing both GCSE and Functional Skills. This year curriculum areas are streaming their learners into clear groups of those that need GCSEs and Functional Skills, and those that are exempt, to ensure there are not big gaps between main curriculum lessons.
* There needs to be a clear strategic plan for enrolments onto study programmes, including English and maths, and which is a whole college approach.
* Have a clear strategic plan for embedding of English and maths across college with a clear training plan. Training and support of staff to embed English and maths can be time consuming and overwhelming for one or two people to lead on. To improve this process the college has created and developed a new Teaching and Learning Coach role. These roles will enable effective support of embedding and promoting of English and maths across college. These posts will enable teamwork to develop underpinning skills and will ensure that there is a balance of one-to-one , group, and whole college training that is essential in developing effective English and maths skills and quality of teaching and learning.
* Be bold – trial different models and different approaches. We have experimented with different models and different structures and have then revised them accordingly following feedback as this is a crucial part of the change cycle.

**EBC Case Study; Appendix 1: Resources**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **C:\Users\Lynn J Joubert\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\AWGIFLUM\DNA 1.jpg** | | **DNA Lesson Plan: Make sound plans** | | | |
| Teacher | |  | Course Group |  |
| Unit Title / No. | |  | Topic/Skill |  |
| Week Number | |  |  |  |
| Date | |  | Lesson time |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson section** | Time | **Teaching activity**  (include assessment) | **Learner activity**  (include expected assessment) | **Resources** | **Eng./maths/ICT** |
| **Lesson start** | | | | | |
| * Appetiser |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Recap of Learning |  |  |  |  |  |
| * ‘Big Picture’ and objective / key questions |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Lesson Development** | | | | | |
| * Exposition of new learning – why the topic is important, how it links into the exam/scheme |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Questions and answers |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Active Learning |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Lesson Conclusion** | | | | | |
| * Check |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Summarise |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Bridge |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| Aim: |
| Objectives: What skills, knowledge or understanding will learners be expected to gain in this lesson? |

4. Enrolment

**Selby College: an introduction**

Selby College is a small tertiary college in North Yorkshire with around 1,350 16-18 full-time learners. The College is the main provider of A-levels and vocational education to 16-18 year-olds in the local area and also provides a wide range of apprenticeships, higher education and workforce training for young people and adults. Selby College is a provider of Higher Education and provides awards up to degree level from the University of Hull and Huddersfield University, as well as working with Edexcel to provide Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC and HND).

Selby College was graded “Outstanding” by Ofsted in 2007 and has a reputation as a high performing FE provider, consistently within the top 10% of colleges since national records began 20 years ago.

**An early start**

When the Wolf Report was published in March 2011 the College immediately recognised its recommendations on GCSE English and Maths as a huge challenge, not just in terms of capacity in the context of funding cuts, but also the culture of managers and staff who felt students would struggle to meet the new aspirations. By June 2011, however, college managers had committed to this new priority. The College’s English and maths offer, and associated expectations, were documented and presented to staff in the summer of 2012. This early start proved invaluable. In 2012-13 we moved significantly towards meeting what subsequently became the conditions of funding with a big increase in the numbers taking Level 2 Maths and English.

We then decided to aim to meet the expected “Condition of Funding” a year early and in 2013/14 set out a plan to ensure all students without at least GCSE grade C in English or maths were enrolled to a GCSE or Functional Skill in the relevant subject(s) and at a level above that already achieved. This early work led to a significantly increased take-up of English and maths. Compared with 2010-11 there was a 183% increase in enrolment.

And in terms of increased “stretch” the College moved a far higher proportion of its students up to Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths than the sector average[[14]](#footnote-14): for example, 22.8% achieved a L2 in English compared to 12.5% nationally and 21% in Maths compared to 12% nationally.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Entries** | | |
| **National** | **Selby** | **FE only** |
| English GCSE | 17.2% | **32.3%** | 12.4% |
| English Other L2 | 5.8% | **27.6%** |  |
| English Other L1 | 17.3% | **27.1%** |  |
| Maths GCSE | 17.9% | **22%** | 10.9% |
| Maths Other L2 | 5.8% | **17.6%** |  |
| Maths Other L1 | 16.3% | **31.2%** |  |

Selby College achieved this by altering our organisational culture and systems over a two year period. English and maths was no longer an “add on” and we weaned ourselves away from identifying students as “peakers” (learners who will never exceed their current achievements) or “decliners” (learners who refuse to engage in further study of English and maths) terminology (e.g. “He has reached his level and it is de-motivating making him do more” becomes “he has to do this whatever I think so we will support him best we can”) which was used as a justification for lower expectations.

In management terms, this new strategy was achieved through:

* Establishing a Senior Management Team (SMT) Lead, as well as Foundation English and maths Leads based within the specialist departments.
* Making all subject areas answerable for their students’ English and maths outcomes, particularly retention and attendance, by embedding targets and monitoring into quality systems and departmental Balanced Scorecards. (Balanced Scorecards incorporate a range of performance standards to present an overview of performance).
* Establishing an English and Maths Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors with strategic oversight of the planning, delivery and performance of English and maths programmes across the college.
* Producing annually adjusted Excellence Guidance to be clear on which students should be doing which English and maths qualifications.
* Training with governors, SMT, Subject Area Managers and teaching staff to highlight the importance of delivering English and maths and the barriers to be overcome to be successful.
* Increasing delivery capacity.
* Adapting systems and timetables.
* Communicating clearly with students and prospective students.

**OUR AIM FOR 2014-15 ENROLMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF SEPTEMBER**

Our experiences in 2012-2013 and 2013-14 taught us that **getting things right at the start of the year is crucial.** We realised that **certainty** is important to enable the right culture to be created. Allocating English and maths after the main programme reduces its perceived relative importance for both students and staff.

Any confusion about prior achievement and consequently what level of English or maths a student is on at the start of the academic year, or where and when English and maths classes take place, can result in total disengagement. This applies to curriculum and support staff as well as students. For example, students will not necessarily go searching for their cross-college maths group and if staff are unsure, they cannot help them. If MIS information is not accurate early on then the timetables, and tracking and monitoring of students not attending, are difficult.

Another factor is November re-sits. If at least some students are going to sit these then they need to be in class as soon as possible at the start of the year. Information also needs to be captured on previous performance at school, on different components of the GCSE, and which boards and specifications they took, to enable entry for the right re-sit.

Our aim therefore for September 2014 was to ensure that all students without a C grade in GCSE English and maths were enrolled immediately to both the appropriate qualification and the correct group, to enable a prompt and engaging start of the cross college English and maths classes on the first day that main timetables started. For this to happen there needed to be certainty among all concerned.

The following pre-requisites were required:

1. A cross-college English and maths grid in place with each full-time programme allocated to a slot, and this timetabled around by the Subject Area manager. They are expected to back up the English and maths slot being utilised with main aim sessions timetabled next to it rather than leaving it isolated. This improves attendance.
2. Sufficient resource in each slot to cope with demand, but avoiding group sizes that were either too big or too small.
3. Students arrive expecting to take English and maths qualifications, and staff across college maintain that expectation and ensure that they attend and participate.
4. An enrolment process that accurately picks up prior English and maths attainment and timely initial assessment results to enable subjects and groups to appear on the learning agreement at enrolment and on timetable from day one.
5. An enrolment process which enables us to monitor and manage group formation as quickly as possible.
6. Buy-in from subject staff and guidance and support tutors to enforce messages about English and maths and positively support and encourage learners to attend.

**Getting Support from the top**

After taking on board the implications of the Wolf Report, a Curriculum Director member of the SMT was given responsibility for the English and maths initiatives. This ensured that senior management were kept informed about changes in policy and were able to understand the risks facing the college, and the barriers that needed to be overcome. Importantly, an English and Maths Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors was created to have strategic oversight of the planning, delivery and performance of English and maths programmes across the college. Chaired by the Principal it also included the relevant Director and the leads for English and Maths.

