

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

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Tomorrow's employees

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Working with Schools

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MENTORS MATTER David Cruickshank, chairman of Deloitte, visits a south-east London academy to discover what benefits a successful mentoring programme can bring to an inner-city comprehensive school **Page 6**



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Schemes that allow students to train in simulated workplaces have proved to be popular with youngsters at Madeley Academy in Shropshire (see page 14)

Successful engagement is about more than PR

Chris Cook looks at some of the complex issues surrounding involvement of companies

Nothing provokes the education establishment's cynicism more than the pursuit of profit: teachers and parents are suspicious of the business world seeking to train or make money from children. This attitude is an impediment to real progress as businesses are already making a big difference in schools.

But an element of the scepticism is well founded. Some business engagement is headline chasing. For every worthwhile intervention, there are a score of PR-motivated headline grabs. Telling the difference is not always simple.

Nick Chambers, director of the Education and Employers Taskforce, says that "for the schools, it can be very confusing. For the employers, too." That, he says, is why "what we have tried to do is build a very strong evidence base. That, to me, has been a

very important process." The benefits to schools of real engagement are becoming clearer by the year. As one of the Education and Employers Taskforce's research papers notes, "there is strong evidence from the United States that young people who participate in programmes with high levels of employer engagement do much better than their peers in the labour market".

Indeed, the most important recent education success story is the tale of employer engagement. Many English academies, state-funded schools run by private groups, are "sponsored" by business people. These schools do not derive any income from this sponsorship. But they benefit from having an honest broker with roots in the business world supervising the way they are run. The results of these schools, set up in the poorest areas of England, have improved markedly faster than any others.

The nine schools in the Harris Federation, set up by Lord Harris, the founder of Carpetright, increased the proportion of their pupils receiving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C by 10 percentage points. The chain of schools run by Ark, a

charity set up by Arpad Busson, the fund manager, has increased the share of its children meeting that benchmark by 13 percentage points.

The government ascribes this success to allowing schools autonomy, rather than the involvement of business people. However, it is schools with backing from people with strong business backgrounds that have been most successful. This is no accident. Chris James, professor of educational leader-

A child who does not know anyone with a degree may not appreciate the return on such an asset

ship and management at the University of Bath, has produced research that highlights the importance and relevance of skills developed in the workplace to effective school governance.

He says: "The most important qualities are those that relate to being able to scrutinise the work of the school – to ask the difficult questions – and to having the interpersonal skills to make that kind of contribution in

a helpful way in a group setting."

Having businesses linked into the school also creates networks the schools can exploit. A big problem that weighs on social mobility is the fact that poor children sometimes do not perceive the benefits of education or the opportunities open to them.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "a quarter of the gap in GCSE results between children from rich and poor families is associated with... differences in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours".

A survey of 15,000 young people found half were more motivated by a spell of work experience to study harder and win the qualifications they needed. A 1998 study of students who had been mentored found the "majority of students said mentoring has affected their wish to do well at school. Three-quarters of these said mentoring has had a lot of impact on their motivation in GCSE subjects."

Businesses can help overcome another impediment to social mobility. A child who does not know anyone who attended university or won a technical qualification may not appreciate the returns on those assets. Nor is it clear that even if they

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do they will understand how to get the qualifications they want – and schools may not help.

Some schools push children to take qualifications that will help propel the institution up the league table, not the child towards their chosen goal. The 2009 report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions and the 2010 Lord Browne review into universities both criticised the careers advice available to poor children. This is an area where businesses can help.

A survey by Deloitte found pupils who had been in contact with four or more employers in the past two years of school were almost twice as likely to feel prepared for the jobs they wanted.

This dual role – raising aspirations and offering guidance – is an important intervention. An evaluation of the American Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership – a scheme that brought teachers, employees and students together in the final year of secondary education – found participants were 11 per cent more likely than their peers to go to university. Eight years later they were earning 25 per cent more.

For business the evidence

of benefit is less clear. Almost three-quarters of CBI members say engagement with schools helps with future recruitment. More than 60 per cent cited public relations reasons.

In some cases the benefits are obvious. A survey of employers in animal care and welfare businesses, commissioned by Lantra, showed three-quarters of 166 businesses related to animal care had recruited staff directly from work experience. This is an unusually strong benefit, but a 2010 survey of 14,000 graduates by the High Education Careers Service Unit found one in five worked for their employers as a student before they applied for a graduate role.

There are strong effects on existing employees, too. A City of London report also found "the individual employee benefits from improved morale and increased motivation, job satisfaction and commitment to the company, all as a direct result of the opportunities afforded by their volunteering experience".

But, Mr Chambers says, "they've also got skills development. Businesses have seen skill development of staff, who say serving as a governor is very benefi-

cial." Almost a third of the survey group said the process helps to develop skills among existing staff. The City of London report says "the majority of respondents report that volunteering has developed their skills and competencies across a broad range of business-relevant areas. These competencies are strongly related to an individual's personal effectiveness in their work role."

PR is also important, as is being considered an ethical company. A 2005 MORI poll found 86 per cent of employees considered it important that their own employer is socially responsible. Furthermore, a 2007 survey of school leaders found 90 per cent of respondents felt the two key benefits to employers were "stronger links with the communities in which they operate" and "improved reputation".

This should not be a signal for businesses to stampede into schools without thought.

As Mr Chambers says: "I think there is a role for effective long-term partnership for employers and schools. But unless there is something in it for everyone, it won't last. So we need to make sure there is a strong evidence base."

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Wider range of expertise needed

Skills gap

Bosses demanding more science and maths graduates risk missing out on other talents, says **Liz Lightfoot**

Businesses want well-trained employees with inquiring minds, but very few of them are crying out for more students of classics or ancient history.

Instead, the focus is on so-called "Stem subjects" – science, technology, engineering and maths – skills the CBI says are vital to growth and employment.

Nearly half of the employers consulted by the CBI for its Education and Skills Survey 2010 said they were having difficulty recruiting people with Stem skills, and three in five believed the shortages would continue.

Once again, the organisation has called for urgent action to increase the number of young people studying Stem subjects.

But could this be a mistake? There is a growing voice for more emphasis to be placed on the importance of humanities graduates, who bring different skills to the workplace.

Independent thinking, analytical skills and creativity are seen as the hallmark of the good humanities graduate, schooled in the art of using and analysing sources, texts and arguments to come up with their own unique essay or debating point.

But, with the coalition government poised to withdraw huge swathes of public funding for the teaching of arts and humanities at undergraduate degree level, the talent pool could be at risk.

Though medical and laboratory-based subjects will continue to receive state subsidy, humanities graduates are likely to find themselves bearing the full cost of their studies.

The importance of a wider skills base has been highlighted by two recent reports, each taking a wider view of the skills needed for economic success in the 21st century.

The first, from the Council for Industry and Higher Education, the organisation that fosters links between universities and business, calls for higher education to work more closely with employers.

Its Creative, Digital and Information Technology taskforce, which included university vice-chancellors, company directors and policy experts, in September published *The Fuse*, a report urging higher education to work more closely with business in an effort to bridge the divide between the humanities and science.

"Stem has become a lazy way of thinking about the world," says David Docherty, CIHE's chief executive. "Of course, we need people with scientific and engi-



Being logical and numerate is not the sole preserve of those who have studied science subjects

Alamy

Case Study Systems manager with a bit of a history

David Harkin, pictured right, is one of IBM's youngest and most ambitious client systems managers, writes **Liz Lightfoot**. It is his job to understand customers' needs and then identify and explain the IT products that will best suit them.

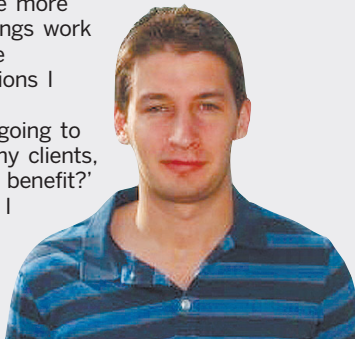
He has come a long way since he joined the company three years ago, knowing little about information technology, other than how to use a computer. Mr Harkin, 24, is a history graduate who specialised in the fall of the Roman empire, the American revolution and the origins of the British Secret Service.

Far from holding him back, Mr Harkin believes his history degree has been a positive advantage.

He says: "I entered the IT profession as a blank piece of paper with no preconception of how things

worked or should work. I view things from a different perspective. I work alongside colleagues with IT, science and engineering backgrounds who are more interested in how things work and how they can be improved. The questions I ask are: 'Why is this important, how is it going to have an impact on my clients, what is the business benefit?'

