

Nelson English Centre

Detailed School and Academic profile for agents 2009

Our School

Nelson English Centre is a unique **school** with an established reputation in one of the most beautiful areas of New Zealand – Nelson. The school is a place for students to learn and develop as a person, make friends and find a new voice in English.

Nelson English Centre has high academic standards and excellent study support. Our students say that the school is well organised, staff are helpful and that they had the ‘time of their lives’ here. We believe that studying English is a life experience. With the right atmosphere, learning English and making friends becomes an adventure.

Our Promise

- A caring, fun environment to learn in
- Excellent academic leadership
- Qualified, specialist teachers
- Top activities programme including
 - regular trips to the world famous Abel Tasman National Park
 - free salsa lessons in our own dance
 - yoga studio and much more... (See our ‘Activities’ page)
- Great personal service
- Carefully selected homestay families, managed by a full time homestay officer
- A philosophy of listening to, helping and respecting our students.

Director beliefs and operating philosophy

Over the last 25 years in teaching English as a foreign language I have worked as a teacher, Director of Studies, UCLES CTEFLA teacher trainer activities person, administrator, Marketing Director and as an industry representative at Government level. I have been a language

student in Cuba and Germany. For twenty years my continued question has been: 'What is the best place and way for students to learn English?'

I believe the best place for students to learn English is at a locally owned school, in a great location with owners who are teaching professionals. Nelson English Centre is founded on four beliefs:

1. New Zealand ownership by teaching professionals. I think English schools are like restaurants. The best restaurants in any city are never the big international food chains. They are usually family owned by people who are experienced and really know and love food and can step in and fix things up if there is a problem. English schools are the same I believe the best are family owners who love language and language teaching and who check regularly that students are getting value.
2. Studying English is a life experience. A school should do more than just teach English well; it can help our visitors have great times and life changing experiences. A school should have an X – Factor.
3. Location matters. Distinct local Nelson character. We are proud of the Nelson location and proud of the different experience it gives our students. Nelson is unique and students studying here will have an experience quite different to their friends studying in Vancouver, Auckland or Sydney.
4. Keeping up-to-date with International TEFL trends

New Zealand ownership by teaching professionals

Does this make a difference? When a school is owned in London or on the New York Stock Exchange, it is a challenge to keep up personal service in the local schools. Experience has shown that local family owners with passion take the time to walk around and check on details. Someone cares. One local person is responsible. Decisions can be made more quickly and for the long term.

If the school owners are also teaching professionals with international experience and reputation, students can enjoy both personal service and international standards of teaching. The best locally owned schools world wide are well-known for clear, strong and long –term academic

leadership.

Nelson English Centre is fully owned by the Upton family trust based in Nelson. The school has operated for thirteen years now and we aim to continue as a middle – sized school long term with a good academic reputation

Life experience - doing more than just teach English

Our approach is to create something like a club of students who are all serious about learning English. Students need to trust other students and staff, and have the space to develop confidence. Ideally they get a sense of adventure about English and New Zealand life. This does NOT happen automatically, but needs careful behind the scenes planning by a competent school organisation.

Just some of the ways we achieve this in Nelson English Centre include

- Staff carefully welcome students, know their names and show respect for them as adults
- We listen carefully to student and agent feedback.
- A unique and varied activity programme
- Carefully selecting the right homestay families to make students feel at home
- Time for fun and play as well as serious study time. The wonderful individual personalities of both students and teachers can shine in the school.
- When teachers are planning study programmes, they always consider students' own knowledge and experience. (Professor Graeme Nuthall: *The Hidden Worlds of Learners*, Canterbury University Press, 1997)

Students often say in farewell speeches that they came to learn English, but ended up learning a lot more than that, and having the time of their lives.

With the right atmosphere, learning English and making friends becomes an adventure. Students are more motivated – even when doing difficult

grammar, or after school homework because they have a clear goal. Students persist and succeed because they are highly motivated

Location matters - distinct local Nelson character

Nelson is different and very exciting. Nelson is not a grey city worn down by globalisation. It has a long educational history and strong tradition of proud independent thinking. I and the staff live here and now enjoy long term links and support from the Nelson community. We know who we are and are committed to the area. We have spent years building up a close relationship with the people who live and work here. There are many 'friends of Nelson English Centre' around town who talk to and help students.

Since 1995, the creative and independent and non-conformist flavour of Nelson has quietly influenced the school and the students who come here. In small but important ways, Nelson English Centre reflects the special creative character that is Nelson / Golden Bay culture.

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School History and Academic Leadership

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Our Principal: James Upton

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1970-1985 Training as State primary school teacher and teaching in Christchurch and London (Qualifications: Dip teaching (NZ))
1986 to 1995 Teaching English in Frankfurt, Sydney, Auckland and Christchurch.. Works as: teacher, teacher trainer, Director of Studies,

short course director and activities person (Qualifications: UCLES CTEFLA and DTEFLA)

The history of the Nelson English Centre

- 1995 Nelson English Centre founded by James and Eleanor Upton. Government body NZQA approved
- 1998 Centre inspected and accepted into ENGLISH NEW ZEALAND (previously known as FIELS)
- 2000 School moves into current bigger premises in Hardy Street near Nelson Cathedral and stabilises roll at 40-70 in winter and 70-150 in summer
- 2000-2001 Director James Upton serves as industry representative on the New Zealand International Education Marketing Network (NZIEMN) an industry-government liaison body deciding on a marketing strategy
- 2000-2002 Director serves as Secretary for (APPEL) New Zealand Association of Private Providers of English Language teaching. Involved in industry policy development and lobbying government. Appears before select committee in parliament and meetings with New Zealand Members of Parliament. (APPEL. Now part of ENGLISH NEW ZEALAND)
- 2007 Strengthens school relationship with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and other pathway institutions
- 2007 School strengthens community and local body relationships including involvement with Nelson's waterfront development
- 2008 School continues to gain in popularity in Cambridge preparation courses as Nelson

Our Teaching Approach

Through its 'academic quality management system', Nelson English Centre has gained a reputation for consistent, effective teaching. We believe this strong academic leadership is an important advantage for our students.

We aim for further advantage in key areas of:

- Teacher selection and professional development
- Matching the teaching team with our student body

- Fully understanding and knowing students

Like most modern English schools, Nelson English Centre uses an eclectic approach to teaching English. This includes insights and techniques from grammar translation methods, the direct method, the communicative movement, community language learning and various insights from linguistics and learning theories. We particularly follow developments in language teaching in the United Kingdom, and some Australian developments.

Added to this are some insights from the New Zealand primary school teaching traditions. These include the outdoor education movement in New Zealand and outward bound philosophy. The work of the Late Professor Graeme Nuthall of the University of Canterbury into the process of teaching and learning has been a particular inspiration.

In the classroom this means respect for the learner as intelligent adults who are motivated to learn. In particular by using the knowledge and experience of the students, both in the past and from the many fun things happening around the school. We believe we try harder than other schools to give students ideas and opportunities to get to know and mix in with the local community.

In general we aim for international best practice, strictly prepared lessons and grammar points, supported by fresh, lively, topical examples and links to the wider community.

The school has an active professional development programme and is involved with operating the ENGLISH NEW ZEALAND academic accreditation scheme