Top level support is required for a number of reasons:

* To secure the resources required to adequately staff cross college groups, despite the difficulty in forecasting numbers.
* To support the change in culture required across the college.
* To support changes to established procedures.
* To understand that in stretching students to more challenging qualifications a negative impact on success rates is likely.

Understanding and support was gained through presentations on, for example, forecast teaching hours against teacher availability. This resulted in staff requisition requests being looked on favourably, and we were able to advertise early (and in TES) resulting in our securing some experienced GCSE teachers.

Apart from presentations and discussions at SMT and Governor Sub-committee, a successful method to generate understanding of the scale of the problem was to task the SMT with some very practical real issues that occurred in autumn 2013. This helped not just in securing understanding but also in formulating policy. A similar approach was taken at a Middle Management team training day in February 2014 and this really helped with buy-in the following September.

**Impact**

Senior support and understanding enabled us to meet our enrolment goal by:

* Enabling us to increase our English and maths resources to give us the confidence that we would probably be able to meet demand from day one.
* Extending our enrolment period to enable more time to be spent on individual enrolments. This involved starting the term two days later than previously.
* Ensuring that support areas of the college (MIS, Student Services and Marketing) were fully on board with what we were seeking to achieve.

**Achieving Staff Buy-in**

It is very often harder to get buy-in from staff than from students. In our experience most students like the idea of achieving a grade C or better at GCSE and will understand that it opens doors for them. They need to be encouraged to believe it is achievable. Changing the culture of staff who have never had to look outside their subject area can be harder, and we had to deploy a range of tactics to achieve this:

* A series of sessions with Subject Area Managers from 2011 onwards, and with lecturing staff. These focussed on the threat of not successfully facilitating English and maths as much as the benefits of delivering the new requirements. Recognising that we HAVE to do something (or lose funding and therefore jobs) whether we like or agree with it or not is quite liberating in the sense in that it allowed us to get over our previous “peaker” views.
* Making all subject areas answerable for their students’ English and maths outcomes. English and Maths results are reported both against the student’s home department and against English and Maths departments.
* Ensuring that only English and maths specialist staff deliver GCSE (and Level 2 Functional Skills) removes what may be seen as a threat by subject staff.
* Lots of work was done in supporting the embedding of English and maths generally within all teaching and learning, which consequently led to more staff support for their students pursuing qualifications in those subjects.
* A consultative approach with Subject managers over the shape of the cross college timetable and issues such as attendance expectations.
* Work with Guidance and Support Tutors (all of our students are allocated to a named Guidance and Support Tutor) to ensure that they understood the importance on Maths and English in the context of the students study programme.
* Giving certainty by centralising decisions over which qualifications and levels student would take. This was supported by Excellence Guidance which made our approach explicit.

**Impact**

Getting this buy-in, particularly from middle managers led to:

* An acceptance of the degree of centralisation required to allocate students to groups by the English and Maths team.
* Greater cross-college collaboration over timetabling and enrolment.
* Consistent expectations of English and maths take up, and promotion of its importance.
* Improved early first term monitoring and chasing of concerns over attendance.

**Achieving Student Buy-in**

Students need to arrive in September fully expecting that they will continue their English and maths and engage straight away. We reinforced this expectation by:

* Ensuring that it is stressed in schools liaison activity with Year 10 and Year 11 students, in college and subject guides, and at open events.
* The requirement to study English and maths is explored at the central admissions interview that all of our applicants undergo.
* The offer letter to students makes it explicit that take up of English and maths, if required, is a condition of their offer.
* A letter is sent in July to all applicants in which the English and maths requirement is reiterated.
* An emphasis during induction and enrolment on the importance of English and maths in meeting career goals.
* The majority of new vocational students came into their future departments in June and as part of this took BKSB initial assessments. This both reinforced the importance of English and maths and gave us information which we could use at enrolment.

**Impact**

The college had far better early take up and attendance (see final impact). For example, by the end of the first term nearly half of the English and maths students’ attendance rates were over 90% and only 16% of students had less than 70% attendance.

Students were certainly very conscious of the importance of English and maths. A number who withdrew from full time programmes during the year for various reasons, asked to continue only in these subjects.

**Getting a common timetable and planning resources**

Our experiences had shown that getting buy in from subject areas on the shape of the cross college timetables was imperative. In February at the annual College Management Team development day Subject Area Managers were given the chance to discuss and agree on different timetable models. In 2015 we will be on our third model in three years as we refine it further.

From previous experience we had already identified that we wanted GCSE delivery to be in two lessons on different days. After presenting different alternatives we ended up with a timetable grid within which each slot allows any English and maths permutation to be facilitated, except both GCSEs, which could only be achieved by accessing an evening class.

For 2014-15 this has been further revised to incorporate both English and maths GCSEs. The grid shows timings for three English and maths groups, A, B and C. So Group A will do English or maths on Mondays and Wednesdays, Group B on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Group C on Wednesdays and Fridays.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 9.15-10.45 |  | 11.00-12.30 | 12.30-1.30 | 1.30-3.00 | 3.00-4.30 |
| Monday | A |  | A |  |  |  |
| Tuesday | B |  | B |  |  |  |
| Wednesday | A |  | A |  | C | C |
| Thursday | B |  | B |  |  |  |
| Friday | C |  | C |  |  |  |

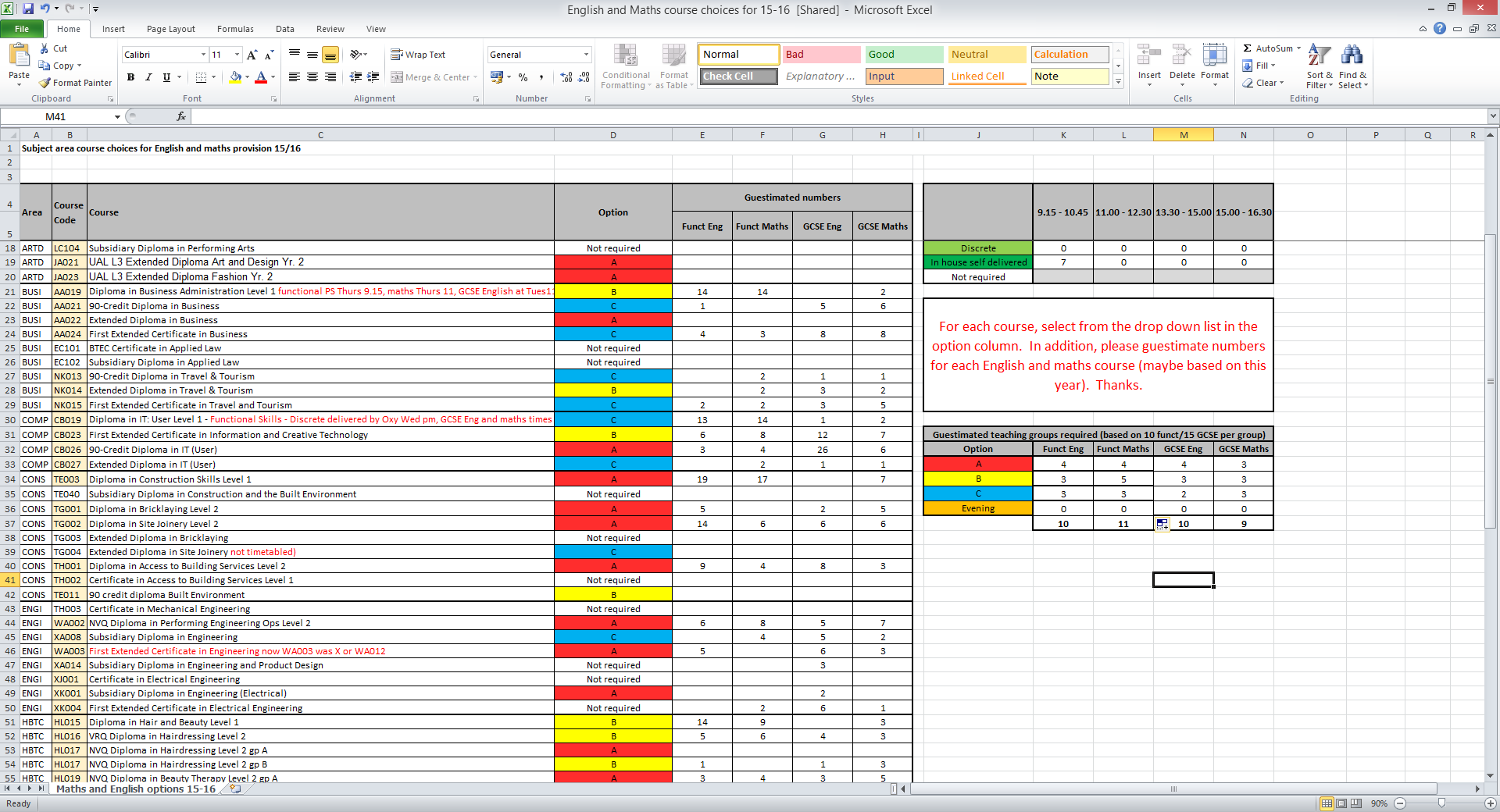
Subject Area Managers have discretion over choices of slots for each of their groups up to a given date and then to ensure that this was timetabled around for main subject delivery, with no students ‘stranded’ with unblocked time.