"So much of what I learned studying history at university is transferrable to my job."



neering backgrounds, but do we actually have a lack of biologists in this country? What employers are saying is that they need people who are logical and numerate and that is not the sole preserve of somebody who does chemistry or biology or physics."

He adds: "Business and higher education need to learn from and replicate the initiatives and innovation that brought the world Amazon, Google and Facebook.

"We have to unpick what employers are saying and see things in a more sophisticated way. Employers don't talk to me about the subjects people study, they talk about recruiting team players and leaders; people with an entrepreneurial spirit, energy, enthusiasm and ideas, who love to learn new things," he says.

It is a view that could be controversial. But, while it is tempting to see Stem subjects and lan-

guages as attractive to employers because of their vocational nature, it is true that business and industry are also seeking graduates from a range of other disciplines, says Christopher Snowden. He is chairman of the Universities UK Employability, Business and Industry Policy Committee and vice-chancellor of the University of Surrey, which has a graduate employment rate of 97 per cent, the UK's highest.

The CIHE is not a lone voice. In the same month, a report by the Work Foundation said the attention given to the supply of Stem graduates ignored the importance of skills possessed by those from other disciplines, such as design and communication.

There is no shortage of Stem graduates, but half of them end up in non-Stem jobs, the foundation says. Instead of concentrating on Stem graduates, companies need to place more value on thinkers and innovators, those who will help them get value out of products and inventions.

"The government should replace the current system of bids for an additional 10,000 Stem and other vulnerable subject places with broader competition for additional places on courses that specialise in boosting innovation," says the report.

Those who have been working hard to increase the supply of workers with a background in science, maths and engineering are reluctant to switch their attention to the arts and humanities.

The fact that Stem graduates take up jobs in other fields shows how much their skills are valued, says Sir John Holman, a professor of chemistry at the University of York and a former government Stem adviser. "Stem graduates are prized in all sectors because their skills go well beyond their technical knowledge," he says.

"Employers value Stem-qualified employees for their analytical, problem-solving and numerical skills, as well as for their technical competence. Look at the salary premiums over a lifetime that graduates can command (compared with those having two or more A-levels): engineering (£234,000), physical science (£238,000), against humanities (£52,000) and arts (£34,000).

For information technology companies, the right mix of graduates is already seen as essential. Google says it regularly recruits Googlers who have studied ancient history, classics, philosophy and literature.

"Our hiring process strives to establish a complete picture of a candidate," the company says. "What they have studied is only one small piece. We place a lot of value on the ability to learn as a key to success."

IBM also says it encourages diversity of degree background among staff.

"The world around us is constantly changing, becoming more interconnected and intelligent, so it is vital that our new employees can adjust and thrive in the years to come," says Jenny Taylor, who aside from having a bachelor of arts degree in medieval history is IBM UK's head of graduate recruitment.

"The Fuse: Igniting High Growth for Creative, Digital and Information Technology Industries in the UK", www.cihe.co.uk; 'Shaping up for Innovation: Are we delivering the right skills for the 2020 knowledge economy', theworkfoundation.com

Business and parents give thumbs up to academies

Policy

Despite support for the coalition's plans, some doubts remain, writes **Charles Batchelor**

The government has adopted a brisk approach to broadening the day-to-day management and running of schools to include people who are not necessarily professional educators.

The previous Labour administration's academies programme is to be expanded, while Michael Gove, Conservative education minister, has added to the mix free schools – charitable charter schools set up by private groups but funded by the state.

While Mr Gove's Liberal Democrat coalition partners appear less convinced about the path that has been set, business organisations and parents' group are more positive.

"Business has been encouraged by what has been going on," says James Fothergill, head of education and skills at the CBI.

"We support the widening of the academies programme, but we would like the government to go even further to include not just 'outstanding' schools but those that are coasting."

"There is also a strong case for allowing profitmaking companies to set up and manage schools themselves. That is not possible at the moment."

It was a Conservative government that launched the idea of allowing business to become involved in schools free from local authority control when it created city technology colleges in the mid-1980s. Labour developed the idea and expanded the scheme to about 200 academies.

These are intended to take a more creative approach to education, although they must still follow the national curriculum in the core subjects of maths, English and science. They depend on a private sponsor, which can be an individual, a trust or a com-

pany, whose vision is meant to drive the school.

Sponsors were originally expected to contribute 10 per cent of the academy's capital costs, up to a maximum of £2m, though this requirement has been relaxed to allow sponsors without the money but with the skills and leadership to run an academy.

This was intended to allow organisations such as universities, private schools and local authorities to become sponsors.

The academy's other capital and running costs are met from local authority grants. In return for their backing, sponsors are able to influence the academy's curriculum, specialism, ethos and its buildings. The sponsor can also appoint people to the school's governing body.

Criticism of academies has focused on their performance, some have done poorly, and concerns that academic improvements have been achieved by excluding weak pupils. They have also been accused of draining funds from existing state schools.

Despite this, the government is seeking to increase

'There is a case for profitmaking companies to set up and manage schools themselves'

the number of schools qualifying for academy status and has widened the criteria to include primary schools. More than 1,500 schools have applied to become academies, of which half are primaries, and about 900 of which have been ranked as "outstanding" by Ofsted.

The original academies were established to improve standards at poorly performing schools and there is a worry, including among business people, that little will be gained by including schools performing well.

Concerns about their impact on existing schools surround the government's programme of free schools. Based on a Swedish model, they would allow parent



Michael Gove has championed the introduction of Swedish-style free schools that could be run by businesses

Charlie Bibby

groups, charities, universities and businesses to set up schools, though most attention has focused on parent-backed proposals.

The original target was for 50-100 of these schools to be set up each year, though only 16 have been approved to open in September 2011 and all of these could struggle to open in time to meet the deadline.

Lord Harris, one of the original backers of academies who supports a federation of nine such schools in south London, has no doubts about the government's programme. The government's policies "could not be more positive for children," he says.

"We need more academies to put more pressure on local authorities to improve their schools. If this [programme] weakens them, it is because they have got bad management. They should be saying to themselves: 'We have got to do something to keep up.'"

Lord Harris says there is strong demand from parents for his schools. A survey of parents in Croydon, where the federation has three schools, showed 28 per cent want their children to go to one. He is considering plans for two more schools in Croydon and intends to expand the federation to a total of 25 schools in south London.

But as the government presses on with these initiatives, some of those involved in bringing business and schools together have expressed concerns about the complexity of the education framework.

"Governments have over-complicated the system with a plethora of qualifications and agencies that business struggles to under-

stand," says Tim Hutchings, chief executive of Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, which runs schoolwork placement and training initiatives.

Business is willing to contribute to the cost of training, he says, and in the current economic climate will probably be asked to do more. But in return, it

expects the state to help students achieve the right standard of education. The government's latest plans will depend on business getting even more involved.



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Mentors succeed as motivators

Employer support

Business people can provide expertise to pupils who need it most, writes **Adam Jezard**

David Cruickshank is used to tough questions – as chairman of Deloitte, the professional services firm, one would expect no less – but the students at the Harris Academy Bermondsey have put him on the spot. “That’s a very good question,” he says to a group of students, “and asked so nicely.”

Mr Cruickshank was visiting the south-east London academy during a week of visits to schools and colleges around Britain by the chief executives of leading companies organised by the Education and Employers Taskforce, a charity that aims to ensure pupils benefit from effective partnerships between schools and businesses.

Some 600 of the country’s senior executives visited 700 schools in October. Others taking part included Jill McDonald, chief executive of McDonald’s UK, Sir Michael Rake, chairman of BT, Sir Martin Sorrell, chief of WPP, the advertising company, and Lionel Barber, editor of the Financial Times.

Some 500 UK Deloitte staff take part in mentoring programmes, aiming to motivate children and interest them in the world of employment, while also allowing the mentors to learn valuable skills.

Although his staff do not visit the Bermondsey academy, he was full of praise for its mentoring programme, which has developed over the past decade, starting when it was the Aylwin Girls School.

“The mentoring scheme here is a role model for others that do not have one,” Mr Cruickshank told the girls several times during his visit.

Part of the scheme’s success lies in its having a full-time head of mentoring, Roger Hiskey, who joined at the same time as head teacher Catherine Loxton, now executive head teacher, 10 years ago. The school became a Harris Academy in 2006, when it was reopened by future Prime Minister David Cameron, who praised the mentoring programme while electioneering earlier this year.

Part-funded by Lord Harris of Peckham, founder of the Carpetright group, the school is one of a nine-strong group of academies in south London.

Mr Hiskey says: “The improvements at the school have taken place gradually and steadily over the past 10 years, they are not a rapid change as a result of becoming an academy.” Academy status has brought benefits, he adds, such as shared planning and training, although the mentoring scheme is unique to Bermondsey.

