

Case Study

Wisewood's Women's Cycle-wear Project

Building Enterprise into a School's Specialism



Successful sports wear designer and cycling enthusiast Heather Knott wanted to engage more young females in Sheffield in cycling. She decided to approach Wisewood School and Community Sports College with a project that blended cycling with fashion and provided a real business experience.



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Wisewood has always been keen to incorporate enterprise and entrepreneurship into the school's specialism, to demonstrate the entrepreneurial opportunities that are available in the sports industry. Heather and her partner Simon worked with students towards a goal of designing a product or service that would inspire more young women to want to cycle.

Eight girls from Y8 and Y11 participated in the project during weekly after-school sessions. Sports teacher Lucy Hitchens approached a combination of students who were studying either a Sports BTEC or a Textiles GCSE, all of whom had a passion for sports and the desire to become more involved in cycling. Over a period of seven sessions, the girls were guided through the whole design process, from identifying the design question through to creating a prototype that would provide some answers.

Heather and Simon, with the support of the Heeley Development Trust, have set up Brio™ – an innovative, not for profit design consultancy – which is currently focusing much of its work on the theory, "How can design thinking encourage people to want to be more active?". It was this philosophy that formed the basis of Heather' and Simon's work with the Wisewood students.

The girls were encouraged to consider their own attitudes towards cycling and their reasons for not cycling regularly. By thinking about their tastes in fashion and the lifestyles of their peers and themselves, they identified the needs of their target customers.



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The activities in each session were designed to mirror the processes that Heather and Simon experience as professional designers. The students were required to present their ideas to the group, explaining the reasoning behind each concept and how it met the brief they were given. Lucy Hitchen supervised the sessions and was impressed by the performance of the students when asked to present to the group. She explained,

"The girls didn't have much experience of standing up in front of others and speaking and this was evident in the early sessions. Throughout this project, I have seen every girl's confidence develop and they have become accustomed to speaking in front of others and communicating their ideas in a coherent and assertive way.

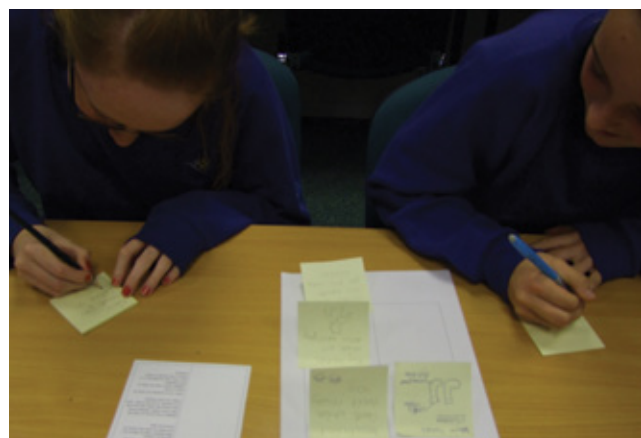
"There are so many different elements to this project that every girl will take something valuable away from it. Whether they specialise in textiles or sports, the skills they have developed will always apply. Plus, they have all seen a new side to cycling and hopefully this is an interest they will pursue in the future!"

Since beginning their work at Wisewood, Heather and Simon have been able to develop an ongoing conversation with young people in South Yorkshire and have already begun work with another school in Sheffield. Heather hopes that the Wisewood project is the beginning of a longer process which will reach, and educate, many young people. She explained,

"Rather than working on a short, simple creative project, Brio has been formed to actually solve a problem. We want young people to use design thinking to discover innovative products and services that encourage active lifestyles. The girls at Wisewood have impressed and surprised us with the quality of their ideas and we look forward to many more positive things to come."



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