



## FRAMLINGHAM COLLEGE

### OVERSEAS PUPILS AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Undoubtedly the language progress, academic results and social integration of our overseas pupils is, to a large extent, a result of individual pupils' own levels of effort, self-motivation and self-perception. However, there is a lot that we can do, as a body of staff, to influence the progress of our overseas pupils. Much is already being done by many members of staff, but it is important we address certain issues and suggest guidelines that can be implemented throughout the whole school, for the benefit of these pupils.

#### Issues

- It can become the norm for some pupils to use their language not only for the majority of their social interactions, but also as their means of comprehension and communication with other pupils in the classroom. Some have become dependent upon this use of interpretation, and while in the short term it may sort out the immediate difficulty, in the long term it affects their language development; in particular their aural skills and self-confidence to understand the material as presented by the teacher. Discussing a new idea, set question or the task at hand in their own language means a pupil is not conceptualising the material in English- the language they are then expected to use for discussion, writing and eventually answering exam questions in. Some pupils often do not exchange ideas, discuss concepts or really have to think in English very much, and consequently they can become inhibited and reluctant to offer answers in a group situation. This leads to probably the most frequent comment in reports right across the years; '*needs to participate more*', '*needs to ask more questions*', '*needs to contribute more in class*', etc. Staff approach the ESL teachers with questions like '*how much English does this pupil actually know?*', as the pupil's contribution is sometimes just too small for any real assessment, at least in the initial stages. The ESL Department also supports pupils who even after two/three years here find it difficult to explain the simplest scientific concept, design method or geographical feature in English even though they understand them 'in their heads'. On the whole, overseas pupils who are not constantly using their own language (i.e. those from minority groups) tend to have greater success in fulfilling their potential, as well as better integration within the school community.

- Some pupils have problems integrating into their year and House; part of this difficulty is their self- isolation through their constant use, in and out of the classroom, of their own language. It blocks off their peers and gives the impression to other pupils that they are not able and/ or not interested in communicating with them. Although it is unrealistic and certainly debatable whether it's right to 'control' pupils' language in social situations, if pupils are using English in all academic situations (i.e. in the classroom and during activities) their confidence to use English socially should improve.
- Some pupils underachieve at both GCSE and A-Level due to their difficulties in language. Most people know progress in fluency in a language depends largely on practice through repetition and listening, and therefore we can help to maximise our pupils' academic success if we insist that English is the only language used in the classroom.

### **GUIDELINES**

- Pupils should not use their own language during any class. If they do not understand they should approach the teacher directly. (Our minority groups – Thai/Japanese/ Korean, for example, do not have the option of discussing difficulties in their first language anyway – they have to approach the teacher directly, and they manage as well as anyone.)
- Pupils should not be using their translators at the same time a teacher is presenting information. They need to be encouraged to listen /take notes etc.
- Pupils should be discouraged from continually sitting next to someone with the same language, and should be encouraged to sit next to a range of pupils (language, ability etc), in order for them not to become dependent upon one/two peers . This will also increase their confidence to work alongside their English peers and improve their social interaction. This can easily be established in Year nine as the norm, from the very beginning of the school year.
- When establishing sets for subjects, wherever possible the overseas pupils need to be in a good mix with English pupils. This is an issue which can also affect our English pupils if they are put into a set with a large number of second language students.
- From Year nine, support and encouragement to speak in front of the class is essential, (with an understanding of Asian cultures which can mean pupils may feel embarrassed and reluctant to offer an answer if they are not 100% sure of their answer. In some cultures they are not supposed to answer if they are not completely sure of being correct, and are not in fact even asked their opinion – the teacher' s opinion is the correct one to have!) This is also particularly relevant with new pupils into year 12 who may find it less easy to adapt than younger pupils.