One of Bermondsey’s chief achievements of the past decade has been raising the percentage of good GCSEs (from A* to C) from 19 per cent to 87 per cent, with more than 50 per cent of pupils getting good passes in maths and English.



David Cruickshank, Deloitte chairman, faces a grilling at the hands of Harris Academy pupils in Bermondsey *Charlie Bibby*

Early on, maths was identified as an area that needed improvement, so a specialist team of teachers was brought in to assist pupils.

Additionally, the school’s management team developed the

Advice from the boss

Some words of wisdom from David Cruickshank, Deloitte chairman, to pupils at the Harris Academy, Bermondsey

● “People need to develop what I call a career passport. Do as well as you can at school and do things outside that enhance your overall profile, such as music, sport and arts. It all builds over the years.”

● “Don’t let people say no and say you can’t do things. If you set yourself a target and go for it, people will support you.”

● “I started off in a small school on the east coast of Scotland with about 270 pupils. I didn’t know what I wanted to do until I went to university in Edinburgh, where I studied economics and decided I wanted to be an accountant.”

● “Everybody gets knock-backs... Focus on what you want to do and be confident in your abilities.”

● “Most people don’t choose to become an accountant [at school]. It’s only when you become one that you realise that it is much more fun than it sounds.”

mentoring scheme, which now has 144 business mentors from companies such as the FT, PwC, Ernst & Young, Deutsche Bank and the Greater London Authority.

“We are an inner-city school and have successful people from top-flight companies all around us, and we have used that to our advantage by encouraging them to mentor the girls,” says Mr Hiskey.

The academy is in an area of social and economic deprivation, with three-fifths of pupils qualifying for free school meals, 50 per cent having English as an additional language and a third having a learning or disability problem.

Girls in years 10 and 11 have 70 maths mentors from Deutsche Bank and Ernst & Young. These are given induction training and work towards goals to help students pass GCSEs.

Other mentors from business encourage girls to meet targets, focus on exam goals and give advice on college applications. They look at tracking sheets, which monitor pupil progress on goals and targets, as well as how they perform in homework and in lessons. The mentors also look at girls’ ambitions, such as going into further or higher education, and help to plan revision timetables.

Mentoring takes place before the school day at 7.30am and after lessons at 3pm. “The girls love it and they clamour to get a mentor,” says Mr Hiskey. “When you think

that this means working before or after school, that is quite a sign of success.”

Most mentors work with girls for the whole of their final two years, and some have been with the scheme for nine years.

“Ten years ago, this was not a successful school,” Mr Hiskey says. “Lots of girls have benefited from having an extra person take an interest in them... The school is now oversubscribed, and parents are now far more willing to take an interest in their girls’ education, which is another sign of how the school has improved.”

The mentors also help with the pastoral side. As one student told Mr Cruickshank: “I had a mentor from South Bank Uni. She helped me with my homework and course work. She also helped me to get along with my teachers, which was difficult at the time. I am now progressing and doing well. My mentor motivated me to come to school early, because that was one of the problems I had last year.”

The academy has about 900 pupils and 300 mentors come in weekly and have one-to-one relationships with pupils, which Mr Hiskey says is “a heck of a powerful resource”.

The pride the girls have in the mentoring scheme is evidence of its success and its effects can be seen in the school. As Mr Cruickshank said to one group: “I’ve noticed how smart it is and how everyone smiles and likes being here.”

Deloitte report

A report commissioned from Deloitte by the Education and Employers Taskforce, titled *Helping young people succeed: how employers can support careers education*, was based on research conducted in the first half of 2010 involving bosses, teachers and pupils.

The report found that “there are excellent examples of schools and employers working together to provide a rich careers education, often woven into the whole school curriculum.”

But the study says that the impact has been patchy. Of the young people surveyed, 42 per cent had had no contact with employers in the past two years. However, 95 per cent said they would like employers to be more involved in advising them about jobs and careers.

The report found that the barriers in the way of closing this gap are:

● Communication

Employers and schools do not know who to talk to or how to build links.

● **Awareness** Schools and employers do not know each other’s needs, or what each can offer.

● Capability and experience

Professional development of heads and teachers does not address working with employers. Businesses are unsure of how to deal with schools.

● **Geography** Some schools do not have many employers within reach.

Among the report’s recommendations are a single advice service for employers and a campaign to raise awareness of the support available for schools and employers working together.

The report calls for the government to remove red tape and consider incentives for small and medium businesses that want to work with schools.

Employers should contribute to existing online services and resource libraries, such as video diaries, job profiles and business scenarios.

In addition, the government should consider developing online services to support careers information, while employers should treat work with schools as a business activity in its overall strategy.

The report also calls for a quality award system, acknowledging employer commitment to good practice in relationships with education, while teacher training should include careers education, and schools should ensure that careers staff have up-to-date expertise.

Gerald Haigh

You use it at home, now you can use it in class

Technology

Pupils are texting their answers to the teacher, says **Courtney Weaver**

For most of the past decade teachers around the globe have wanted nothing more than to stamp out text messaging in their classrooms.

But thanks to educational technology companies such as the UK’s Promethean World, many are warming to text messaging.

One of the world’s biggest producers of interactive whiteboards, Promethean now markets devices it calls learner response systems which encourage students to text in class.

Students can text responses to the teacher in lieu of raising their hand or written answers.

Promethean says that the devices will help teachers to monitor the progress of all the students in their classrooms, not just the ones who are most comfortable about speaking up.

The devices can be set in different ways, so students are given a multiple choice question or must text in the correct answer. The percentage of students who get the answer correct can be displayed on a board in front of the class.

Answers can be stored as data that can be plotted on a spreadsheet.

The concept might seem straight out of the pages of 1984, *Brave New World* or *Logan’s Run*.

Yet Jean-Yves Charlier, chief executive of Promethean, and others in the industry insist that using such tools constructively is the best way to bring the technology-averse classroom up-to-date.

The learner response systems will not mean students stop articulating out loud, Mr Charlier says. Rather the devices can be used for a few questions a lesson as a way for teachers to monitor students’ progress in “real time”.

The next generation of devices, he says, will be able to receive images, such as maps. Students could, for example, name the three

biggest UK cities and pick them out.

“We just can’t have our children at home with interactive television, mobile phones and gaming consoles and then send them to schools where they have nothing,” Mr Charlier says.

According to Promethean, 10 per cent of US students will have some sort of text messaging device in the classroom before the end of the year, while the percentage of UK classrooms with interactive whiteboard technology will increase from 72 per cent to 90 per cent in the next few years.

The goal for these devices is for “technology to be the enabler”, says Terry Sweeney, chief executive of RM, another British educational IT group.

Transferring interactive whiteboard technology to horizontal surfaces such as table tops allows students to break up into small groups and work at a table together instead of huddling around one computer.

“When you think about what kids need when they finish their schooling and go into the business world,

they need to be critical thinkers and work as a team... Those are the skills I’ll be looking for as an employer,” says Mr Sweeney.

The technology will also “bridge the gap between school and home” and improve communication between students and teachers, he adds.

Online platforms will soon replace the note home, so parents can better monitor their children’s attendance and performance.

“It will be a window into the [child’s] world,” Mr Sweeney says, only slightly ominously.

While parents might be taken with the devices, the companies have had a hard time impressing investors.

Since Promethean World’s £400m initial public offering on the London Stock Exchange in March, it has seen its market capitalisation fall to £231m and shares dip 82p below the 200p offering price.

Analysts say it is just a matter of time before it finds an appropriate market valuation above where it is now trading but below



Educators have gradually warmed up to high-tech resources

the pre-IPO valuation. The company has seen growth rates of 35 per cent-40 per cent in the past few years and its customers are upgrading to more expensive whiteboards, Mr Charlier says.

The company, like RM, has found a fan base among teachers. A specific product, Promethean Planet, functions as a YouTube for

teachers to share lesson plans and has 750,000 teacher users.

For the most part, teachers have taken the technological changes in their stride, Mr Sweeney says.

“There was scepticism, because they were looking at how they were going to have to change teaching,” he says. “Now you can’t get them off of it.”

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Working with Schools

Accountability How it adds up for charitable donors

What motivates a business to give part of its profits to education? According to KPMG, the advisory firm, and its charitable foundation, it is because the returns will benefit future employers and society.

Continuing corporate generosity depends on rigorous impact assessment: the trend for tough testing of results is noticeable across the entire schools sector, as business sponsorship becomes more widespread and more sophisticated.

