

Education



WITH ALICIA KELLY

Our students don't just learn English, they live it

There's so much to learning our language than just sitting in the classroom, such as playing skittles or visiting Manchester United FC

THE best way to learn a language is to immerse yourself in it. So that's exactly what staff at Kingsway English Centre encourage their overseas students to do.

There are English lessons, of course, but there are also trips to enjoy pork scratchings at the Mug House in Claines, the chance to play skittles and visits to places such as Warwick Castle.

It's all part of the plan so students don't just learn English but also live English.

They do that by staying with host families in Worcester who cook their meals and chat to them.

Once students arrive, there is a strict English-only rule in place to ensure they eke out every last minute of English-speaking practice.

Owner Sue Johns said: "I think this approach is absolutely crucial.

"It means they are immersed in English.

"It's not just in the classroom, it's during break, on our social programme and with their host families."

Mrs Johns said Kingsway teachers take the focus away from grammar and concentrate instead on vocabulary and pronunciation.

She said: "Most people who come to us have studied English before, maybe for years and years.

"We help by building their confidence so by the end of the second, third or fourth weeks what is in their head is coming out of their mouths."

The majority of students who use Kingsway are Swiss, followed by Germans and Russians.

However, at the moment there are also Algerian, Czech, French and Japanese students there.

Some view the course as a holiday, others are business people sent by their companies, or they are housewives or retired people with a desire to learn English.

It's a far cry from when Mrs Johns, of Ombersley, and husband Rick set up Kingsway in 1988.

Mrs Johns, a former teacher, said: "I was making initial preparations and my husband said to me one day, 'Do you want some help with this?'"

"It turned from a kitchen table



LEARNING IS FUN: Sue Johns, owner of Kingsway English Centre, says the best way to learn a language is to immerse yourself in it. **TO BUY THIS PHOTOGRAPH:** worcesternews.co.uk/pictures/sales. 37359801

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exercise into a business." Since 2002, Kingsway has been based in Foregate Street, Worcester.

It is a language school with a difference because it deals mostly with professional people and the average age of its students is 40.

According to Mrs Johns, this appeals to mature, motivated pupils.

She said: "We started off with anyone over 16 so we had a ragbag of people to study.

"One of our first key clients was from an oil company and so we knew we had to up our game and to do that we had to get rid of the part-timers, the budget travellers and focus on this.

"We moved from a maximum age of 16, then 18, now 21.

"You won't find yourself in a class with a 16-year-old, someone young enough to be your child.

"So many people say they come here because we promise there will be no teenagers."

A packed social programme is a major part of the school's offering.

Mrs Johns said: "We feel it is part of the cultural linguistic experience.

"We go to places such as Warwick Castle or Oxford or a day in Manchester visiting Manchester United's stadium.

"Every Friday we have a three-course lunch at places such as the King's Head in Sibbury; the Bear and Ragged Staff, Bransford; Ostlers and the Ginger Pig in Worcester.

"We organise everything for them so they don't have to think outside of their learning.

"They can just relax into speaking the language.

"When we say goodbye to people, we have people crying.

"They say it's been life-changing.

"They've had such an overwhelming experience, they say it's the best time of their life."

WHAT THE STUDENTS SAY

Susi Rupp, aged 60, is a travel agent, from Aarau, Switzerland. "For me this is a holiday. For a long time I wanted to spend two weeks in a language school to see the standard of my English. I chose here because it's not a school for 20-year-olds and I wanted a small town. I knew from ex-students' feedback that they have very good families here. The school has given me the ability to be more sure of my English and not to take too much notice of the mistakes. They make us really work, work, work. The first two days I was quite tired in the evenings. But because we are all here for a short time only we want to get out of this as much as we can."



Jiri Kulich, aged 38, is from Mlada Boleslav, Czech Republic. "My company Skoda sent me here to improve my English. We do a lot of business in English speaking countries such as China, Korea, Spain, France and Italy so I need my English. It's the best way to go abroad to England rather than staying at home and have, every weekend, one or two classes. It's really intensive here but also relaxed. The school is really cute. Tomorrow I will go with my host family to the Malverns. We will have a walk and some dinner. It's really nice. You are a really traditional nation and it's really nice to be here and feel the atmosphere here of old Europe."



Heinrich Huber, aged 54, from Zug, Switzerland. "I work for a university for applied science. It's 20 per cent teaching and 80 per cent research and development. It's part of my job to read English papers but I'm here more for a holiday and conversation. This is my second visit. I came before for six weeks and I think I really progressed. I carried on listening and reading but I hadn't the opportunity for speaking so I decided to study again. For me it's also partly about the culture. I love to read the newspaper and to walk to the High Street during lunchbreak."



TOMORROW: HEALTH WITH JAMES CONNELL