

Boys' Achievement in English

Introduction

The department recognises the need to address the issue of an increasing gap in achievement in English between boys and girls; this is a national trend. The issue is a continuing topic for discussion and informal research within the department.

It is essential that in the pursuit of an improvement in boys' motivation there is no compromise in the quality and appropriateness of materials and activities for *all* students. The department recognises that many of the activities and approaches often identified as generally less motivating for boys are intrinsic to the English curriculum, and that ways must be found to engage boys in these, rather than to reduce their importance.

In addressing the issue of boys' achievement, the following aspects of practice are under continuing review:

- teaching and learning styles
- classroom organisation
- access to role models
- range, variety and structure of writing tasks
- range, variety and structure of oral work
- the balance between short- and long-term tasks
- variety and pace in lessons
- choice of texts and topics for study
- differentiation
- approaches to private reading
- use of ICT and other technologies
- the nature of spoken and written feedback on work
- formative assessment and target-setting
- homework setting (structure, clarity of expectations, deadlines)
- consistency in approach to coursework deadlines
- classroom management strategies.

Grouping

Differences in boys' and girls' responses to the curriculum can result in a skewed picture of boys' ability, based on their attainment rather than their potential. When new mixed ability groups are being constructed, which involves first gathering data on students, it is important that the distinction is carefully maintained between attainment and ability.

Cover Lessons

Introduction

It is essential that the work set in cover lessons allows for real learning, and makes the lesson as stress-free as possible for the supply or cover teacher.

Procedure

- 1 Fill in a cover sheet for each lesson. Remember to name a member of staff who is available to help during the lesson.
- 2 Leave any additional information, instructions and resources on the desk in the classroom.
- 3 If possible, talk through the work with the member of staff that you have named as available to help.

Accountability

- If possible, let the class know that you are going to be away, and your expectations of them: this lessens difficulties for the cover or supply teacher, and makes students feel more that they are accountable to you for their work in the lesson.
- Students will feel more accountable to you if you provide a worksheet, written in your own 'voice'.
- Students should be given clear outcomes and targets, for example, state how many words they should write.
- Students should be aware that you will be looking at their work soon.

Activities

- A series of short, achievable tasks is more motivating than one extended task. If a class is expected to "Continue with coursework", then they should have a clear expectation of how much they should do.
- A variety of types of task, rather than a series of very similar ones, seems to work well, especially with Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Working in pairs is often successful; it can be motivating, and the legitimising of some noise can make management easier.
- Potentially vague activities such as 'planning' or 'revision' need clear structure and outcomes, so that students use their time constructively, and so that the cover teacher does not have to invent specific tasks. Revision lessons involving practice questions work well.
- It is essential that there is enough work for students to do, but if there is too much this can demotivate some.

Parents

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections in the staff handbook.

The department recognises and values the contribution that parents make to their children's development as readers and writers, and encourages their close involvement in children's work

Course outlines

These are created at the start of each year, and are distributed to parents. They contain information about the aims, structure and content of the relevant course. They also contain guidelines on how parents can help with their children's work in constructive ways, within the limits prescribed for coursework. They are also available at parents' evenings.

Suggested reading lists

Lists of suggested reading books for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are offered to parents at parents' evenings, or when appropriate, to help parents to encourage their children in developing their reading habit.

Open evenings and parents' evenings

As a matter of policy, folders of work, exercise books and oral records are made available at parents' evenings to form the basis of discussion with parents.

At open evenings and parents' evenings, visitors are given opportunities to:

- talk to staff and to students
- see displays of work, reflecting the best practice of the department
- participate in sample lessons
- see students working with ICT and other technology
- see students working on role-plays and other Drama activities within English
- see videos of students' work
- see displays of department resources, schemes of work and policies.

English/English Literature: GCSE Oral Record

Name:

Teacher:

Activity	Teacher's comment	Grade(s)		
		Speaking & Listening <i>Explaining/describing/ narrating</i>	Speaking & Listening <i>Exploring/analysing/ imagining</i>	Speaking & Listening <i>Discussing/arguing/ persuading</i>
Date:		Reading	Literature	Student evaluation in folder (✓)

Activity	Teacher's comment	Grade(s)		
		Speaking & Listening <i>Explaining/describing/ narrating</i>	Speaking & Listening <i>Exploring/analysing/ imagining</i>	Speaking & Listening <i>Discussing/arguing/ persuading</i>
Date:		Reading	Literature	Student evaluation in folder (✓)

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Date:		Reading	Literature	Student evaluation in folder (✓)