Started in 2001, the KPMG Foundation decided to put its charitable efforts into young people who end up at the bottom of the heap, whether through educational failure or falling foul of the criminal justice system. In 2005, the Foundation focused on helping the 6 per cent of children who leave primary school without basic reading and writing skills. Every Child a Reader was formed as a collaboration with charities and the government to offer half an hour of one-to-one reading time with specially trained teachers, costing about £2,500 per child, to pupils falling behind their peers after their first year of primary school.

In 2006, the scheme had an extra £10m of government money to expand nationally, after research by the Institute of Education, University of London, showed that children on the scheme made an average gain of 21 months in reading-age

in four to five months of teaching. For the foundation, which had by that year already put £10m into the scheme, the money was well spent because it was convinced the social returns would dwarf the investment. A study calculated that, taking knock-on problems such as truancy, special educational needs provision, and crime and unemployment into consideration, the taxpayers was losing more than £2bn per year because of illiteracy.

Every Child a Reader, where successful, would save £15 for every £1 spent on one-to-one reading lessons.

A numeracy scheme, Every Child Counts, was added to the mix under the umbrella organisation Every Child a Chance. Research shows pupils make an average of 13.5 months progress over three months with just 20 hours of one-to-one tuition.

Following the spending review, it will increasingly be up to schools whether they continue with such schemes.

The foundation says its quest for rigorous evaluation makes identifying new projects difficult, but that collaboration such as Every Child a Chance make accountability and monitoring easier.

More online at FT.com

Miranda Green



Shameless campaign to create a teaching elite



Raising standards

Miranda Green looks at a scheme that gives graduates a chance to teach in some of the UK's toughest schools before going into business

The partners and alumni of McKinsey, the management consultants, are used to being part of an ambitious elite. But Brett Wigdortz, the founder and chief executive of Teach First and a former McKinsey consultant, is focused on the needs of a group the last government called "the many not the few".

With his immensely successful, business-backed teaching initiative, he is injecting the talents of the UK's top graduates into the least successful corners of the state school system to help ratchet up standards.

He freely admits trying to harness – and even subvert – the very idea of an elite: "We create

a sort of mafia of people who will focus on this issue throughout their life," he explains of the 2,520 young teachers who have already either completed the scheme's two years of teaching in the most challenging schools and moved on into a business career or stayed in the classroom. Amazingly, half decide to stick with the teaching in spite of unrivalled levels of contact, internships and networking with top employers offered during the programme.

Mr Wigdortz left McKinsey eight years ago to make a reality of recommendations in a report on businesses working with schools he wrote in 2001, commissioned by Business in the Community and London First.

He is now at the helm of a scheme that has won plaudits – and hard cash – from two sets of ministers and, thanks to a £4m government grant announced in July, is about to take another leap towards its ultimate goal – transformation of English education by raising teaching quality. "We are very optimistic, and we really believe that we can change society. We feel kids getting left behind by education is a national tragedy," he says.

At the beginning, 186 graduates from top universities were sent into failing or struggling schools in the most deprived areas of the capital.

By 2005, 265 of the best graduates, selected from an increasingly competitive campus

recruitment process, were sent into schools in the north-west, the West Midlands, the east Midlands, London and Yorkshire. Now the scheme is the third-largest recruiter of graduates overall and the largest recruiter from Oxford and Cambridge, with 560 starting this summer in 220 schools.

Mr Wigdortz is steadily edging closer to his ambition of a presence in a third of secondary schools in deprived areas, and Ofsted, the education inspectorate, has applauded his "exceptional" troops. The government grant will allow him to start sending "teach firsters", as they are known, into primary schools and to double their number taking part in the next four years.

"We would never say secondary is too late, but you can make even more of an impact with earlier intervention," says Mr Wigdortz, who believes the business-led nature of his project explains its success, with companies providing funding, internships, coaching and training.

"It has been absolutely crucial to be founded by business people, our trustees are business people, and it has definitely brought a performance culture. Also, there is no more powerful way for business to intervene. Employers find our alumni are their top recruits. To be a great teacher is the same as being a great leader in any field."

Initial sponsorship tended to

Teach First Pupils at a Hounslow college wonder why a high-flying young person would end up in their classroom, . . . and decide to stay

To the pupils in her class at Feltham Community College in Hounslow, Lucy Gray is an exotic figure. Her lilting Scottish accent makes her a foreigner on the outskirts of south-west London and, at the age of 23, she has spent the past few years getting a politics degree at Edinburgh University rather than, like most of the young women they know locally, starting a family.

"They are absolutely fascinated by my degree," she says with amusement. "Perhaps their degree is not at the forefront of most teachers' minds, but mine is recent, and the pupils don't come across people that often who have been to university. So I talk to them about university a lot, and they try to work out why I'm not married at my age – I have to remind them that I don't have children of my own."

For Ms Gray, her role is as much about raising the pupils' expectations and broadening their horizons as it is sharing knowledge. Sadly, her charges find it difficult to accept that such a high-flying young person should end up in their classroom – many of their previous teachers moved on to other schools

quite quickly. "They don't understand why I'm here. They ask me why I don't have a good job. Why I am working here. If I'm away, they think I'm going to job interviews."

Ms Gray applied and was accepted on to the elite Teach First graduate teacher programme that started in the summer of 2008. She found herself at the comprehensive secondary school in Feltham teaching citizenship after the brief six weeks of basic training given to "teach firsters", as they are known.

Feltham Community College was part of the previous government's "national challenge", which means it received extra help to reach a benchmark of 30 per cent of pupils achieving a minimum five GCSEs at grades A*-C. Staff turnover was high and many pupils had behaviour problems, but it has improved during the three years Ms Gray has been teaching there, partly because of the arrival of a new headteacher who started at the same time.

The latest Ofsted inspection report, in 2009, found the school had made progress after several years of worsening outcomes for its young people, and was

now "good" with elements of "outstanding" provision of care and guidance. An earlier Teach First recruit has stayed for six years and Ms Gray decided to remain at the school when, at the end of her two-year placement, she was offered the job of head of department for citizenship and religious education – an early promotion typical of this group of hard-working and highly motivated young teachers.

Mentoring with an Accenture management consultant, Sam Davies, last winter gave Ms Gray a valuable outside perspective on problems she was experiencing at school. "I would be feeling upset about something and he would talk to me about my motivation and why I was doing it – he was always really good at picking away at an issue and stripping it right back to the reason for all that effort – that it was in the children's interest."

Comparisons with the corporate world, with its similarly long hours and relative lack of personal contact with clients, helped her appreciate how she was spending her time. "No day here is ever wasted," she says. Another big impact of



Raising expectations: Lucy Gray

the mentoring was to bring a professional eye to various difficulties. "Sam was able to explain how something would be dealt with in the corporate environment – sometimes the issue was an emotional one because this is an emotional business. But often he would show me how to stand my ground

on something. I always left the meetings feeling confident, because he would be positive about what my form was achieving. For example, if the class all achieved a B grade when a C was expected, he would encourage me to celebrate that success, explaining he always copied his line manager in on good news."

For Mr Davies, positive feedback about issues that had been troubling Ms Gray and then resolved with his help, was a boon. Keen at some point in his career to try teaching himself, he enjoyed the insights he got from Ms Gray's accounts of school life and is volunteering again this year. "If I'd been aware of the programme when I was a graduate, I'm sure I would have applied," he says.

Professionally, Mr Davies feels the structure of the Teach First mentoring – which aims to help the "mentees" identify and work on their own areas of weakness and then find their own solutions – has helped him manage his own teams during career development and performance review meetings.

Miranda Green

Working with Schools

The Teach First scheme places graduates in challenging schools before they move into business

be from US companies, including Citi, McKinsey and Capital One, alongside the Canary Wharf Group – possibly because in the US philanthropy is a more developed corporate activity. But that has changed, alongside an increased business appetite for access to top graduates and a need for more proof of how donations make a measurable impact: "Even in these difficult times, almost every company sees the importance of corporate and social responsibility and of education specifically. Any and every good recruiter wants to work with us now."

For 2010-11, private sponsorship income of £3.5m is sought, mainly from corporate sources, more than the £2.2m raised from corporate donors last year or £1.5m the year before.

Mr Wigdortz says he is grateful to "hugely supportive" ministers, and for extra grant money from Michael Gove, the secretary of state for education. However, he is determined not to be taken in by government – of any colour: "I'm scared stiff of that. If we were a government quango we would never have been successful. Our independence allows us the ability for strategic movement, and to frequently say 'no' to the politicians."

This vision chimes with the new government's desire to see solutions to social problems provided by non-state sector bodies.

