

Case Study

Fir Vale – At The Business End



Making school subjects seem relevant to life outside of the classroom can be a tricky challenge for teachers. Some students may not see the importance of some areas of learning for use in later life.

Fir Vale School has tackled this problem by implementing an English project called *At The Business End*.



Fir Vale has hosted visits from professionals from a range of industries including journalism, marketing, law and business.

The project aims to show students how relevant English is to the way a range of professionals work.

Fir Vale has hosted visits from professionals from a range of industries including journalism, marketing, law and business. Future plans include visits from estate agents and people who work in public relations.

Matthew Parkin, leader of learning for Key Stage 3 English at Fir Vale, co-ordinated the visits. He explains,

“We chose to highlight to our students the importance of English in the business and entrepreneurial world. There is no better way to do this than to have a professional who has firsthand experience come into the school and meet with the students and talk with them.



“We wanted to give the students some variety and so we have tried to encompass a range of different industry professionals. When they visit they give a talk to the students, then we have a question and answer session before we take part in challenges and exercises relevant to the industry they have discussed.

“For example, when a business manager came to see us, we had the pupils write mock job applications and give feedback to each other. For the marketing exercise the students wrote press releases about the project to send out to the local media and for the journalist element we wanted the students to write news reports. It's important to try and engage the students as much as possible in order to keep their interest.



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“It would be great to get a children’s author in to talk to the students to really inspire and excite them and that is a real possibility for next year.”

The visits were arranged by Business and Education South Yorkshire (BESY) and Matthew found their help invaluable.

He added, “It would have been nearly impossible for me to arrange the visitors by myself. Co-ordinating five weeks of visits would have seriously affected my teaching and so BESY have been great in helping to source and arrange the professional visitors.

“On the whole, the project has been positive and the majority of the students have responded well to it and have enjoyed talking to our visitors. I believe it to be a very worthwhile and positive project and one we will look to do again next year.”

Gil Vasey, a Director within the Specsavers Group, was one of the visitors to Fir Vale and he believes this approach is good for everyone involved. He says,

“It’s important for students to find out from business people what working life is really like. I was keen for them to ask me questions and find out about business without me lecturing them. I really enjoyed being involved and it seemed as though the students did too.

“I do think it is important that visitors to schools or colleges don’t lecture the students about the rights and wrongs of schooling or boast about their achievements. It’s important for them to be engaging and responsive to the students.

“It gives them a different perspective on business and how important English can be to their ambitions.”

If you are interested in arranging for an entrepreneur to visit your school please contact Liz Yoxall at Business and Education South Yorkshire on 01709 336738 or email thebig@be-sy.co.uk



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