
Policy: English as an Additional Language

The English as an Additional Language Department (EAL) welcomes international students who wish to experience English education for any length of study in the United Kingdom. Students usually come to West Buckland to prepare for GCSE and A-level examinations and the IELTS examination, which will allow them to enter Higher Education. We also welcome students for shorter lengths of stay from Europe, especially the Baltic republics, France, Spain and Germany and farther afield, from South America, Russia and Mexico. For prospective short term students further guidance ('Short Stay' students in GCSE and A-level groups) is available from the school.

- 1.1. Students should have a language capability, which will enable them to study successfully and integrate into the school community, with appropriate support, in the medium of the English language. The Headmaster receives reports and assessments on prospective pupils prior to entry, and when possible, international students will visit the school and be interviewed, or interviewed via Skype, and assessed before being admitted.
- 1.2. No matter how long or short their stay at West Buckland, international students are fully integrated into the life of the school as members of the houses and mainstream tutor groups. The induction programme for new students provides individual peer mentors from within the boarding and day community to help new international students settle in and to receive support for at least the first half term.
- 1.3. The aim of EAL classes is to develop students' English language skills so that they are able to take part effectively in the academic and social life of the school. This includes the development of grammar and vocabulary, of subject specific vocabulary, and of study skills to enable students achieve at the stage they are currently studying and preparing them for progression to the next stage.
- 1.4. Whilst students are at West Buckland, they are encouraged to take part in the wide choice of co-curricular activities on offer. This will help them gain the most from their stay at the school, both in terms of widening their range of experience and in terms of their language development.
- 1.5. We tailor language courses to meet the needs of the individual student. Lessons are in small groups, usually of no more than six to ten students. Up to Year 11, ESL lessons and support in other academic subjects are offered within the mainstream timetable whilst other students are taking modern foreign languages or mainstream English. In the Sixth Form, lessons are timetabled to avoid clashes with other A-level subjects. Most students enter for iGCSE English as a Second Language in Year 11 and IELTS in the Sixth Form. Depending on demand and the availability of exams, it may be possible for students to enter the Cambridge First, the Cambridge Advanced Examination or Cambridge Proficiency.
- 1.6. The ESL department liaises with other departments to provide subject support. This may take the form of work on wordlists, proof reading, help with prep, preparation for exams or teacher support in the classroom. The department supports Year 13 students with their personal statements for university application and also offers support and preparation for 'own language' exams. The ESL staff also offer some pastoral support and a 'supportive' area to work or socialise, particularly in the first few weeks at the school.

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- 1.7. We encourage students to enter for appropriate GCSE and A-level examinations in their first language, including Chinese, Russian, German and French, and provide essential support to enable them to gain these qualifications.
- 1.8. The department works from its own suite of two teaching rooms equipped with computers, interactive whiteboards, and a self-access room with computers, listening facilities and a small reference library. Students may come to the self-access room when not in class and are able to access learning support from staff members.
- 1.9. In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for overseas students to give up EAL lessons but this is not recommended as English critically underpins a student's ability to achieve whilst at West Buckland and beyond.
- 1.10. Before the Sixth Form this would be in order to take GCSE English Language and Literature in place of iGCSE English as a Second Language. This decision would need to be made no later than the end of Year 9 and would be subject to an assessment marked by the Head of English. Application for a switch to mainstream English should be made to the Director of Studies.
- 1.11. In an increasingly competitive university entrance environment, as a rule, we do not believe it would be in the interests of a student to cease EAL lessons before attaining Level 7 in the IELTS examination. For students who have achieved their desired IELTS score, there is a weekly double period in which students practise and develop the language and skills required for university study. EAL lessons provide valuable support to students in improving their facility to perform well in other A-level subjects, particularly those like economics or psychology that have significant reading and writing requirements. Application for exemption from EAL lessons should be made to the Director of Studies.

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