Moreover, the young teachers who are part of Teach First enjoy feeling they belong to the Wigdortz "mafia", and are proud of the mission.

Gemma Bayes, who has just started as head of modern foreign languages at the Chelsea Academy in Lots Road, London, explains that her initial two years as a teach firster were so tough and her pupils' challenges demanded so much of her attention, that the experience, with the support of the Teach First

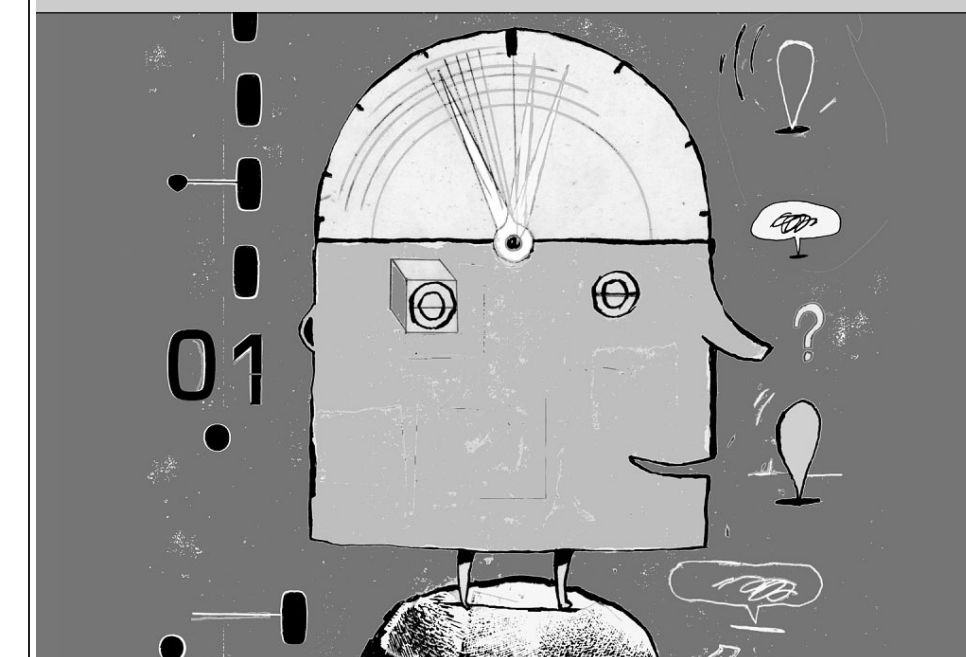
'Employers find our alumni are their top recruits: to be a great teacher is the same as being a great leader in any field'

network, has her hooked on a career in education.

Her reward has been unusually large and early responsibility and promotion.

"Those who leave get guilt complexes," says Ms Bayes, "But you never actually leave because you are constantly called back to support new teachers, and the friendships and continuing professional development binds you in. You do feel very privileged to be part of a network with such brilliant people."

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Working with Schools

Focused on the achievement gap

Sponsorship

The success of academies is patchy and they can face opposition but the aims are high, says **Jane Bird**

Lord Harris of Peckham struggled at school, but this did not stop him becoming a carpet magnate. In 1990, keen to help children with similar problems in south London, where he grew up, the chairman and chief executive of Carpetright became one of the first sponsors of an English state school.

Sponsorship of state education in England is provided by academies, which were originally conceived to turn round underperforming schools or create new ones in areas of deprivation. Their scope has recently been widened to include high-achieving schools.

Though state-funded, academies operate outside many of the rules governing mainstream state schools. There are 322, and the number is expected to rise to more than 400 by the end of the school year.

The Harris Federation sponsors nine, and hopes to increase this to 25 in London within five years. Other academy sponsors include: Ark, a charity set up by hedge fund managers; companies such as Microsoft; religious groups; fee-paying schools; universities; and even some local authorities.

Sponsors were initially required to pay 10 per cent, (about £2m) toward the capital costs of new buildings. But this requirement has been dropped, so that they now set up an endowment fund and provide strategic management guidance.

Lucy Heller, managing director of Ark Schools, says the motivation for sponsoring an academy is to close the achievement gap. "The extent to which a child's educational achievement can be predicted based on where he or she lives, is frightening," she says.

Academies aim to produce better exam results than traditional state schools – a goal they often achieve, according to a PwC report in 2007, which found attainment improving faster at all levels.

Success has been patchy, however. In May, Stockport Academy became the third school sponsored by the United Learning Trust, an Anglican charity and the biggest academy sponsor, to be given the lowest rating by inspectors in less than a year.

Teachers often oppose academies, arguing that they damage nearby schools by diverting funding and excluding badly behaved pupils to improve their statistics.

There has also been local opposition, with sit-ins and protests against academies sponsored by Ark in Wembley and Harris in South Norwood and Merton.



Even when existing schools are failing, there is often opposition to academies because parents are reluctant to embrace change, says Dan Moynihan, chief executive of Harris Federation, who encountered this when setting up Falconwood Academy at Bexley.

At the time, only 17 per cent of the school's pupils achieved five A*-C grade GCSEs including English and maths (the government's measure of success). Several buildings dated back to the first world war and everyone went home at lunchtime on Fridays, Mr Moynihan says.

"With four grammar schools nearby, all its pupils had either failed the 11+ or been thought not good enough to try."

Lord Harris faced the objectors at a public meeting, got the council's go-ahead, and now 60 per cent of Falconwood pupils are hitting the GCSE target. The school has achieved an "outstanding progress" rating from inspectors.

Since Ark took over Walworth Academy in 2007, the proportion of students achieving the GCSE target has risen from 26 per cent to 60 per cent. Although Ark's publicly stated goal is 80 per cent, the actual target is 100 per cent, says Ms Heller.

Having hedge fund managers as sponsors has given Ark academies an entrepreneurial fleetness of

The Evelyn Grace Academy in Brixton, south London, is run by Ark, a charity set up by hedge fund managers Luke Hayes

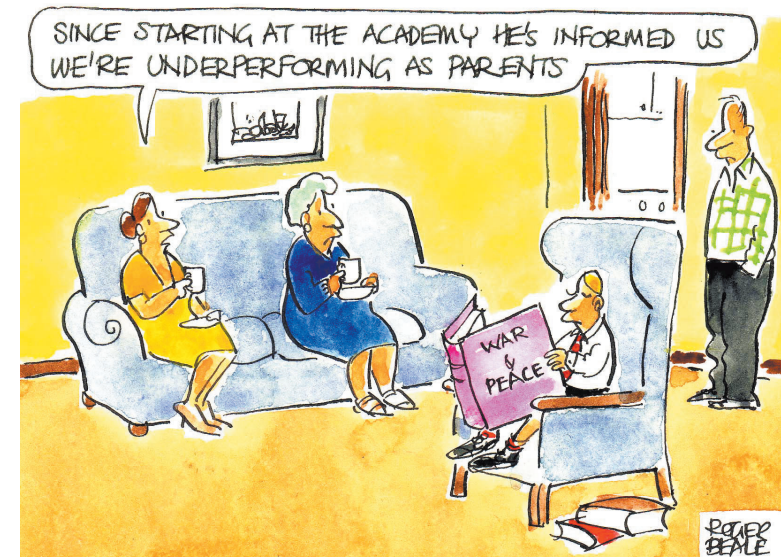
foot, she adds. "There is a toughness and relentless pressure on the central team to achieve the results, because it's all very well to have high expectations, but in the end you have to deliver."

A high proportion of pupils are at least two years behind when they start, so Ark focuses more strongly on maths and English than conventional secondary schools, with five hours teaching a week in both. "There's no point in pupils starting to learn French before they can read and write English properly," says Ms Heller.

Academies are allowed to create financial incentives for teachers. At Harris, annual salaries are £2,000 above average in London, and £1,750 outside the capital. Staff receive an annual performance bonus of £200 if a school hits its target, and punctual daily attendance gets a further £100. Harris also provides private medical cover, half the cost of a master's degree in leadership with London University – and 20 per cent off Carpetright products.

Academies taking over existing schools have to take on their teachers, too. Some are likely to be below standard, either because

they have not been well led or because "bad teachers tend to get reshuffled rather than leave the profession", says Mr Moynihan. "Those whose performance is not good enough can be sacked within three months, although six months is more typical with Harris, Mr Moynihan says. Academies have to specialise in subjects such as performing arts, science or technology. Harris academies also focus on enterprise. This includes learning about balance sheets, communication skills, working together in



groups, and problem solving, says Mr Moynihan. "We are grooming them for the business world, so we want to make sure that, when they meet people, they are confident and articulate."

