

This document has been archived because it is no longer current.

Using business and enterprise to enhance student progression: Christ the King Sixth Form College

URN: 130416

Area: London

Date published: 4 March 2011

Reference: 130105

Brief description

This example shows how partnership working in an outstanding business department enhances students' experiences.

Overview – the provider's message

'Business and enterprise activity at Christ the King College exemplifies all that we are aiming to achieve, and is a good example of how we give effect to our mission. Our starting point for the journey was with satisfactory provision which failed to take full account of students' needs and where engagement with employers did not extend beyond work-experience visits and placements. By re-designing our business curriculum, building innovative and productive links with employers and by engaging students in ambitious, imaginative learning opportunities we have transformed this area of our work. The process of culture change and its associated benefits took time to achieve and required careful planning and some key input from individual staff members. However, our "enterprise graduate programme" has become a beacon of success within the college. It is a model for developing other courses and is engaging the schools with which we work in wider business-related activities. We have found that all of this has been achieved through a clear, coherent, incremental and systematic approach to curriculum development.'

Dr Jane Overbury, Principal

The good practice in detail

The college's grades at inspection were almost all outstanding. These included the grade awarded to business, administration and law and the grade for the effective use of partnerships. The main [inspection report](#) says that high standards are achieved by advanced level students and it highlights their excellent progress. Stimulating and well-designed

enterprise activities are embedded in the curriculum and have a very positive impact on students' learning and aspirations for future success.

Background

The development of enterprise became stronger as the quality of the curriculum area improved from satisfactory to good and then from good to outstanding, over the past eight years. At the beginning of the journey, the principal described provision as being, 'sound but lacking the dynamism and vision necessary for excellence'. The focus was on student achievement in individual courses rather than a coherent strategy and vision for the area as a whole. Links with employers were sporadic and frail. They relied heavily on the efforts of individual teachers as there was no coordinated system to identify employers, engage with them and maintain productive relationships with them. The course offer was too limited and did not meet students' needs. For example: a BTEC national certificate was offered over two years but a national diploma was not available; and a range of National Vocational Qualifications were available but they did not meet the needs of students who aspired to progress to higher education.

Key changes made to improve learning and progression

The main issues that needed to be addressed included: ensuring that the curriculum met the needs of aspiring young people; creating an ambitious vision for the future; and setting a



clear agenda for change. The curriculum was re-structured to strengthen progression routes between the levels and on to higher education. Students now progress to degrees in law and economics as well as business studies. Cultural change evolved through a strengthened focus on learning and by raising expectations that students would attain high standards in spite of the difficult challenges of living and studying in an area of high deprivation. New staff from industry added stimulus for change.

Teachers who were used to autonomy learnt to work collaboratively across units of the national diploma and other qualifications. Strong linkages across units were put in place through joint work on designing assignments to ensure that learning was coherent and robust.

Building highly productive partnerships with employers

A local advisory board of employers was set up to help the college to understand how best to approach employers and maintain fruitful relationships. Effective working practices for managing relationships with employers were introduced, which were very similar to customer relationship management practices used in industry and modelled by the Career Academy. These involved a central point of contact and clear communications in order to build and sustain good relationships with a wide range of employers. The college was careful not to ask too much of employers but to discuss how each employer's involvement could be used to enhance learning. Once involved and after getting to know the college, many companies increased their activities with students to include such things as mentoring, shadowing, internships, visits, providing speakers and facilitating workshops.

Integrated enterprise activities with positive benefits for learning

National diploma and A level students are involved in exciting enterprise activities. The Enterprise Graduate Programme (EGP) involves a quarter of national diploma students and spans two years. All first year students are encouraged to apply to participate in this developmental and well-structured programme. They follow a formal application process and shortlisted candidates are interviewed at the premises of a high-profile company. Applicants receive feedback on their performance. Successful candidates are assigned a business mentor who provides regular guidance, and helps them to develop personal skills and clarify their goals and ambitions. Mentors actively discuss the importance of maturity and leadership in young people and encourage students to push themselves to achieve. They reinforce aspiration nurtured at college. Many successful applicants for the EGP have progressed from foundation and intermediate business courses at college. Students attend 'guru' lectures by business specialists and undertake many interesting visits to different types of employers. These activities and lectures are usually available to all national diploma students, not just those on the EGP.



A six-week paid internship is an integral part of the programme. Activities for interns are demanding and varied, such as: trialling software and translation applications; direct market research; and acting as a team leader in a large supermarket. Students find the programme inspirational. They say it is 'life changing...opens your eyes to the future...and gives you drive, willpower and motivation'. At the end of the programme students attend a formal dinner, which includes speeches and toasts, in order to prepare them for similar business occasions in the future.



Second year national diploma students run an annual fashion show in aid of charity. The show feeds into five of the nine qualification units covered in the year. It builds students' capacity for taking responsibility, team-working and networking with fashion stores and a range of stakeholders involved in putting on a successful event. Students compete with each other for the various roles needed to organise the event. Enterprise graduate students bring the benefits of what they have learned during their summer internships to the event. They disseminate it to other students through their approach to the planning and completion of activities. The charity and the students evaluate the event against set goals and criteria and make recommendations for improvements for the following year. The fashion event has grown in quality each year. Tracking of students' achievement shows that in qualification units associated with the fashion event, achievement has improved markedly with most students gaining distinctions.

Students studying AS level business studies mentor groups of primary school pupils to help them to develop enterprise activities. They work with over 300 pupils in seven schools to develop enterprising ideas, such as making a new 'smoothie' and marketing it. Each school holds a competition to select one team to represent it at an enterprise day event. The event is held at the college and attended by all the schools. It is run in the style of the 'Dragon's Den' with employers evaluating the proposals and giving talks. Students thoroughly enjoy these activities and find it improves their team working, communication skills, clarity of thought and motivation.



Provider background

Christ the King is a Catholic sixth form college situated in Lewisham, south-east London and Sidcup in Kent. 76% of the college's students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 55% of students are Catholic. Lewisham is one of the most socially deprived local authorities in the country. 50% of the college's students are classified as disadvantaged learners and 68% of students at Lewisham are from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2009/10 the college enrolled about 2,000 students including 400 students at Sidcup. The college provides courses in 11 subject areas. The college's vision and values are articulated in its mission statement which is: 'a Catholic college dedicated to the education and development of the whole person, so that learners can reach their full potential'.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

To view other good practice examples, go to:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice