



### **Use of Standard English Policy**

At Isaac Newton Academy our aim is to equip every student with the knowledge, learning power and character necessary for success at university and beyond. The ability to use Standard English with ease and confidence and to know in which situations it is appropriate and necessary is an important skill that all members of staff have a responsibility to support students in developing.

Standard English refers to a particular dialect of the English Language. It is the dialect of education, government and the law. It is the dialect required in formal situations, interviews and presentations.

Standard English does not have slang or colloquial expressions e.g. 'kinda', 'man', 'like', 'you know'. Standard English is grammatically precise: 'we were', not 'we was'; 'could have', not 'could of'.

Standard English can be spoken in any accent (as James Naughtie, Janet Street-Porter & Andy Kershaw demonstrate on the BBC).

Linguistically, all dialects are equal; however socially some are much more equal than others. At Isaac Newton Academy we believe that by teaching students what Standard English is and how to use it, we empower them to feel confident and at ease in formal situations, to project a positive image of themselves and create strong first impressions which may impact on their educational, career and life chances. We know that the ability to use Standard English appropriately improves students' self-esteem.

At Isaac Newton Academy we teach students that Standard English should be used

- in formal learning situations, including in paired and groups work \*
- in Harkness discussions
- in presentations (including BRIDGES presentations)
- in formal dining conversations
- in conversation with any adult (member of staff or visitor)
- at the main school and student reception.

\*Exceptions would include in drama role plays where portraying a character with another dialect, in PE lessons when playing sport where communicating in colloquial and abbreviated language is the norm and when moving around the school between lessons.

Students are not expected to communicate with each other in Standard English in the playground or in non-formal social situations.

In order to support students in understanding what Standard English is and when it should be used, it is important that all members of staff take responsibility for the promotion of Standard English,

that they create opportunities for students to practise their use of Standard English and that they role model its use when talking to students, and to each other in the presence of students.

It is vital that students should want to learn to communicate in Standard English. In order to ensure this, the advantages of using Standard English have to be clear to them. They also have to be clear about how their dialect varies from Standard English. This requires members of staff to pick them up when they use language that deviates from Standard English. However the way that this is done is key. Correction of speech should be linked to the situation, not the student, and should be non-judgemental. It should be done with sensitivity but not apology. It is also very important that students feel that their own dialect, if different, is respected and valued. And we must remember that language evolves, is there to be experimented with and even played around with creatively and imaginatively.

When listening to students' speech, staff should differentiate between the occasional sentence filler, such as "sort of" which slips in when someone is formulating their thoughts and thinking through how they will verbalise them, and ingrained habits of repeatedly using words such as "like" and "basically" as part of a deliberate style of speech. In the case of the former, it may well be counterproductive to the student's learning, creativity and expression to stop and challenge the individual. In the case of the latter it is important that the student understands that his/her means of expression is getting in the way of effective and appropriate communication.

As role models of the use of Standard English, staff should be aware of how they are speaking and, if they notice themselves saying something in non-standard English, correct themselves e.g. "Woops, I just said "Me and Mr Smith are teaching you - I meant Mr Smith and I!" However, members of staff should not get too self-conscious about the odd sentence filler such as "kind of" slipping into their everyday classroom speech. Members of staff should show sensitivity about addressing a colleague's non-standard English. It would not be appropriate to do so in public or in front of other staff or students. However if a colleague regularly uses a non-standard English expression in formal situations, such as when delivering assemblies, it would be appropriate for the line manager to point this out to them as part of their CPD.

Strategies that are effective for supporting students in developing Standard English and using it appropriately:

- The Beep Game (Students agree expressions that are banned. Then one talks for a defined amount of time on a topic and the class beep if he/she uses any banned word or phrases.)
- Encouraging students to use alternative "fillers" such as "I think"
- Saying "I really like your idea(s) but could you say that again, rephrasing it, using Standard English?"
- Humour works with confident and robust students – "Eughh!" when they use non-standard English
- Encouraging think time
- First word re-start
- Coaching persistent offenders by recording them and playing their speech back to them so that they can hear how they sound and self-correct

- Having a class Standard English monitor
- Using praise when students use Standard English
- Giving students the opportunity to try again or to nominate a friend to help them rephrase what they said
- Using real situations as examples
- Building in plenty of opportunities for debates and discussions
- Building in the use of Standard English as part of the assessment criteria, and discussing students' scores openly
- Positive beep game – using replacement fillers
- Giving parents top tips for them to use to support their child in improving his/her use of Standard English
- Holding a session for parents of the students who find using Standard English hard to talk through the reasons why this is a priority for us and how the parents can assist

**Reviewed June 2018**