Sponsoring an academy provides long-term stability in education and has far more impact than a single inspirational principal, says Ark's Ms Heller. "It's like setting up a corporate, a public school or a charity."

"We provide the institutional ballast that outlives and outlasts individual heads."

education system and why they are studying for qualifications," explains Kevin Smith, chief executive of the IoW chamber.

Making sure that the school experience relates to the world outside is also an objective of the Harris Federation, a grouping of nine academy schools in south London that has been sponsored by Lord Harris, chairman of Carpetright, the furnishings chain.

Enterprise is the stated objective of many of the Harris academies. At the Girls' Academy, East Dulwich, it is combined with sport and health sciences, while in Bermondsey it sits alongside media as a specialism of the school.

"In my opinion, enterprise covers anything – maths, science, health and sports," says Lord Harris.

Academies were first established by the Labour government in 2000 to give schools freedom from local authority control.

They are funded by central government and must deliver the core subjects of the national curriculum, but they can receive support from personal or corporate sponsors, either financially or in kind.

Lord Harris puts success down to discipline and "telling children they can do better"

When the Harris team took over its first school – then a City Technology College – in 1990, just 9 per cent of pupils were achieving five GCSE grades A*-C. Last year, the figure was 99 per cent and more than 200 pupils will be going on to university, says Lord Harris.

He puts the success of the schools down to discipline, including the wearing of uniform, motivation and "telling children they can do better".

At the Bermondsey school, which opened as an academy in 2006, "when you mentioned university, four years ago nobody knew what that was. Now, they all talk about going."

Working with Schools

Campaign to relate learning to real life

Enterprise

Charles Batchelor on the best ways to prepare pupils for the world of work

Teams of 14-year-olds in Lincolnshire and Rutland are working on a project to design a distinctive water feature for the Capability Brown-landscaped gardens at Burghley House, an Elizabethan pile in Stamford, Lincolnshire.

This initiative, part of the Embedding Enterprise Curriculum Challenge run by Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership, will help the students to develop skills across a range of subjects, including design technology, history, maths and information and communications technology.

Students can call on the expertise of the project's business partner, Sheffield and Ford, a local building company specialising in stone work. It would make the winning feature if it is judged to be good enough.

Schools have until the end of March to sign up – four have already done so – and the winner will be announced at the end of April.

"We ask business to set a challenge in the real world which students can work on," says Stella Morgan, curriculum enrichment manager at the EBP.

"It helps young people develop and embed employability skills over a period of time. A complaint we hear from employers is that young people don't really know what to expect when they leave school."

Connecting young people with work and business is also the aim of the Young Chamber network, which has been set up in schools across the country during the past two years by local chambers of commerce.

Originally developed by the Isle of Wight chamber, the initiative aims to engage children from the age of 11.

"The aim is to give an element of understanding as to why they are in the



A builder assists with Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership's Embedding Enterprise Curriculum Challenge

The academies work closely with local businesses to prepare the students not planning to go into further and higher education for the workplace, including four six-week periods of work experience in the sixth form.

"The job of the head of the sixth form is to make sure there are jobs out there for these students," says Lord Harris. "There is no point getting good exam results if there are no jobs."

The business background provided by Lord Harris and the boards of governors of the schools should mean the careers guidance provided to pupils is appropriate and focused.

Across the national school population, however, careers guidance has often not been adequate. "Half of state schools have careers and education guidance that is in some way inadequate," the Sutton Trust wrote in a submission to an all-party committee of MPs last year.

"One teacher cannot possibly know everything about access to medicine at selective universities and engineering apprenticeships, plus BTECs, diplomas and arts courses."

The trust, which promotes social mobility through education, called for the creation of a network of specialists, possibly at local authority level, that could assist schools and students.

State schools could also do more to make use of their alumni as role models and as providers of support in the form of advice and the offer of work experience, it said.

Employers need to do more to improve the quality of careers guidance, accord-

ing to a report by Deloitte for The Education and Employers Taskforce published in September.

Ninety-five per cent of young people agreed they

wanted employers to be more involved in providing advice to school leavers, and young people who had been in contact with four or more employers in the past

two years of school were nearly twice as likely to believe they had a good idea of what skills were needed for the jobs they wanted to get.



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Working with Schools



Zenna Atkins, chief executive of Gems, the world's largest provider of private education, hopes that private businesses will soon be allowed to take over running state-sponsored schools

Business seeks rewards for results

Commercial learning

Companies are already running state schools but will not be allowed to make a profit for a while, writes Jane Bird

Zenna Atkins, until recently chairman of Ofsted, the schools' inspectorate, cannot wait to start running state schools in the UK for a profit.

She is chief executive of Gems for the UK, Europe and Africa. The Dubai-based foundation is the world's largest provider of private education, with 50 years of international experience, including 12 fee-paying UK schools, so it makes sense for Gems to apply this expertise to the public sector, Ms Atkins says.

The government has indicated it is open to the idea of schools making a profit, although it has not yet given the go-ahead. If it happens, companies would be able to run schools in place of the state, receiving the same budget of about £4,500 a year for each pupil they attract.

In return, companies such as Gems say they are prepared to make considerable investment, including in buildings.

The delay is frustrating for the companies, which argue that it

should not matter if they make a profit with state education, provided they can deliver measurable benefits for students. "People have got a bit hung up on profit," says Ms Atkins. "I'm interested in outcomes for children. If you are holding the private sector to account, so long as the financial input is the same, and the output in terms of pupil performance is better, who cares if the private sector is making money?"

The parents do not mind and nor should the government, she says. Her view is shared by Steve Bolingbroke, UK managing director of Kunskapsskolan, which runs 33 profitable state secondary schools in Sweden and is keen to enter the UK.

"The debate on profit assumes a rip-off – that the private sector will cream off money," Mr Bolingbroke says. "That couldn't be more wrong. We want to create a long-term sustainable business of schools that people will want to send their children to."

Unless the private sector creates good schools that attract pupils, they will have no long-term business, he says.

Another point often put by companies is that commercial organisations have been making money out of UK state education for a long time by providing nurseries, referral units, independent special schools, stationery, books, catering and IT services.

Serco, the management services

company, has a turnover of £140m in education, from activities such as running Ofsted inspections, education department contracts and providing services such as curriculum development, leadership, and management benchmarking to 330 schools. It would like to add running independent special schools to its portfolio.

Elaine Simpson, global director of Serco Education, is bemused by people who object to the idea of companies making a profit through doing things more efficiently. "Only a tiny percentage of profit gets paid out in dividends, and the rest is reinvested to

"Margins are not the same as private schools, so you need a philanthropic base"

increase shareholder value," she says.

Companies argue they can do things more cost-effectively than individual schools. In outsourcing all education services to Serco in August 2008, Walsall Council has seen its annual education bill cut by more than £1.5m.

This, Serco says, is achieved by improving structures and processes, empowering staff to make decisions quickly and passing on the benefits of shared scale and

know-how from its parent organisation. The private sector could also help boost educational performance.

Eighty per cent of UK schools with which US-based Edison Learning has worked, have achieved at least one level of improvement in their Ofsted assessments, says Paul Lincoln, chairman of the company's international operation.

"Turin Grove, Edmonton, London, moved from the bottom quartile to the top quartile, during our three-year contract," he says. It also boosted attendance to above the national average, and filled all its places in year seven.

Edison Learning would like to run schools commercially, but Mr Lincoln believes this is unlikely to happen before the next election because of the current focus on introducing "free schools" –

where local parent or faith groups set up their own schools – and increasing the number of academies.

Kunskapsskolan is talking to some of the free schools that have been given approval and may be prepared to invest. But it will need to be convinced that they are in locations that will work in the long term and are not too dependent on a vocal group of parents or teachers.

Stephen Ball, of London University's Institute of Education and author of *Education Plc*, a study of school privatisation, is scepti-

cal. Despite private sector organisations saying they can do things well, there is not much evidence or experience of this, so it would be experimental, Prof Ball says. "If it is seen as experimental, that's fine, but let's make sure we know what's involved, as it would entail some risk, so there is a question about who bears it."

He also cites the problem of companies going out of business. WS Atkins ran into difficulties after running education for Southwark Council for two years and walked out of the contract, costing the council about £2m. And he points out that companies are most likely to be attracted to the idea of running schools when they can benefit from economies of scale by taking on 20 or 30. There is no immediate prospect of this.

However, Gems' Ms Atkins is undeterred. The company can work within the system by running academies or free schools until the commercial go-ahead is given. Although Gems wants to make a profit, its interest is partly philanthropic.

The opportunity for profit is a lot lower in the state sector than with fee-paying schools, which can charge up to £25,000 a year, Ms Atkins says. "Margins are not the same as private schools, so you need a strong philanthropic base, and Gems has that because our founder has pledged to educate one child free for every 10 we make money from."

