Curriculum Policy Statement

Based on our philosophy of *'challenging the strongest students whilst supporting the weakest'*, our courses and teaching are designed to provide effective training for students who need English for work, study or travel. As such, we are committed to providing high quality courses and accommodation in a warm, friendly and professional environment. We believe that every aspect of a student's time with us is equally valuable, and so we emphasise both academic as well as social needs and programmes in Bury St. Edmunds. We understand that everyone is unique with different needs and different goals. We aim to provide individual attention in order to help each student achieve their goals.

Principles

In order to ensure that our courses and teaching reflect the quality of our philosophy, our curriculum is based on the following principles:

1. 'Curriculum' is understood to mean all of the organised learning opportunities within the school, and includes:
- all timetabled lessons
- extra opportunities for structured learning and practice through organised activities, such as regular conversation clubs
- the social programme of afternoon/evening activities and weekend excursions
- safe and supportive host family or residential accommodation

2. The curriculum is supported by
- the appointment of appropriately qualified teachers
- continuing professional development of those teachers
- the provision of suitable learning resources and facilities
- monitoring the progress of students through a range of methods
- regular feedback on all areas of what we provide to inform how we offer and run the different services

3. BLS provides programmes of study appropriate to the needs of different students. Currently these include:
- General English courses
- Examination Preparation Courses as part of a regular intensive programme (e.g. IELTS and Cambridge PET/FCE)
- Tailor-made courses for one-to-ones or closed groups to meet requirements (e.g. Business English, extra intensive programmes, courses with drama elements, tailor-made social activities)
- Courses for both adults and teenagers

4. Each programme of classroom study will:
- be of high quality
- follow the principles underlying the school's objectives
- be taught by teachers of suitable experience and qualifications
- have clearly defined hours of tuition
- draw on a range of materials reflecting current methodologies
- be informed by needs analyses and ongoing review and feedback to allow for different learners' needs, goals and learning styles
- include advice and guidance for study after lessons and for future study after the course

5. In order to facilitate effective learning, students are usually grouped according to language level. Assessment of a student's level may happen prior to a course and/or on the first day of a course.

   The course books and syllabi that BLS uses are informed by the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), as exampled below, with students placed in our class most suitable for their level and needs:

Level name	**CEFR**	**Key Competencies (non-exhaustive examples)**
Proficiency (offered at one-to-one)	**C2**	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided. I have some time to get familiar with the accent. I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
Upper-Intermediate/Pre-advanced groups	**C1**	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort. I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.

		I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
	B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect. I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Lower Intermediate groups	**B1**	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear. I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	A2	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job. I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities.
Elementary (additional support as feeder into A2)	**A1**	I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics. I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.

7. Course Programmes

a) General English Courses (15 – 23 hours a week)
   - Students are tested on their first morning and a needs analysis is done
   - They are shown around the town to help familiarise them with their surroundings
   - They are placed in our most suitable class for their age, level and needs
   - The course programme is based on a suitable course book and/or syllabus and reflects the CEFR
   - The needs analysis also informs the course
   - Student progress and support is monitored through regular progress tests, tutorials and self-assessment, regular homework and regular feedback

b) Exam Preparation Courses
   - Students are placed based on our professional judgement into our most suitable class for their level and based on the needs analysis
   - Course books are used and provide the syllabus and reflect exam skills training in combination with development of grammar and lexis
   - Student progress and support is monitored through regular progress tests, mock tests in exam conditions, tutorials and self-assessment, regular homework and regular feedback
   - Aspects of students progress also inform the progression of the course and syllabus

c) One-to-one Courses
   - Students are tested and a needs analysis is done
   - The course programme is tailored to the individual's needs and objectives and course materials are selected appropriately
   - Students are matched with a teacher who is suitably qualified and experienced to ensure the individual's needs and goals can be met
   - Student progress and support is monitored through regular progress tests, tutorials and self-assessment, regular homework and regular feedback as appropriate

d) Closed Group (monolingual) Courses
   - Students are tested on the first day or pretested prior to arrival and placed in a class appropriate for their level
   - The course programme can be developed and designed to meet specific requirements for timetabling and content as negotiated prior to arrival

- The course programme is developed and informed by needs analyses and regular assessment throughout the course and is based on a course book and/or syllabus and reflects the CEFR
- The course content is age appropriate
- Student progress and support is monitored through regular progress tests, tutorials and self-assessment, regular homework and regular feedback
- There is a direct link between classroom based and activity/excursion-based aspects of the programme providing for an integrated and rounded overall educational programme

e) Summer Intensive Courses
- Students are tested on their first morning and a needs analysis is done
- They are shown around the town to help familiarise them with their surroundings
- They are placed in a class most suitable for their age, level and needs
- The course programme is based on a suitable course book and/or syllabus and reflects the CEFR with an integrated social programme
- The needs analysis also informs the course
- Student progress and support is monitored through regular progress tests, tutorials and self-assessment, regular homework and regular feedback
- The academic and social programmes are age appropriate for teenager or adult groups
- There is a direct link between classroom based and activity/excursion-based aspects of the programme providing for an integrated and rounded overall educational programme