When this information was complete (May) then the English and Maths team attempted to model the likely numbers for each subject in each slot. This was done by:

1. Looking at the percentage of students from each course in the 2013-14 year who would have required GCSE and Functional Skills according to our offer in 2014-15.
2. Multiplying this by the forecast numbers on each study programme in 2014-15 based on applications and the known rate of conversion in previous years.

This allowed us to plan how many cross college English and maths groups would probably be required in each slot. In some cases Subject Area Mangers were asked if they could change slots to enable us to cover them better.

We use this planning sheet to capture the forecasts:



This is a work in progress example which will be reviewed and sense-checked before groups are planned in.

**Impact**

* The majority of Subject Area Managers timetabled effectively around the English and maths slots.
* The number forecasts were not too far out overall but we had more D grades at English than expected and fewer at maths. We also had both a higher number of students and a higher proportion of D grades than anticipated in the IT and Computing Area, creating the need for more groups in their slots than expected. We did need to find an additional English GCSE part-time lecturer at short notice to cover an additional group that was unforeseen and unable to be picked up by existing staff.
* The average group sizes for GCSE groups were 14.5 for English and 15.5 for Maths.

**What we DID: The enrolment process**

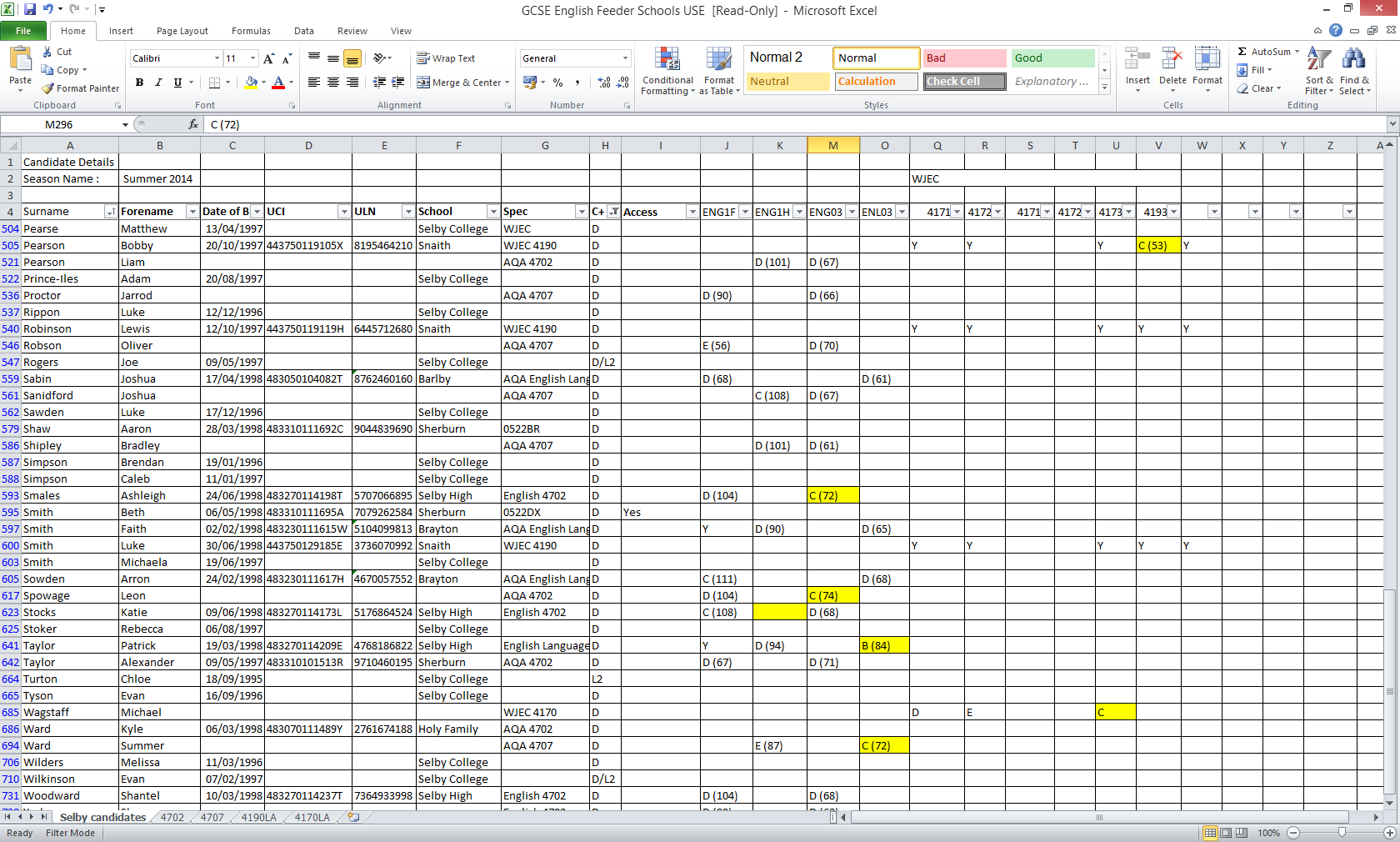
We realised that this stage was hugely important as we were going to identify English and maths needs from the outset and allocate to groups as the students enrolled. The college already had a robust process as part of its “right learner right seat” strategy which ensured than prior attainment was already scrutinized carefully to ensure learners embarked on the correct level of programme for them. But additional work was needed.

In preparing for enrolment the following were important:

* Getting groups set up in our MIS (EBS) in advance.
* Working closely with MIS, Student Services, Curriculum Managers and Guidance and Support Tutors so that all were clear about the process.
* Ensuring that students took initial assessments prior to enrolment to provide evidence of level where required. This happened either in the summer term when they visited college or at the start of the enrolment process on the day.
* Setting up recording systems. English and maths staff recorded allocations during the process and MIS input the subject and group information when the student enrolled. This allowed a checking up process to happen afterwards
* Information was secured from schools about which boards and specifications were followed at GCSE English. This allowed English staff to identify performance in specific modules which was vital in entering for November resits
* Stressing to external applicants that they bring results with them to enrolment and ensuring we had the results of existing Selby students progressing to GCSEs.

The process adopted mostly worked well:

1. On arrival students submitted results for photocopying. If they had not already done so they then took their BKSB initial assessments.
2. The relevant Subject Area Manager and Director of Curriculum checked results, not just for meeting entry requirements for the study programme but to identify the level of English and maths. This was entered into the learning agreement.
3. The agreements for students with less than a C grade at GCSE were passed to English and maths staff who checked the prior achievements, consulted the BKSB initial assessment if required, and entered the qualification to be taken and the group onto the learning agreement. English staff captured the exact detail of previous GCSE results to enable prompt entry for re-sits:



1. The agreements were then passed to the enrolment staff. When students were called through to enrol they were immediately told the English and maths they were to do and signed up to it there and then.
2. MIS then entered the information into EBS (our MIS system) as soon as the student had completed the learning agreement.
3. Student timetables subsequently showed English and maths sessions, and lessons started the second day of term.

Because part 2 and 3 above happened in a room with the Director, Subject Area Manager and English and Maths Leads all together it ensured that any queries or emerging problems could be identified and discussed as we went along.

**Impact**

By the end of enrolment we were fairly confident that we had captured the prior attainment and English and maths requirements for all students who had come through that process. All groups started as planned, although as noted earlier we had to create some additional groups and find staff and rooms.

Where we did experience failures with individual students it concerned:

* Late enrollers. When the full apparatus of enrolment was not in place then the picking up of English and maths information and the allocation of groups was much more problematic
* A failure to issue individual timetables. Some departments gave students generic course timetables which did not specify the individual’s English and maths lessons. This meant that some missed the first lessons through no fault of their own.

However, although we did have many problems to overcome and needed to be flexible and responsive to both individual and course issues we were pleased overall and have learned further lessons.

The positive impacts were:

* All English and maths groups started up on the first day (some later needed splitting).
* Very few students missed early lessons or were allocated to the wrong groups.
* Students and staff had far more clarity about the processes and this supported take up, attendance and the ironing out of problems.
* GCSE details were available far earlier to facilitate entry for November resits.
* The condition of funding was met very early. By t4th November only four students did not meet the condition (and 2 exceeded it by trying to improve on their C grades).
* As previously noted the early start and attendance was far better than hoped. The “hit list” from 4 November showed only 20 students (out of around 600) who had either not attended or had levels of attendance suggesting they were what we call “decliners”.

**Recommendations**

We recommend that colleges plan to start English and maths as early as possible to reinforce a culture that takes the importance of these subjects for granted. At Selby we are a smaller college and therefore have been better able to work towards this. From our experience the key things to achieve this are:

* Having the **resources** to give certainty that planned groups and timetables can be achieved post enrolment. This requires support from senior management and governors which can be elicited if they truly understand the problems.
* Careful **planning**. This includes forecasting of possible student numbers and staffing requirements but also of timetabling and enrolment processes.
* **Collaboration**. With Subject Area Managers who need to be able to buy into cross college timetables and systems, between English and Maths departments (if they are separate) and with MIS, Student Services, Marketing and other areas of the college.
* **Certainty and clarity** for students and staff that this WILL happen and the student will be attending the course allocated to them at that time.
* Centralisation of English and maths decisions and **careful control** of the enrolment process. This means ensuring sufficient time and staffing resource to properly check prior achievement and allocate groups.
* **A culture** which recognises the importance of English and maths to secure a consistent message that stresses the benefit and makes it clear that take up is compulsory. This is achieved through clear top down communications and sharing of accountability.
* Committed **English and Maths leaders** who work effectively from an administrative as well as a teaching and learning point of view.

5. The importance of the English and maths curriculum manager: how to create change at middle management level

**South Leicestershire College: an introduction**

South Leicester College is a general college of further education situated on the southern outskirts of Leicester. It draws students from across Leicestershire, but particularly from the south of the county, and is a medium-sized, vocational college which also delivers community and adult education. The college provides an Apprentice Recruitment Service for employers and individuals which is one of the largest in the East Midlands.

The college is part of a federation with two schools and with Hinckley and North Warwickshire colleges. The latter has been graded “Outstanding” by Ofsted and South Leicester College has significantly improved its success rates, this year reaching 90% (6.1% above national benchmark). This has been recognised by Ofsted which raised its rating for South Leicester College last year to Good.

**Programme Area Leader – why are they important in improving GCSE English and maths?**

In November 2011, the role of Programme Area Leader (PAL) was established at South Leicestershire College following a restructure. The rationale for creating the role of PAL was to recognise the important function of curriculum managers affecting change at an operational and strategic level. The English and maths PAL had two specific areas of responsibility:

* Operational management of the curriculum, teaching, curriculum planning, budgets and working collaboratively on planning at a strategic level; and,
* Direct line management of staff, recruitment and development and quality improvement.

As PAL with responsibility for these two priority areas, I believe that English and maths are seen as a fundamental part of all technical and vocational qualifications. They are not a separate “add on” but are seen as a constituent part of the learning programme with as much focus being placed on them as the occupational qualification. They are the very fabric of the College and as fundamental to us as breathing.

Our College Principal, Marion Plant OBE shared her commitment to these subjects with the following message:

*“…English and maths…our approach is to ensure it is everyone’s responsibility…”*

**September 2014**

Improving English and maths at South Leicestershire College was particularly important when I started my role as PAL as our achievement rates showed:

* GCSE English – Overall 74.7%

A\*- C Grades – 12% (Inadequate)

* GCSE Maths – Overall 79.6%

A\* - C Grades – 33% (Requires Improvement)

Following a review of the area, the team and I agreed the following priorities:

1. Improve success rates in GCSE English and maths at all levels and across all groups of learners;
2. Improve the effectiveness of integrating English and maths skills in vocational lessons;
3. Develop the skills and confidence of staff in English and maths;
4. Improve the awareness of the importance of English and maths by staff and students;
5. Raise the profile/status of English and maths across the college;
6. To ensure a whole college approach supported and championed at every level in the college.

The key elements of the role of PAL for English and maths which resulted in a number of successful outcomes included:

* Working in full collaboration with the Directors of Learning and Skills, vocational managers and teachers to raise the profile of English and maths.
* Effective communication with all staff and students to send out the message about the importance of GCSE English and maths, for example:
  + attendance at parents’ evenings to make sure that parents understood the importance of English and maths;
  + setting up the Hub (see Appendix 2 of this case study) for additional English and maths support and staffing it with specialist teachers for drop in support, ensuring it was fully staffed at all times including holidays and evenings.
* Working as a team, putting on additional sessions which were based on a team assessment of what was required. Tutors regularly updated the vocational areas on absences and continued to chase students who were regularly absent. The team also worked together as a collective and shared ideas, helped with the planning and preparation of lessons, giving feedback on any resources or ideas they had that worked.
* Co-ordination of learning walks, informal observations and close working with the Quality Lead for English and maths ensured:
  + A comprehensive audit of teaching and learning in GCSEs including schemes of work curricular themes, tracking documents, learner profiles. Once any theme or area for concern was identified, staff development or 1-2-1 training was arranged;
  + Informal learning walks and facilitating learner voice sessions has provided me with an opportunity to listen and offer immediate feedback to bring about improvements.
* Using live data in relation to attendance, punctuality, retention and achievement and helping staff to understand the implications and how to use this information to promote improvements.
* Having a programme which was run with numerous informal assessments that fed into clear revision areas for each student to work on (this has been improved again this year with students actually having the revision packs rather than just a list of topics).
* Maintaining a close working relationship with the Vocational PALS to help track and chase learners who were not attending. This close working relationship brought about a change in culture where vocational areas clearly recognised the importance of the maths and English alongside their vocational areas.