Working with Schools

Old fashioned methods fostered by companies

Academies

Jane Bird on the traditional values sometimes overlooked by many regular schools

The 3,000 people who came to this year's open evening for Crystal Palace Academy caused considerable disruption. There were traffic management orders and buses had to be put on diversion.

The congestion reflected the huge popularity of the school, which was once categorised as failing, and has been transformed by becoming an academy.

It has a good reputation and spirit of enthusiasm, says 17-year-old Tamsin Parker, who is studying for A-levels in maths, French and art. "They want you to do well, and, if you're struggling, they're very supportive," she says.

Ms Parker likes the fact that she can ask for extra help after school and in free periods, such as conversation with the language assistant for her French oral

exams. When her GCSE mock results were disappointing, she also appreciated the mentoring scheme available from older students and teachers.

Her mentor advised her on a revision timetable and how she could improve. "I worked harder because I didn't want to let my mentor down," she says. "The scheme is especially useful for more rebellious pupils."

Like many academies, there is a strong emphasis on good behaviour and respect. Bullying is unusual, and unlike some other schools in the area, there is no gang culture. "I feel physically safe," says Ms Parker. "Even when the corridors get crammed, there's no excessive shouting."

Strictly enforced uniform underpins the approach. Students design their own school logo that sits in the crest of the Harris Foundation (the school's sponsor) on their blazers. Dress code for the 6th form is business wear.

Dressing smartly helps instil discipline, Ms Parker says. "Some people do rebel and undo their top button, but the teachers make you do it up again."

All students are members of one of four "faculties" – arts, communications, science, and maths and technology (similar to traditional school houses).

Students wear their faculty tie and, in addition to competing on sports day, they score points for attendance and punctuality. The current champion has its flag flying highest at the school entrance (a bit like in Harry Potter).

Pupils are encouraged to mix with other age groups, especially on school holidays. Ms Parker went on two trips to France, which she says helped open her eyes to the pleasures of speaking a foreign language and have given her an ambition to live there.

Extra-curricular activities include trips to theatres and museums. "Many of our kids wouldn't go to these places if school didn't take them," says Dan Moynihan, chief executive of Harris Federation, who was head of the school for five years until 2008.

"Most parents say that they would pay for private education if they could because it provides really good character develop-



Tamsin Parker has benefited from mentoring by staff and older pupils

ment," he says. "We offer a similar experience. So, far from being revolutionary, there is quite a traditional feel to us. It's just that in the places where we go, those traditions don't exist and often there are more kids in the corridor than in the lessons."

Paul Holmes, Liberal Democrat MP for Chesterfield, has spoken against academies and made the point that any school could do the same things.

"And it's true they could; the problem is that large numbers of them don't," Mr Moynihan says.

Twickenham Ambitious Swedes put academy to the test

Visitors to the Twickenham Academy invariably say "wow!" when they see the learning space created out of the old school's gym, says Nick Jones, head teacher. More like an Ikea store than a traditional classroom, it is divided into sections for different activities and has furniture on wheels that can be moved aside or reconfigured.

There are IT areas, places with higher tables for craftwork, acoustic pods for working in small groups on projects and a section equipped for pupils to make presentations. "Everyone likes it," says Mr Jones.

Architecture is one of the ways Sweden-based Kunskapsskolan, which sponsors Twickenham Academy, is experimenting with what it sees as a prototype profitmaking school. The Academy opened in September in buildings previously occupied by Whitton School and Sports College, many of which are to be rebuilt.

"We are taking themes from Swedish architecture and adapting them to the English environment to produce a greater variety of learning spaces," says Steve Bolingbroke, UK managing director of Kunskapsskolan. The company hopes its model will be replicated worldwide.

"We chose the UK to start, because we feel there



Head teacher Nick Jones

the former gym enables staff to try out different approaches to teaching, such as two groups together with two teachers.

"We want a more human scale with less moving around and lots of glass, so students can see and draw on teachers," says Mr Jones. "And it's a signal to parents and teachers about what we are trying to achieve."

Kunskapsskolan wants to run profitmaking schools in the UK and is using five academies, of which Twickenham is the first, to demonstrate its ideas.

"We have put a lot of effort into creating a showcase of how a school can be run differently," says Steve Bolingbroke, UK managing director of Kunskapsskolan. The company hopes its model will be replicated worldwide.

"We chose the UK to start, because we feel there

for private-public partnership on state schooling in the near future," Mr Bolingbroke says. Other attractions were the UK's high reputation and the fact the English language is international.

Twickenham Academy has its own "ladder" curriculum with 40 steps that pupils ascend at their own pace and achieve at gold, silver or bronze levels.

Pupils get individual weekly tutorials to discuss goals they have set for themselves. "The philosophy of goal setting is very important, so our teachers spend slightly more time each week on one-to-one sessions than in a conventional school," Mr Jones says.

He talks regularly to a "partner" head teacher in Sweden. "We learn from each other by discussing our philosophy and how we operate schools. It's a two-way process, because there are elements of the UK system that are stronger than in Sweden, for example use of new technology. Teaching methodology in the UK is also often stronger than elsewhere."

With much of its intake from Hounslow, the school is a robust comprehensive, Mr Jones says. "It's catchment includes some quite deprived areas. It's not just a leafy suburb."

Jane Bird

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Education Employers

Working with Schools

True-to-life courses help lift pupils' aspirations

Career Academies
Liz Lightfoot
considers the value of offering pupils from disadvantaged areas a more practical curriculum

Jordan Moore is impressed as he is shown round Clifford Chance's headquarters at Canary Wharf. The thought that people could spend their breaks in the swimming pool or the games room particularly appeals to him.

"These offices are beautiful. I would like to work here," says the sixth former after his visit to the law firm from his comprehensive in one of the less advantaged parts of Peterborough.

Jordan is in a party of pupils from schools and colleges in urban areas visiting the London headquarters to meet a cross-section of staff and learn about life at a rich, global business. All are signed up to Career

Academies UK, a movement of more than 900 employers and 110 schools and colleges that work together to offer 16- to 19-year-olds a different, more practical curriculum that includes alternative qualifications to A-levels, business mentors and a six-week internship.

But Career Academies are not Clifford Chance's only focus. Like many other law firms, banks and businesses, it has a range of schemes to support schools, such as providing employees to help pupils with reading, mentoring, and career workshops. Many large companies have chosen schools in disadvantaged areas as part of their corporate social responsibility policies.

But does it work? Can the provision of role models and mentors, interview training and work experience or the occasional school visit to a headquarters actually make a difference to children in areas of the country with highest unemployment and social deprivation?

Evidence is sketchy and anecdotal. But schools

speak highly of the value to pupils of meeting successful people in different walks of life and of how it raises their aspirations. Jordan says that, without the "more true-to-life" Career Academies course, he would probably have dropped out of education after losing focus in his GCSE years and passing just three.

Two years after his visit to Clifford Chance, he is in fact working part-time as a cashier in Tesco and as a barman in a local club. He says he has "not yet done that well", but the club owners have put him on a training scheme to become a supervisor.

"My ambition now is to run my own company in the service industry, perhaps helping tenants of flats with services they need," he says.

According to an evaluation of Career Academies by FreshMinds, the research and recruitment consultancy, all the alumni and 94 per cent of year two students rated the experience good or excellent.

One City banker told how he nearly failed to get on

the scheme at Longley Park Sixth Form College in Sheffield because he was the only one to turn up for the Career Academies interview in jeans and a T-shirt. He got through after he showed a photograph of his phone of himself in a suit.

"His father had seen him wearing the suit and told him to take it off, because he would never get in and be no good in a business job anyway," says the report.

Students said the six-week paid internship was the best part of the two years, but their teachers talk of the difficulty of finding placements.

The internships are a big demand on employers says Martyn Drain, the director of Career Academies. "As we have got bigger and expanded to regions outside London, it has become harder to find employers willing and able to provide the internships that our students say have the biggest and most positive impact on them," he says.

Headteachers place a particular value on having businesspeople as governors. Joan McVittie, the

head of Woodside High School in Wood Green, north London, says Fiona Flint, the wife of HSBC chairman Douglas Flint, has been an "inspirational" member of the governing body for the past four years. This summer, 47 per cent of pupils gained at least five or more A*-C GCSE grades, including maths and English, up from 18 per cent when Ms McVittie took over the school in 2006.

The bank holds quarterly sessions with an education consultant to keep governors up to date with regulations and legislation.

