

Loughborough College

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KETTLEBY FOODS

Background

Loughborough College was invited into Kettleby Foods in May 2002 to teach English to their employees. The company produces convenience foods for some of the major supermarkets and is quite large, the parent company being the Samworth Group. They have a large workforce and use agency staff most of the time, especially during the busier periods. It always seemed busy but the students attended the classes well. They were from many nations including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, India and Greece and with many different backgrounds. This ensured that the classroom was culturally rich, especially food culture! This gave rise to many exchanges of cooking advice and recipes. The company was very good because they paid them for this time, which was designed so that the first class was at the end of the early shift and the next at the beginning of the late shift.

The teaching process

Before we began to teach, the company introduced us to the food processing plant. There we met many of the new students in their working environment. This was extremely useful as we were able to understand their language needs more fully. Although we were there to teach ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), the company asked us to present it through company policy handbooks such as Health and Safety, Personnel issues and Good Working Practice and these were taught through embedded ESOL. We introduced elements of pure ESOL particularly to heighten skills such as listening. A tailor-made course was produced and we were to spend 15 weeks at 2 hours a week with 2 classes.

Achievements

It was a pleasure to see some of the students after the course had ended in the Samworth News clutching their hard-earned attendance certificates. Some of these students wanted to continue learning English through the company, so it was decided with the next groups that there would be an extension higher language course for them and two classes for new

students as the previous format. So another pleasant 15 weeks was spent which ended in July. We are looking forward to further classes.

The students have benefited greatly as some are looking for promotion and others are now more capable of tackling roles such as Health and Safety Officer Reps for their area. One Turkish student who lives in Melton Mowbray also began coming to mainstream classes at Loughborough several mornings a week and he presented himself again for the new term. He is very enthusiastic.

The company were very supportive. The teaching room, the Samworth Academy is as grand as its name, the company being purpose-built about 7 years ago. We were allowed to buy food at staff prices and were welcomed by all staff whenever we went. It is a real pleasure to work with Kettleby Foods and we hope to have a long association.

Christine Harris, ESOL Co-ordinator, Outreach