



Neuroscientist and broadcaster Baroness Susan Greenfield visiting The King's School, Canterbury to speak to pupils about her career

*"Pupils are making decisions now that will set them on the path for the rest of their lives"*

school and students regularly win work placements at JP Morgan.

Pupils get involved in a plethora of entrepreneurial and careers-focused projects. Millfield Prep School runs a *Dragons' Den*-style competition to inspire young entrepreneurs and year 9 pupils in the senior school develop their leadership, communication and teamwork skills by presenting their own assemblies each week. Older students take part in Tycoon in Schools (a project spearheaded by entrepreneur Peter Jones), the Student Investor Challenge and Target Two Point Zero, a competition that gives 16 to 18-year-olds the chance to assess the state of the economy and decide the interest rate they would set. The school is also launching an Enterprise and Entrepreneurship BTEC this September (2017) and holds an annual careers convention each year, when around 40 former pupils return to talk about their professions.

James Brittain, Millfield's head of higher education and careers, encourages students to get work experience (would-be medics, for instance, volunteer at a local hospital) and says honing pupils' employability skills is vital. Millfield students are taught how to write a good CV and covering letter, how to research courses and careers, and how to develop their interview skills. He is surprised if pupils don't have work experience on their UCAS forms. "I quite like the ones who have been proactive, hoiked their CVs round the local shops and got jobs that way," he says. "If someone wants to be an architect it's great to have work experience at an architects' firm, but I say 'get your hands dirty too. Go and work on a construction site.' It says a lot about you as a person."

He and deputy Simon Briston see sixth formers on a one-to-one basis, guiding them through the maze of opportunities. "We always start with the course," says Mr

Brittain. "Unless you know what course you want to do you can't choose the university. If a pupil says, 'I want to do business with French' I'll say, 'why? Convince me.' I'll keep saying 'why?' until they've convinced me and then I'll say, 'right, that's the opening paragraph of your UCAS personal statement.'"

Some employers have expressed concern about the numbers of UK school leavers who are unprepared for the world of work – but that's definitely not the case with pupils at Hurstpierpoint, a co-ed day and boarding school in West Sussex. As well as running a raft of careers lessons, talks and workshops, the school runs a work placement programme for students in years 11 and 12. The programme isn't compulsory but more than half of them take part in it every summer, gaining work experience with a range of employers, including hospitals, GPs' surgeries, banks, finance companies and fashion designers. As Jan Leeper, Hurstpierpoint's director of pastoral care and head of careers, says: "Universities and employers are looking for evidence of relevant work experience so we actively encourage them to do work placements. A couple of years ago I asked the upper sixth how many had done work placements and 95 per cent put their hands up."

For Hurstpierpoint's work placement programme, pupils send in a formal application letter and CV and then careers adviser Tania Fielden interviews them. "It's like a real life job interview," she says. "They have to do their research beforehand, shake my hand, make eye contact. I used to work in human resources for a finance company and I was frequently disappointed by the young people we took on. They were so ill prepared for the workplace and it really concerned me. That's what motivated me to do this job. I feel very strongly that we need to prepare students for the world beyond school – and I think Hurst does it really well."

Most pupils get a second interview, either with senior teachers or employers, and everyone gets feedback afterwards. The placements themselves teach pupils about everything from commuting and being punctual to presentation skills and teamwork, and sometimes lead to jobs later on. One boy did a work placement at an estate agents' firm and was offered a full-time job when he left school.

"The students are very engaged with it," says Jan Leeper. "We wanted to run a programme where they had to go through a series of hoops to get the placements. They are not handed out like sweets. The pupils have to work hard to get them. Our aim here is to help students understand the careers that are out there, match those careers to their skills and enable them to make good choices. After all, they are making decisions now that will set them on the path for the rest of their lives."

## EQUIPPING PUPILS FOR WORK

Canford School in Dorset believes that a scheme that sends groups of sixth formers to work in orphanages in India, Ghana and Argentina each year is hugely influential for pupils' development. They spend time teaching children, organising art and craft activities and repainting the orphanage. They see first hand the difficulties faced by communities living in dire poverty.

The Canford Partnership programme also gives pupils the chance to hone their job application and interview skills. Around two-thirds of the lower sixth cohort apply for the 36 places on the scheme, completing a detailed application about their team-working, communication and leadership experience.

The applicants have a 15-minute interview, take part in a group exercise and learn to identify their



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personal strengths and weaknesses. "Even those who aren't successful with the partnership learn a lot from taking part in the application process," says head of careers Michael Doherty.

Most schools invite former pupils back to give lectures, run workshops and inspire their younger counterparts. The Girls' Day School Trust Alumnae Network has more than 70,000 members, many

of whom mentor younger counterparts. Meanwhile Malvern St James, a girls' school in Great Malvern, Worcestershire, regularly asks old girls to talk about their careers. Recent speakers include MP Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party.

Many schools offer activities like Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which enables young people to push themselves physically, help others and explore new places.

As Epsom College headmaster Jay Piggot says: "Recent research highlights that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is regarded as the most valued activity that a student may participate in as it fosters essential skills including leadership, teamwork, self-motivation, communication, confidence, consideration and the ability to learn."