

Really raising standards in GCSE English and responding to Ofsted

Ofsted says it wants schools to provide a richer curriculum at KS3 and focus less on routine assessment. It also wants schools to reduce teachers' workload. But, of course, it also wants standards to continue to rise. How can this be done?

Sean Harford, Ofsted's National Director of Education, has written: 'Track' doesn't necessarily mean 'use data'. – see www.risingcurve.net The search is on for teaching programmes that:

- increase students' knowledge and understanding, and
- increase teachers' understanding of how each of their students learns
- so they can give each student direct oral feedback and guidance
- without routine marking that has little effect.

We can help

Students need higher-order reading skills, confidence and resilience when responding to more challenging unseen texts – prose in Language, poetry in Literature. These skills need building up over time and are best developed in Key Stage 3, though Year 10 isn't too late to start.

Let's Think in English is based on powerful research evidence that *all* students can develop these skills. It uses the same methodology as Cognitive Acceleration in Science (CASE) which has been repeatedly proven over 20 years to raise attainment by between 1 and 2 GCSE grades. The programme works well with all students and particularly with less able, EAL and disadvantaged students who will find the new specifications particularly challenging. We offer a programme of specially-designed fortnightly lessons (30+ for KS3 and 20+ for GCSE) using fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama and film which guide teachers in working with students on developing these skills. ***350+ schools are already doing this in England and abroad. You can join them.***

Next introductory course

Location: King's College London – 5 minutes walk from Waterloo Station

Date: Tuesday 12th June 2018, 9.30am to 3.30pm.

Cost: £175 per delegate (£160 each for 2 or more) including materials, lunch and refreshments. £100 reduction for subsequent training and support. Participants receive paper and electronic versions of all the materials used on the course.

To book: email Laurie Smith at laurie.smith@kcl.ac.uk giving delegate name, school name and address, and email address for invoice.

Let's Think in English (LTE) provides:

- fortnightly lessons which guide students in exploring unseen texts effectively
- deepening experience in swift, perceptive inference and deduction
- 'verbal drafting' of responses through guided group discussion and feedback
- experience in recognising higher-order features of writing such as tone, pace, irony, wit, suspense, variety of structure, unreliable narrator, etc
- enjoyable, high-interest lessons which increase students' knowledge of 19th to 21st century writing.

The total cost – **resources, in-school training and a year's in-school support as an effective structure for staff development** – is less than three pupil premiums (£2470) plus trainer's fares outside London (less £100 for attending the course on 12th June). **Further information and sample lessons** at www.letsthinkinenglish.org

Some comments on Let's Think in English

"... pupils were challenged to discuss their ideas about a story based on very limited information. Skilful questioning probed pupils' understanding and engaged them in quite a sophisticated debate which developed their critical thinking very well."

Ofsted report on a London school judged Outstanding, June 2015

"... in a Year 7 English lesson, pupils were challenged to generate their own hypothesis about language and draw on quotes to back up their ideas. The teacher's skilful questioning motivated and challenged all pupils and their excitement in the class discussion and debate was tangible."

Ofsted report on a Kent school judged Outstanding, April 2016

"Teaching the LTE lessons and discussing the process with colleagues has given me a lot of confidence in setting higher aspirations for students. It has allowed me to reflect on students' learning and the impact of strategic questioning". – London teacher

The Year 7 class I have worked with are better able to spot symbolism and key narrative devices such as foreshadowing in their normal lessons. They are also far more aware of building on each other's answers and using reasoned language to explain their own opinion. I have also seen a marked improvement in their ability to select relevant evidence from texts to support their ideas in analytical writing. – London Key Stage 3 English Coordinator

A great idea and resources I can see being extremely useful in the classroom. My department will love it! – English Lead

Very enjoyable and eye-opening. I can see how it could be applied within my school and how it can develop key skills. The lengthy support subsequently is very encouraging. – English Lead

Excellent – made me far more confident about engaging with the new GCSE system and also made me look at developing students' skills in a totally new light. – English Lead