Preparing for Progress 8

From 2016 Progress 8 will be the main accountability figure for secondary schools. Schools that achieve plus 1.0 or more will be exempt from Ofsted inspections for the next year. Schools that achieve minus 0.5 or less will be inspected. Under the new Education and Adoptions Act, schools will be ‘coasting’ if they fall below a specified Progress 8 for three successive years. It is therefore essential for schools to maximise their Progress 8 scores.

New research shows that Progress 8 will reward moderately and less able students more than able ones. A student who gains new grade 3s instead of 2s will receive more than twice as many points as a student who gains 8s instead of 7s. This is part of a cross-party political policy to raise the attainment of students who leave school with poor qualifications or none, where Britain performs more weakly than much of the developed world. An electronic version of this flyer and the research on which it is based are available at: www.letsthinkinenglish.org/gcse-english-changes/ and www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/crestem/Research/Current-Projects/CogAcc/Lets-Think.aspx

Progress 8 and GCSE English. Only GCSE English Language or Literature will count in the English slot of Attainment 8 on which Progress 8 is based and Eng Lang or Eng Lit will be double-weighted only if both are taken in the same series. This means almost all students will need to be entered for both exams. They will therefore need confidence and resilience in reading demanding texts and answering evaluation and comparison questions in timed conditions.

Further, if Eng Lang appears in the English slot of Attainment 8, Eng Lit can appear in one of the non E Bacc slots (and vice versa), so English can be worth 30 per cent of Attainment 8.

Let’s Think in English has a good track record of raising the attainment of students of all abilities. Teachers say it greatly increases the effectiveness of their questioning, helping their students to think critically and providing the kind of challenge that the new GCSE specifications need. We offer a programme of specially designed lessons which develop these skills, beginning in Key Stage 3 and leading to work targeted on the new GCSE English specifications. 250+ schools are already doing this. You can join them.

Next introductory course
Location:  King’s College London, Franklin-Wilkins Building (Waterloo Bridge Wing) – 5 minutes walk from Waterloo Station
Date: Thursday 5 November 2015 9.30am to 3.30pm.
Cost: £175 per delegate (£160 each for 2 or more) including all materials, lunch and refreshments. £100 reduction for subsequent training and support.
To book: email Laurie Smith at laurie.smith@kcl.ac.uk giving delegate name, school name and address.
**About Let’s Think in English**

The programme provides fortnightly lessons which enable teachers to achieve the kind of discussion that significantly increases students’ reading-response skills and reasoning powers. The lessons use high interest texts – fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama and film. They are based on structured challenge, developing higher-level reading response and understanding through **focussed discussion** (social construction), **problem-solving** (cognitive challenge) and **structured reflection** (metacognition) which makes students aware of how they think most effectively. Teachers have found that many of the KS3 lessons work as excellent preparation for GCSE.

The programme has been developed since 2009 and fully trialled in all parts of London and the South East. It is also being used in Hampshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Bristol, Stockport and Liverpool with more schools joining each term.

We were delighted to be approached by [Edexcel](http://www.edexcel.com) to provide a suite of GCSE lessons, though these are generic and prepare students for all the specifications.

The lessons are different from other English lessons and we have found subsequent support sessions are essential. **The full package of KS3 lessons, training and support costs just two pupil premiums.** This is good use of money for ‘closing the gap’ - see [www.letsthinkinenglish.org/training-and-support](http://www.letsthinkinenglish.org/training-and-support)

**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

“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

“Let’s Think has encouraged me to consider the impact of student responses to a variety of material. Because the emphasis is on individual opinion and how to express that articulately, this has had an impact on their ability to think critically. It has made me slow down in my teaching in their lessons, and others and consider that some detailed work on a smaller piece of text can have a bigger impact overall.” – London teacher

“LTE has forced me to rethink the types of questions I ask during my lessons and to plan for a wider range of questions in order to elicit more thoughtful responses. I've also noticed the students have been empowered to ask more insightful questions themselves - some of which I can respond to and others which we have to investigate further, helping the students see learning as a lifelong process.”

“Love the sample lessons on your website which I have used with mixed ability KS3 group – very effective – pupils have reacted very positively as have colleagues.” – Course attendee

**Stop press**

Laurie Smith is leading a course on developing lessons for the new GCSE specifications at The City Lit, Central London, on Mondays 14 September to 30 November, 6 – 7.30pm. [www.citylit.ac.uk/courses/teaching-poetry-and-prose-for-the-new-gcse-specifications](http://www.citylit.ac.uk/courses/teaching-poetry-and-prose-for-the-new-gcse-specifications)