But altruism and improving the future workforce are not the only motivators. Mark Campbell, Clifford Chance's global head of finance, who has been reading with children at Shapla primary in Tower Hamlets for the past 16 years, says it is also personally rewarding.

"We are surrounded by disadvantage and it is a way of giving something back to the community; but it is also hugely enjoyable to get out the office and do something different for half an hour."

The taskforce was formed to create a central point of contact and knowledge about school and business links. In the words of Nick

Chambers, its director: "The aim is not to prescribe, but to spread best practice, so it becomes common practice."

"There's a shared interest here," he explains. "Employers want to get involved in education and discover how to do it in the most effective way. Schools also want employer engagement. But head teachers are busy and need some sort of guidance. We want to provide a body of solid evidence and information that they can easily access."

Mr Chambers and his team began immediately to look for effective school and business links. I contributed by following up some of those projects, visiting the schools and talking to the people on both sides of the equation.

What I have found has been always fascinating and often moving. In schools where people from local businesses were deeply engaged – mentoring, listening, interviewing, taking young people seriously – I saw pupils raising their game, with better attitudes,

greater self-worth and higher expectations.

And, above all, showing a deeper understanding of what it is like to join a business and be a valued member of their workforce.

Just how important this is, especially for those who have grown up in homes where no one has ever gone out to work, was brought home to me at Manchester Academy.

This secondary school, taking children from some of the most difficult areas of the city, has a number of thriving business links, including one with law firm Pinsent Masons.

One of the company's solicitors, Nancy Hobbs, told me of one particular student she had mentored: "The first time I met her in a mentoring session she had such an attitude."

"However, you could see her potential and that, given the opportunity, she would develop this. Gradually, she changed the way she spoke to her peers and other mentors, and her confidence grew."

Another boy spoke to me

with an assurance that his teachers said he had only developed after sessions with his mentors from the law firm. "You see these business people," said the boy. "They look smart, they think up ideas out of the blue, and you just want to be like them."

Raising student expectations is not only important in less affluent areas. Coundon Court School in Coventry, which has links with

Organisations such as Pinsent Masons and LTI Vehicles probably find it enough to know they are contributing to the employability of young people. But it obviously helps if employers can see tangible benefits too.

Coundon Court media studies students made a highly professional marketing video for LTI Vehicles, for example, and Howard Gill, a partner at Pinsent Masons himself heavily involved in mentoring, is sure it is good for his firm.

Mr Gill says: "First, it ties into our values programme. By mentoring young people, we are living and breathing the values. And second we can tell our clients that in terms of our community relations programme we both talk the talk and walk the walk."

There is also a visible effect on morale and motivation. About 35 staff, a third of the law firm's local workforce, volunteer for the programme and find it satisfying and enjoyable.

Mr Gill says there is evidence that this helps with

the firm's recruitment and retention, because applicants want to work in businesses where they will have that sort of opportunity. There is also very much a feeling they are contributing to the future success of the Manchester.

Another mentoring programme that helps both the young people and the employees is run by HSBC Finance UK in Worthing, West Sussex. A large number of employees, working in groups, give 90 minute mentoring sessions on CV writing, interviews and teamwork to students in Years 10 and 11 at Worthing High School.

Glenn Souter, who runs the HSBC programme, sees the mentoring experience as directly beneficial to his colleagues. "I say: 'if you can present in front of a class, you can present to anybody'. They're the most honest audience you can have."

Gerald Haigh is an education journalist and a former primary and secondary school head teacher

Working with Schools

Efforts by business help young

Employer Taskforce
Gerald Haigh,
a former head teacher, says links between schools and companies can benefit both

Despite a long career as a teacher, head teacher and school governor, I had never fully understood how supportive of our young people schools and businesses can be when they work together properly.

I discovered that when the Education and Employers Taskforce asked me to look at some examples of good working relationships between schools and local businesses.

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Chambers, its director: "The aim is not to prescribe, but to spread best practice, so it becomes common practice."

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How to excite young learners

Practical teaching

A Telford-based academy has gone beyond outside placements by bringing work into school, writes Maureen McTaggart

There are probably very few adults who can say going out to work gives them a rush of excitement, but that is how students say they feel when they enter the world of work at Telford's Madeley Academy in Shropshire.

"What we've done is excite the learners," says Ian Lawson, the school's director of employment and training, "because when they walk across the school grounds to come into the vocational training centre they are getting ready for the world of work in terms of the stuff that they put on, be it overalls, boots or a tunic."

"They are coming into an adult work environment where they are being trusted to use industry-standard equipment and products. To see a 13-year-old student making a small brick wall after only four weeks of teaching is just awesome. And you joke with them that they can build you a barbe-

cue next year – but they probably would."

In 2009 Ofsted inspectors said the Madeley Academy was outstanding, adding: "The academy has been on an extraordinary journey." What was even more impressive is that the school, whose motto is "focused on success", opened in its new £29m building only that September.

This 900-pupil specialist sports academy for 11-16 year olds is one of the Thomas Telford family of schools, and it is sponsored by the Edge Foundation. This has the goal of changing education fundamentally to give it a more practical focus.

The foundation says: "We believe that practical learning should be part of every young person's education. So we want improved educational facilities, better careers guidance for young people, more opportunity for learners' voices to be heard, increased employer engagement at all levels, and an overhaul of teacher training, particularly in practical and vocational subjects."

The approach to the world of work at Madeley is twofold. Every week it is bustling with 480 learners, including 50 from other schools, working on projects from construction, horticulture, hair-dressing and catering. They work in suites designed to reflect the

current and emerging local job scene and to give them, as Mr Lawson says, "the life skills that they will be able to use when they go for interviews or when they actually get into the workplace".

Each subject area is developed to run as a business and some, such as the trees and shrubs venture created by the horticulture students, generate revenue. Pupils are hoping their bulbs in decorated planters will go down a storm again this Christmas and that a landscaping commission from a nearby hotel will exceed expectations. Meanwhile, for the catering students, preparing a lavish buffet for 200 people is now a breeze.

Mr Lawson believes the connection between Madeley's in-school vocational centre and the outside

world of work should be seamless, and he works tirelessly to achieve this by creating partnerships with local businesses. Developing a sense of entrepreneurship is at the top of his list of aspirations for his learners and putting them face to face with the world of work is his preferred method.

Although some students have found part-time work with employer partners, it is not his, nor the school's, intention to turn out hundreds of hairdressers, bricklayers or hospitality workers. "You hear employers crying out for students who are numerate and literate and that goes without saying," he says. "But what I have noticed is that a lot of young people are lacking some of the essential people skills or soft skills, and a lot of these things are not tackled directly in education."

"What we need to do is to make sure that young people can communicate well, they can present themselves, they can put a report together, they've got good listening skills and they can ask really good questions."

"As well as doing that, they also need to be able to operate as part of a team and, when required, step up and be the leader of that team. Through some of the subjects, like construction, I would hope that we are going to see some of the next generation of architects and surveyors, but even if they don't take it that far we'll certainly have people that have good DIY skills who also know how to plan and organise, control stock, manage a project and hit a deadline."

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Nail that job: pupils work in suites designed to reflect the job scene and give them necessary life skills

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Building links How to make two-way engagement work

Good link projects are not built casually or overnight, writes Gerald Haigh.

I have thought a lot about that as I made long train and car journeys to see examples of good practice around the country, and eventually came up with what I thought were the common factors linking them.

- **Two-way engagement** Businesses give their time and expertise to schools, who often feel they want to do something in return. The corporate video by pupils at Coundon Court (see below) is a good case in point.
- **Single points of contact** One reliable contact on either side. Both should be people who have decision-making authority.
- **A serious commitment by the school at senior level** This is a life-enhancing project for the pupils and students involved and it should not be just added to the portfolio of an overworked teacher.
- **Flexibility** Over time, the project that emerges may be different from what was originally planned. An engineering firm does

not just know about engineering. There are also aspects such as IT, teamwork and training for job interviews, so be open to what talents can be brought in.

- **Help with classroom technique** Worthing High is one school that runs short training sessions for non-teachers working in school. This also aids the mentors and others coming in with their presentation skills, so has a two-way benefit.
- **Young people should be taken seriously and not be underestimated** In return they will have fresh and useful ideas to offer.
- **Bring young people in to visit** They see pride, purpose, skills in action, variety, and a world of which they may have no experience.
- **Make it enjoyable** Perhaps this is the most important thing. Working with young people is refreshing, stimulating, excellent for morale and motivation, and can enhance presentation and mentoring skills. It also gives businesses something different to be proud of and is fun.

For more information, go to:
www.educationandemployers.org



Pupils from Coundon Court School, Coventry, made a corporate video



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