**What we achieved in a period of 12 months:**

* GCSE English – Overall 90% - improved by 15.3%

5.2% above SSA Nat Avg - GOOD

56.7% A\*-C Grades – improved by 44.7%

* GCSE Maths – Overall 88.3% - improved by 8.7%

6.2% above SSA Nat Avg - GOOD

48.3% A\*-C Grades - improved by 15.3%

**Quotes about GCSE English and GCSE Maths:**

*English and maths is central to a student’s life chances and career pathways. They are the difference between a job and a career – and we want all our students to have a fulfilling career and positive progression opportunities.*

**Deputy Principal and Chief Executive Federation**

*GCSE is the ‘gold standard’ that everyone understands: learners, trainers and employers. GCSE English and maths are essential requirements for so many job roles across all sectors of the economy.*

*Tutors have very good maths skills themselves: including Level 5 teaching quals, GCSE maths enhancement programme etc. They work tirelessly with the students with extra sessions in the Maths Hub all year and additional classes during May half term week. Maths has a high profile in the College and vocational tutors support the maths team.*

**Directors of Learning and Skills**

*I never thought I could do this. At school it seemed out of reach but here, I was just helped every step of the way.*

*I am so proud of myself now I can actually help my children with their homework.*

*I have to admit that this course has helped me to set my sights much higher. I now have a university place and a real plan. Thank you!!*

*My course work has suddenly become a lot easier. Thanks to the tricks that I learned in my English classes and always having support available, I am ready for the next step up.*

**Learners**

**How the PAL role at South Leicestershire College improved the quality of GCSE maths and English for 16-19 years old students:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **How it was achieved** | **Impact** |
| Strengthening the GCSE teaching team. | Two strands:   * Recruitment of new teachers capable of delivering GCSEs – two GCSE English teachers and one GCSE Maths teacher recruited. Mixture of newly qualified and experienced teachers appointed * Existing teachers with the potential to teach GCSEs timetabled to shadow/team teach experienced GCSE teachers | Two new GCSE English teachers with energy and enthusiasm for the subject appointed. Both achieved grade one in their college formal observation and achieved excellent results. An experienced maths teacher appointed capable of teaching up to level 5, who shared their experience with the rest of the GCSE maths team in staff development sessions.  Three Functional Skills teachers with the potential to teach GCSE were timetabled to team teach across the academic year. This ensured that they learned how to deliver GCSEs and also provided extra support for the learners. |
| Thorough self-assessment process that analysed the data from the previous year by individual teacher for attendance, retention, achievement and success. | Every teacher was given their data for the subjects they taught and had a 1-2-1 meeting with the PAL to go through their data line by line before the start of the academic year. | Teachers aware of the importance of managing their data and that this was their responsibility. Also made aware that they would be judged on their data as part of the PDR process. |
| Visit North Warwickshire and Hinckley College to meet with their English and maths curriculum manager to find out how they achieved their excellent results in English and maths. | PAL visited NWHC and spent three hours discussing how they achieved their fantastic success rates. | NWHC sharing of their good practice was able then to feed into SLC’s quality improvement plan and we were able to use ideas and policies that were proven to work. |
| Rigorous Personal Development Review targets to be set based on the college’s quality improvement plan. | Every English and maths teacher given targets based on their performance in the previous academic year and the college’s quality improvement plan. Teachers given individual targets for GCSE recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success for 16-19 and adult learners. Also every teacher had specific targets for meeting face to face with their GCSE learners’ personal tutors. | Improved communication about learners with vocational tutors, improved attendance, improved retention, improved achievement and improved success. |
| New GCSE subject leaders for English and maths appointed with responsibility for planning team meetings, overseeing the attendance and retention, shared scheme of work and resources. | Staff identified with passion and knowledge for the subjects, and given help and support by their PAL. | New subject leaders able to lead and support staff in a more timely manner. Strong team ethos emerged, everyone supporting each other with ideas and resources. |
| Ensure that all full time 16-19 learners complete diagnostic assessments in English and maths prior to the start of their course. | Working closely with the Director of Student Experience and membership of the Enrolment and Applications group this action was made into college policy. | Improvement in the accurate placing of learners on to GCSEs. Learners’ spiky profiles with teachers from week one. 76% of all 16-19 learners completed diagnostic assessments before start of the 13/14 academic year. |
| English and maths timetabling to be completed first before vocational areas. | Permission was requested and given by the college Vice Principal that English and maths would be timetabled first. Timetabling rules and an enrolment flow chart was circulated to all vocational PALs and Directors. Meetings held with the timetabling team to underline that English and maths gets timetabled first and does not get moved (see Appendix 3 of this case study). | All GCSE classes running from week one of the academic year, GCSE attendance only 2% below the college average. |
| Improve process by which learners can access academic support and ‘preparation for GCSE exams’ classes. | Permission from English and maths Director was requested about extending the GCSE delivery from 32 weeks to 34 weeks in order to deliver extra GCSE classes over the Easter holidays and May half-term. GCSE staff also requested to work during these holiday times to facilitate the workshops. Learners’ parents also written to by the PAL advising that their son/daughter attend these necessary extra sessions. | Well attended sessions, particularly in the May half-term. Learners able to access appropriate revision sessions to prepare them for the exams. Increased overall success rates. |
| Fortnightly data meeting of the English and maths teams to improve accountability and monitoring of data. | Every tutor reported on their attendance, retention and progress for each of their GCSE groups. This information was then updated by the teacher into a centrally located spreadsheet shared by all GCSE teachers and the PAL. | Teachers took ownership of their data. Emerging issues discussed and dealt with promptly. Strategies for success shared. |
| Strengthened communication between PAL for English and Maths and Vocational PALs. | Regular monthly meetings timetabled to discuss emerging issues, attendance, retention and participation. These meeting were put into all PALs’ Outlook calendars before the start of the academic year. | Learner and teacher issues dealt with quickly. The importance of English and maths clearer to other PALs. PALs involved and taking responsibility for their GCSEs. |
| English and Maths PAL to publish monthly attendance for English and maths. | At the beginning of each month each Directorates attendance figures for Functional Skills and GCSEs were shared with PALs, Directors and the college Senior Management Team. | Attendance in English and maths classes was discussed at Director meetings, discussed at 1-2-1s between Directors and PALs, between PALs and their vocational course teams and in PDRs between PALs and their vocational staff. |
| GCSE English and maths staff attended Parents’ Evening. | English and maths teachers were asked to meet with parents and carers to discuss their child’s progress during Parents’ Evening. All teachers were required to attend. The English and maths PAL manned a stand next to the signing in desk. | For the first time English and maths teachers met parents to discuss learners’ progression. This helped to raise the profile of English and maths and gave teachers the opportunity to enlist parents in supporting them with any concerns and issues they had. Also it gave the English and maths PAL an opportunity to meet with parents to explain how the college approached English and maths and the importance placed on it by the college and employers. |
| English and maths teams located in a centralised workroom. | The PAL requested the college Vice Principal to allow the English and maths team to work in one workroom together. | Staff morale much higher because they wanted to be based centrally together. Being based together allows the GCSE teachers to support each other sharing best practice, ideas and resources. Emerging issues with learners dealt with collectively and quickly. Planning for GCSEs can happen in a timely manner and meetings can take place to suit the teachers. |
| GCSE English and maths teachers timetabled to support and deliver better integrated English and maths in vocational sessions. | All integrating English and maths training for vocational staff had at least one GCSE English and one GCSE maths teacher supporting the main deliverer. The GCSE teachers looked at the vocational tutors’ schemes of work to identify naturally occurring English and maths and helped them to be able to integrate these occurrences into their lessons. | Improved integration of English and maths into vocational sessions. Clearly linked to improved English and maths success rates. |
| Co-ordination of learning walks, informal observations and audit of Faculty Evidence Folder. | Through closely working with the area’s Quality Lead the teaching and learning in GCSEs was audited, themes in GCSEs classes audited (EDI/ILT/Stretch and challenge etc.), SOW audited, tracking documents audited, learner profiles audited etc. | Improved sharing of best practice, teaching and learning improved, staff record keeping improved, staff much more familiar with observation process. All GCSE staff graded two or better in their formal observation. |
| Improve awareness of the importance of English and maths. | Through consultation with my Director and the Vice Principal we included English and maths as a standard agenda item at all meetings from course level to Governor level. Introduced the ‘I love English & Maths at SLC’ to be used on all internal and external communications. Revised the prospectus and course guides to highlight the importance of English and maths. | All staff aware of the importance of English and maths. More vocational staff taking responsibility for the English and maths qualifications in their vocational area. The importance of English and maths clearly highlighted in the college prospectus (see Appendix 2 of this case study) and discussed regularly at all levels of the college giving it enhanced status. |
| New awards created for GCSE English and GCSE Maths student of the year. | For the first time we had separate awards for GCSE English and maths students. | We were able to celebrate and recognise learner achievement in GCSEs. |
| Learner Focus Groups to be organised. | The PAL organised learners from different vocational areas to attend Learner Voice lunches were they would feedback on English and maths in the college. | Learners’ ideas to improve English and maths incorporated where possible into the quality improvement plan. For example, moving from three hour GCSE classes to 1.5 hour classes on separate days. Learners also recognised the importance of English and maths and its role in improving their employment prospects. |

