

# PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

There has always been a debate in education between, on the one hand, educating young people to develop a love of learning for its own sake and achieving high academic qualifications, and, on the other hand, developing the skills needed for the workplace and for each student's future.

Modern education can move on from this rather one-dimensional debate and can now deliver academic aspiration alongside the accumulation of skills that are vital for young people to develop if they are to succeed in the 21st Century. It is possible for young people to leave school highly qualified academically and with the skills that will see them succeed in the world of work.

I would argue that development of skills alongside academic rigour is not only to be encouraged; it is actually essential. Schools have a duty to ensure that these critical skills are developed in each young person by the age of 18 years. And what are these 'skills'? The eight skills usually identified are: Leadership, Digital literacy, Communication, Emotional intelligence, Entrepreneurship, Global citizenship, Problem solving, and Teamwork. To this list, I would add Resilience, which is so important as children become young adults in a challenging world.

I am Headmaster of an academic school where we aim to inspire pupils and encourage a love of learning. Our pupils aspire to achieve high academic



performance and do so at GCSE and at A Level. They go on to the leading Universities, Music colleges, Art and Drama schools. But I do not think RGS Worcester would be doing its job properly if we were not developing skills alongside academic achievement.

How is this achieved? The short answer is by providing opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to develop these crucial skills and by working with business to form a 'bridge' between what happens in the classroom and the application of skills in the workplace. This begins from a young age, even at Prep/Primary School age, and is then enhanced right through Senior School and Sixth Form.

At RGS Worcester, every year group from Year Five upwards has an opportunity every year to engage with business. Examples of these opportunities include a superb engineering project with Worcester Bosch in which our pupils had to design a test head for part of the production line.

"Our students were the first ever girls only group of 'industrial cadets' to experience engineering at Yamazaki Mazak. Morgan Cars provides pupils interested in automotive engineering with a unique experience of seeing their full production process. Our pupils design, build and race an electric car, supported by local companies. A group of Year Eleven pupils



are currently National Champions in the 4x4 Jaguar Land Rover Challenge.

It is links such as these that resulted in RGS Worcester becoming West Midlands Regional Winners of the Chamber of Commerce Award for Education and Business Partnership 2016.

This year, all of our Lower Sixth (Year Twelve) students have embarked upon an Enterprise and Employability course. This unique course, developed with the University of Worcester Business School and the Careers Enterprise Company, has involved over 100 students presenting their ideas for setting up a new business. In the Employability module of the course, business leaders explained to the students the skills they will need to demonstrate in the workplace.

The Careers department at RGS Worcester runs an extensive programme to assist pupils in choosing their career pathway. We use Careers profiling in Year Nine, and tests and interviews in Year Ten. Pupils receive specialist advice to assist them in their GCSE and then A Level subject choices so that they follow courses that will lead to the career they seek, or keep their options open. Detailed guidance is provided for the University application process. We use a superb software tool from which students can access a database of all the university courses and apprenticeship schemes and narrow down their choices to find the best

fit for them. Using a new online system, they can build a profile to enhance a CV, including video footage, to demonstrate their skills. Our own Careers EXPO is one of the largest in Worcestershire with over 120 delegates and pupils invited from local schools. We invite in leading speakers who encourage pupils to broaden their horizons: Sir Ranulph Fiennes spoke at the School recently about resilience and leadership, and Miranda Hart held a 'facetime' question and answer session with budding young actors.

With the new Apprenticeship Levy and the uncertainty of how high student debt will reach, we must equip our pupils to be flexible about career pathways. They should consider the wide range of options available including entering the workplace straight away through Degree Apprenticeships or following a business sponsorship scheme through University. They can consider studying abroad and developing their skills through work experience. The choices are vast and the opportunities exciting.

The co-curricular programme at the School is deliberately broad and we are introducing the 'Crown Award' which encourages pupils to participate in at least one activity to develop each identified skill. Teamwork, for example, might be achieved through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or participating in any of 20 different sports on offer, Leadership by taking on responsibility as a Digital Leader, Prefect, School Council member or participating in the Combined Cadet Force. Digital Literacy is provided for all through our Digital Learning Programme. Communication skills can be enhanced through Debating or participating in Drama productions.

Global Citizenship might involve charity or community work, raising awareness through Amnesty International or engagement with environmental issues.

Problem solving could be tackled through Coding Club, or countless other academic societies, Emotional Intelligence gained as a Pastoral Prefect and supporting younger pupils.

There are so many ways of encouraging young people to develop skills alongside their academic work, without them often even realising they are doing it!

So let's put the academic vs skills debate to bed and focus instead upon providing opportunities for young people to explore and develop academically and the skills they so urgently need. If schools can create the right supportive environment for their pupils to thrive academically, they can also provide the opportunities that will see young people enjoy developing their



By John Pitt,  
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skills. Schools do need help with this and business leaders can assist by providing expertise to inform young people - it is so much more powerful when the CEO of Worcester Bosch (and former RGS Worcester pupil), Carl Arntzen, speaks to our pupils than if a teacher tells them.



The great thing about developing skills is that, by challenging them to break out of their comfort zone, we see our pupils develop enthusiasm, resilience and self-confidence. By finding out more about possible career paths, their motivation for academic work grows. They enjoy working with one another, engaging with adults, and facing their own futures with real excitement.

We are very fortunate here in Worcestershire and through the Chamber of Commerce to have business leaders who want to engage with schools and are prepared to give their time and provide expertise and opportunity for the young people who attend our school. We are keen to share these experiences with other schools and businesses. There is always more we can do together.