

Road to IELTS: a case study

Background

Rishworth School is a UK-based co-educational boarding school, founded in 1724. The school has around 500 students of which over 100 are boarders. Many of these need to take IELTS to move on to higher education.

Subscription

50 licences of Road to IELTS Academic

Period

July 2011 to the present



Interview with Jackie Thompson, Head of EFL

How did you get your students started with Road to IELTS?

We started by gathering all the target students in the ICT suite and giving them a one-hour session on Road to IELTS. We gave them their passwords, showed them how to start the program and worked through the Speaking section set 1. We decided to give them a lot of freedom in how they approached the resource – basically, they could dig into whatever they found interesting. The one rule was that they had to spend three hours every two weeks on Road to IELTS. When and where they did it was their responsibility. There are ICT suites in the boarding areas, so even if they didn't have laptops (and 95% do), they could still use it.

And did that work?

After the first two weeks we found that a third hadn't touched it, and another third had only done a bit. So the Head of the Sixth Form and I had a good talk with them. The real secret, though, was the Results Manager, which meant that I was able to see exactly what each student had done. We gave them a tutorial each fortnight and printed out their results for those two weeks. They got a copy and I got a copy. What was brilliant was that we could see not only what they did, but also when they did it. If they were working on Road to IELTS at 2am, I was able to talk to them about how they could plan their studies better. I also set them the essays as homework, marked them, and we discussed them in the tutorials. These counted towards their three hours.



What about the content?

I think it's wonderful! The students really liked it too, especially the quizzes. In fact, it was useful for our IGCSE students as they too take IELTS. They found it especially good because it helped them with general English in an academic context for many of their other GCSE subjects.

And how did they get on in IELTS?

Very, very well. I'm very proud of my kids! The year 13s scored between 6 and 8.5, my year 12s between 5.5 and 7.5 and Year 11s scored between 4.5 and 7. On average, they got a whole point or more above the band score we request. It's difficult to quantify exactly how much Road to IELTS helped, but they certainly did better than the previous year. Only two out of 48 didn't hit the target – the highest I've ever had. ■