**Some key recommendations for other colleges:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Recommendation | Challenge | Overcoming the challenges |
| Staff must take ownership of their data for every class they teach – they must be able to know every learners’ attendance, every classes’ retention, achievement and success. | This is seen as getting in the way of the teaching and not what teachers are here to do. They will be reluctant to take ownership of something they see as someone else’s job. | Develop staff so they can quickly find and run reports from the data management system you are using. Show them how understanding and commanding their data will improve their understanding of their learners and maximise success. |
| Identify who should be your GCSE subject leaders and put them in place. | You may have in place subject leaders who have done the job for a while and become tired and jaded by the lack of support and success they have received. You may have members of staff reluctant to take on the role because of how it is viewed in your institution. | Pick the appropriate person who has the enthusiasm and drive for the role. Provide support and guidance to develop them. Protect them from criticism and regularly meet with them to monitor and support performance. |
| Timetable ALL English and maths first. | English and maths can be seen by some areas as an extra, not as important as vocational qualifications. You have to have English and maths lessons at the start or end of a day because my vocational staff will not work then. The learners do not want to do it or do not see it as important as their vocational qualification. | Get support from your Principal, Vice Principal and Director. Campaign for this to happen at every opportunity, it is vital for improvements to happen - DO NOT GIVE UP. Make sure you have clear defined rules for the timetabling team so that other curriculum managers cannot change any English or maths sessions. English and maths staff are precious, there are not enough around, and this will help the college to utilise its English and maths staff effectively. |
| Get your diagnostics done early, before the academic year starts bring all your 16-19 learners in during the summer to complete their diagnostics in English and maths. This will help you place learners appropriately and quickly. | Vocational areas will tell you learners are not interested or that you will put them off. That it costs too much to staff it and that it is a waste if they do not enrol. | Use it as a keeping warm exercise, get learners in in vocational groups and have vocational staff present to answer questions and speak to parents. Explain the importance of English and maths and your college’s commitment to it, so they are ready and not surprised in the new academic year. Get the learners to complete any necessary forms for work-placements or their DBS. By placing learners in the appropriate English and maths classes quickly they can be taught from week one and this will stop them from not attending if they do not start until later. |
| Ensure you have a good relationship with the recruitment team, enrolment team, data management team and the timetabling team. | They will not necessarily see the importance of English and maths, they will have spent years thinking and being told that vocational qualifications are more important. | Get invited to their team meetings, explain about the government’s agenda for English and maths; speak to them regularly, particularly at the start of the academic year and the end of the academic year. Get them to buy into the new importance of English and maths. |
| Use the PDR process to drive quality and success improvements. Use it to ensure ALL staff are responsible for the qualifications they teach. | Staff will say that they do not pick the learners, that they do not know how they got a D at school, that they cannot get them to attend and engage, that they have not got time to keep track of the data, that they just want to teach. | Give staff individual targets based on the quality improvement plan in their PDR that have targets for them to meet and/or exceed. Take time to explain how their teaching and results feed into the college’s strategic targets so that they understand how important their work is. Regularly meet with staff 1-2-1 to support them and monitor how they are progressing against their individual targets. |
| Reward good English and maths staff by increasing their fractional established percentage and/or converting sessional teachers to established teachers. | In this time of austerity with lots of vocational areas facing cuts and redundancies, there may not be an interest from the Senior Management Team to increase the English and maths capacity in your college. | English and maths is the most important area in the government’s education agenda, study programmes have dramatically increased the number of English and maths teachers colleges need. Attracting new staff is extremely hard; therefore when you have trained staff that are good you need to keep them by offering them more established work or converting them to established staff. |
| Have a centralised workroom for all your English and maths staff. | Senior managers may like the idea of staff being based with vocational teams, there might be a history of staff working in vocational areas, they say it will improve communication between vocational and English and maths teachers, there might not be enough space in a staff workroom to fit all the team, working across different sites this can be very difficult. | English and maths staff being centralised means instant access for support, sharing best practice, allows a strong team ethos to develop, regular formal and informal meetings to take place, emerging issues to be identified and dealt with quickly. |
| Raise the profile of English and maths internally and externally. | Vocational areas may say that this is not needed, it will cost more money than it is worth, everyone already knows that English and maths are important, it is not fair to judge vocational tutors on how well they integrate English and maths. | The integration of English and maths to be reported on in all formal observations. Appoint a person responsible for ensuring that English and maths are being integrated throughout your college. Audit all schemes of work to ensure opportunities to integrate English and maths are being identified. Include English and maths as a standard agenda item at all meetings; develop and introduce an English and maths brand to be used throughout the college – every notice board, internal and external communication, website and prospectus. |

**SCL Case Study: Appendix 1**

**Ofsted Inspection 24-28 November 2014 key GCSE English and maths judgements:**

**Foundation English – GOOD**

* Teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the high students’ outcomes. Success rates increased in 2013/14 and were high both for functional skills and GCSE at A\*- C. Progress within lessons and on to higher levels of study is also good. Attendance from the beginning of the academic year is close to the college target
* Experienced and well-qualified teachers work effectively to highlight the benefits of improving English skills. Students, many of whom were unsuccessful when studying English previously, now enjoy their learning and see the relevance of these skills to their everyday lives and future employment opportunities
* Teachers know their students well and support them sensitively to succeed
* Managers and teachers have raised the profile of English across the college significantly. Links to vocational teachers have improved greatly over the past year. Vocational and English teachers communicate more frequently and usefully share information on students’ needs. Close monitoring of individual progress and a strong focus on examination preparation is contributing well to students’ success
* Teacher use ILT well in most lessons., For example, in one lesson, the teacher skilfully used a video clip to bring a GCSE set text to life, followed by internet research by students on key characters from the book along with the use of mobile phone dictionaries for clarification of vocabulary
* English teachers promote maths well in lessons. They ensure they take every opportunity to extend the development of students’ understanding, for instance through a discussion on different salary scales along with a calculation exercise based on the minimum wage. Students can see the relevance of such work to their daily lives and often improve their skills without realising they are studying maths

**Foundation mathematics – GOOD**

* Teaching, learning and assessment are good as reflected in the high proportion of students who achieve qualifications … and obtain high grades in GCSE mathematics. Students make good progress in their lessons. Most students work above the standard expected for their level of programme and are successfully developing the mathematical skills that they need for both their vocational areas and their daily lives. Students’ attendance and punctuality in the vast majority of lessons is very high
* Teachers are enthusiastic and motivate students successfully. They provide good care and support for students during both individual and group work and create a positive learning environment that fosters a culture of mutual respect. Students rapidly improve their confidence in mathematics due to the good support that they receive. Students enjoy learning and feel confident that they can get the help and encouragement they need from their teachers to accelerate their mathematical skills development
* Teachers use their skills and expertise well to plan imaginative and varied activities that build upon students’ strengths and interests helping develop their understanding of key topics in both GCSE and functional skills mathematics lessons. For example, in one lesson a teacher skilfully used play dough and colourings to extend students’ understanding of how to use ratios effectively in a practical context. This activity was very successful in visually reinforcing the consequences of getting a ratio wrong
* Verbal and written feedback is good. Teachers give clear oral feedback and use questions and answers effectively to help students understand and explore key topics. Written feedback effectively highlights strengths and helps students understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers encourage students well to access relevant mathematics resources on the VLE that extends their learning outside the classroom. Students also benefit from ‘The Hub’ where they can access additional help from teachers to improve their mathematical skills outside planned lessons
* Students receive effective initial advice and guidance. Following early and diagnostic assessment, staff place students on an appropriate functional skill or GCSE course and provide them with timely information to support their progress

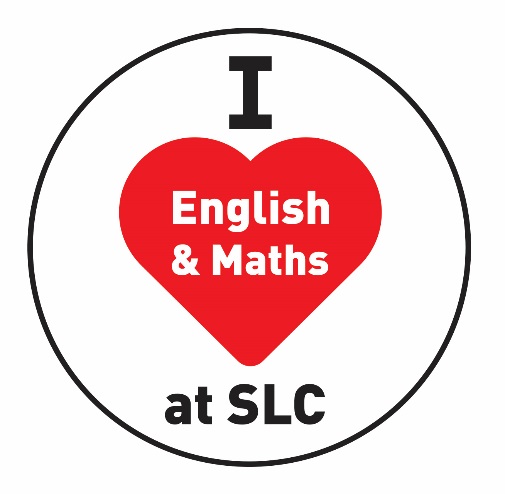
**Other relevant comments from the report:**

* Teachers successfully promote the improvement of students’ English and mathematics skills which has increased the success rates for Functional Skills and the proportion of students achieving grade A\*- C GCSE has dramatically improved since the previous inspection and is now good
* The proportion of students achieving GCSEs in English and mathematics at grades A\*- C has also rapidly increased and is now high. Teachers promote the importance of high standards of English and mathematics well to all students, particularly how these will improve future employment prospects
* Managers and teachers have raised the profile of English across the college significantly. Links to vocational teachers have improved greatly over the past year. Vocational and English teachers communicate more frequently and usefully share information on students’ needs. Close monitoring of individual progress and a strong focus on examination preparation is contributing well to students’ success.

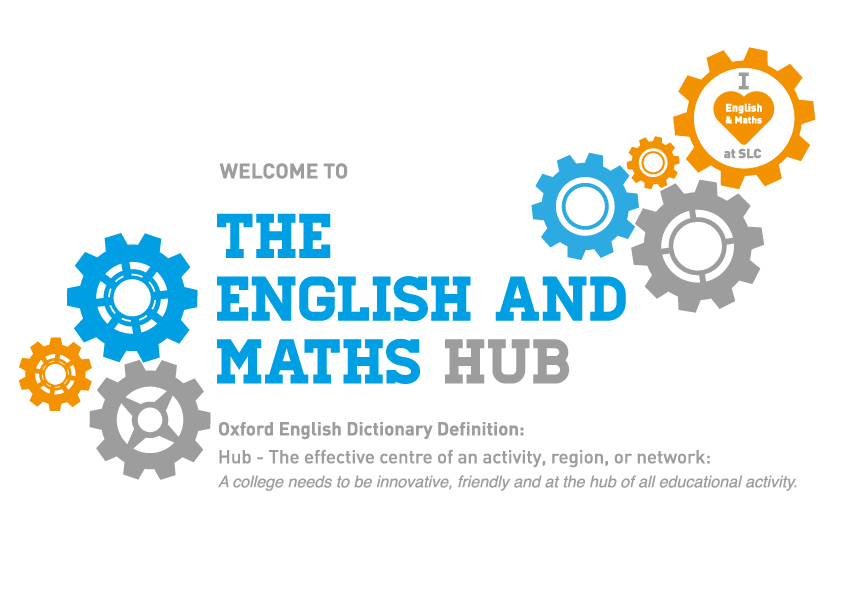
**SLC Case Study: Appendix 2**

**Example Documents and Images:**

English and maths logo used on internal and external communications:



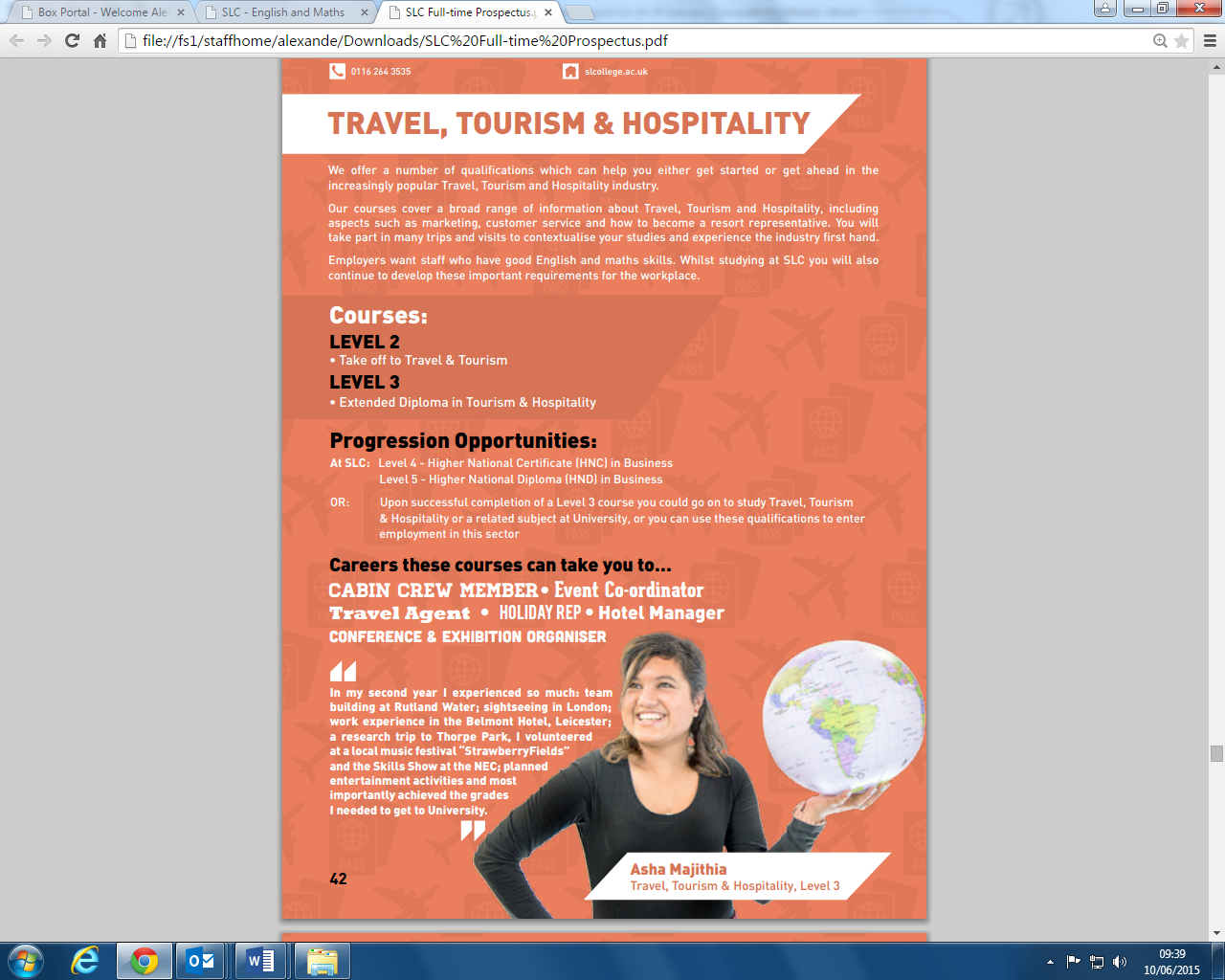
English and Maths Hub logo:



From the South Leicestershire College prospectus:



The details for each course in the prospectus also refer to the importance of English and maths and that learners will continue to develop these skills while at South Leicestershire College:



**SLC Case Study: Appendix 3**

**Timetabling and enrolment guidance given to PALs and Directors:**

**GCSE and Functional Skills Cross College Timetabling Rules**

Following discussions with the Timetable/Register Team the following rules have been agreed which must be followed when timetabling. Please remember that all 16-18 learners MUST have English and Maths as part of their Study Programme unless they have a grade ‘C’ or above in English or maths. If they have a GCSE ‘D’ (or a Functional Skills L2) grade it is expected that they do GCSEs. These are the funding rules for the next academic year.

**The Timetable/Register Team will use the ‘Master GCSE/FS Timetable’ and 15-16 Curriculum Plan to timetable each PALs area’s GCSE and Functional Skills sessions on the timetable system at Study Programme level\***

**NO CHANGES ARE ALLOWED TO THE GCSE AND FUNCTIONAL SKILLS SLOTS**

**PALs need to ensure that their GCSE and Functional Skills sessions are evenly spread across the two slots that have been reserved for them**

**GCSE and Functional Skills sessions will be timetabled by Friday 15th May**

**PALs need to book slots with the Timetable/Register Team to timetable their curriculum plan after their curriculum plans are officially signed off and the new data system is installed**

\*This will allow the GCSE and Functional Skills slots to be seen against course codes and you will therefore be able to see the whole timetable for your Study Programmes.

All parts of learners’ Study Programmes will be on the box after enrolment, together with their spiky profile in English and maths

All parts of learners’ Study Programmes will be on the box after enrolment, together with their spiky profile in English and maths

16-18 Full-Time Learners

GCSEs or Functional Skills Learners’ Routes

1. Study Programme Application received
2. Initial Assessment and Free Writing completed

Over the summer ALL 16-18 learners are called back in to do their English and maths Diagnostic, this identifies their spiky profile. Diagnostics are completed at the level of their IA result

**Entry requirements for GCSE Maths and English:**

1. Grade ‘D’ evidence
2. FS Level 2 evidence
3. Initial Assessment result of 'Level 2'

**Entry requirements for Functional Skills and Progression Units in English and maths:**

1. Has a GCSE grade ‘E’ or below
2. Does not have any GCSE grades
3. Has an Education Healthcare Plan, formerly a Section 139

Does NOT meet GCSE requirement or has an Education Healthcare Plan: these learners will do Functional Skills and/or Progression Units

Learners’ Study Programme timetables will have their day, time, tutor and room identified – course lasts a minimum of 32 weeks, 3 hours a week. This will also appear on the on the Box in each learners’ area

Final Exam – June 2016

During the enrolment process for their Study Programme learners will be enrolled on the appropriate English and maths qualification at a level above their IA result, unless there is detailed evidence to enrol them on a lower level

Learners’ Study Programme timetables will have their day, time, tutor and room identified. This will also appear on the Box in each learners’ area

During the enrolment process for their Study Programme learners will be enrolled on the appropriate GCSE English and/or maths qualification

It is expected everyone will have taken their exams at least once by the end of Feb 2016 – if a learner does not pass they will carry on attending until they are successful

**English and Maths Hub Timetable**

**Get help with your English and maths in the English and Maths Hub!**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 9-10am | Alex Lindsay  Support - English and Maths | Alex Lindsay  Support - English and Maths |  | Alex Lindsay  Support - English and Maths | Anita Suri  Support - Maths |
| 10-11am |  |  |  |  | Anita Suri  Support - Maths |
| 11-12pm |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12-1pm | Danny Baggott  Creative Writing Club | Nathan Nealon  Chess club | Alex Lindsay  MOOC Club |  | Anita Suri  MOOC Club |
| 1-2pm |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-3pm |  |  |  | Sharon Kew-Moss  Support - English |  |
| 3-4pm | Catrin Meredith  Support - Maths |  | Jaz Dhesi  Support - English | Nick Coulson  Support - Maths | Alex Lindsay  Support - English and Maths |
| 4-5pm | Dawn Morris  Support - Maths | Karen Gregson  Support - English | Nick Coulson  Support - Maths | Alison Collins  Support English |  |

**What can the English and Maths Hub offer you?**

* Support with your English and Maths.
* Stretch and challenge opportunities for learners with GCSE grade ‘C’ and above
* Improve your creative writing with a published author.
* Learn to play or improve your chess game.
* Embrace the opportunity to study online courses in your chosen vocational area from beginner to university level.

**SLC Case Study: Appendix 4**

**Internet Resources Supporting Maths**

Use the following resources to support your classroom work; they are from educational sites I have looked at and used. If you do decide to research your own websites or use educational forums please stay safe and follow this advice:

**Remember, everyone you meet online is a stranger, even though they might seem like a friend. Always use a nickname when you log on and never give out any personal details that would allow someone you meet online to contact you. That means full name or home address, telephone number, personal email or mobile number. Never arrange to meet up alone with someone you make friends with online, but if you are going to anyway, take a friend you trust and meet in a public place. Try to have your online conversations in public; people are less likely to hassle you if other people can see them doing it. Accepting emails or opening files from people or websites you don’t really know, can get you into trouble – they may contain viruses, nasty messages or annoying links to stuff you don’t want to see. Talk to your tutor or someone you know well and ask for help if you’re worried or upset about anything you’ve seen or been sent online.**

**In order to be fully protected online please make sure your fire wall is on and you have up-to-date virus software.**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/numbers/wholenumbers/>

This covers all the basic knowledge you need to sit the national test at level one, it is a very user friendly site and much loved by learners and tutors. Each topic is made up of explanations, quizzes, games and worksheets. If you only look at one website this is vital.

<http://www.mymaths.co.uk/>

This website has an excellent range of topics that you can access so that you can test yourself; it will also provide a range of interactive resources that we will work through in the class.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/subjects/maths.shtml>

<https://www.examtime.com/blog/apps-for-students/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/job-skills>

<http://www.bbcactive.com/BBCActiveIdeasandResources/WhataretheBestEducationalApps.aspx>

<http://www.mathseverywhere.org.uk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV-Y24-8LLU7WlTc7S4CYow>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQDUb9S3IKA>

<http://learningmathsonline.ac.uk/wp/>

1. National success rate tables for 2013-14 where FS are included are not available, but this measure will be included in future publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Barking & Dagenham Community Strategy 2013-2016: <http://moderngov.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/documents/s66226/20130116%20Final%20Draft%20Community%20Strategy.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. These practitioner research projects at BDC were undertaken with support from the LSIS, now ETF, practitioner research programme, delivered in partnership with The University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (SUNCETT) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The research papers by Tinyan Akin-Omoyajowo and Laurence Johnson can be found on the Excellence Gateway website:

   <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg4107> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg6633> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg6631>

   and

   <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg6632> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Fielding, M. et al (2005) *Factors influencing the transfer of good practice*, London: DfES,

   Research Brief No RB615

   <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg4234> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://eaprilconference.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/eapril-2014-proceedings_issn-aanvraag_def1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://maths.excellencegateway.org.uk/practitioner-led-exploratory-research-projects-videos-0> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smyHmn6tWZs> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHClzOODJpw> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-og1r3otBg> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <http://www.mmlsoft.com/index.php/products/tarsia> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Source: Department for Education, Statistical First Release L1 and L2 Attainment in English and Maths by 16-18 year old students in 2012/13 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)