

Young ENTERPRISE

Students are being encouraged to be more business-minded, learns *Anna Tyzack*

There's no point leaving school with a clutch of impressive grades and no idea what to do with them. Now, more than ever, secondary education has to look to the future – the rising costs of university and changing jobs landscape dictate it, says Richard Jones, headmaster of Bryanston School in Dorset.

'What a child might do next should be intrinsic to what's on offer at school,' he says. 'It's the aspect parents are most interested in – how the school can fast track your entry into the real world. For some pupils, the path ahead may not be a traditional professional career, but rather the exciting prospect of starting their own business.' Emily Ashe, head tutor of Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, another school with a focus on entrepreneurialism, agrees that there is no longer a traditional exit route from public school. 'Pupils are anxious about racking up debt at university: it might suit them more to do a degree apprenticeship at a company like BAE or Rolls Royce,' she says.

This is why schools such as Stonyhurst and Bryanston are embedding entrepreneurialism into the school day – in lessons and in co-curricular activities. Caroline De Mowbray, Bryanston's new full-time head of entrepreneurship and innovation is creating a bespoke programme collaborating closely with academic and co-curricular departments. 'Every child should leave school with the skills to succeed in the modern workplace,' she says. 'They need a diverse skill set – including digital literacy, networking and team building.'

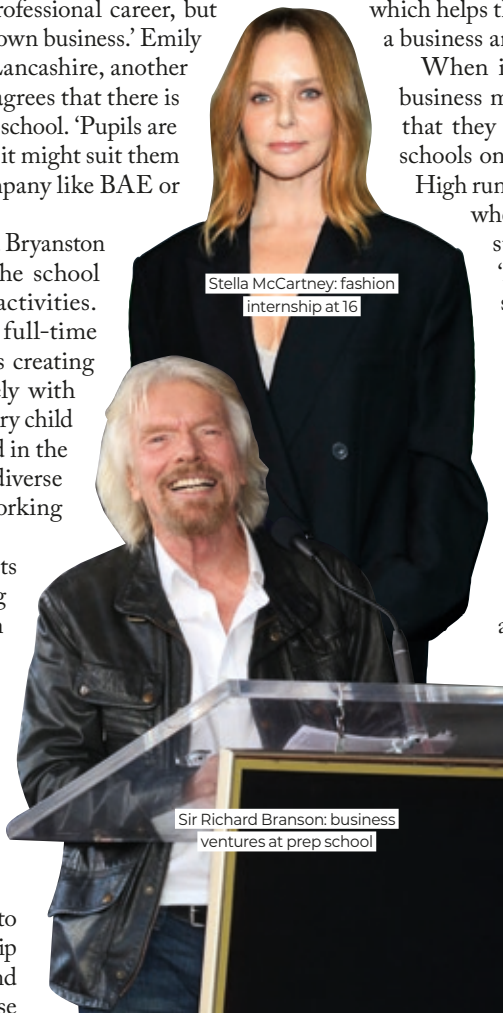
All pupils now run entrepreneurial projects within various aspects of school life, learning how to network and make the most of an opportunity. At business mentoring sessions, they can pitch their idea and be supported through the process of commercialising it and devising a production and sales strategy. 'It's important that they realise what kind of idea has legs and what doesn't,' explains De Mowbray.

Putney High is another school putting entrepreneurialism and enterprise firmly on the curriculum. Year 8 pupils attend 'Learn to Earn' workshops to understand the relationship between the subjects they study at school and the occupations and potential incomes those

might lead to and how these might affect their future lifestyle. Then, in Year 9, pupils complete a Design Thinking module, which gives them a solid understanding of engineering, design thinking, architecture, product design and robotics, and how they link to their computer science, maths and physics lessons. According to Samantha Hazlehurst, head of marketing, pupils are more motivated to learn once their studies have been put into the context of the real world. The school also offers a GCSE-equivalent financial literacy course to pupils in Year 10, which helps them understand the economics of both running a business and working for a company.

When it comes to finding innovative speakers and business mentors from the real world to convince pupils that they can be successful entrepreneurs, independent schools only need tap into their alumni network. Putney High runs regular working breakfasts and alumni lunches, where former pupils return to inform and inspire students keen to follow similar career paths. 'Many make valuable connections,' Hazlehurst says. 'At the most recent event former pupils came from fields as diverse as finance, fashion, film, interior design, law and construction.' Caterham in Surrey meanwhile, has launched Caterham Connect, a professional and social network for the sixth form and alumni. The school runs regular Insight evenings in the City connecting current pupils with a line up for entrepreneurs who have links to the school. They discuss the inspiration and resilience it takes to turn a great idea into a thriving business and afterwards sixth formers cut their networking teeth, rubbing shoulders with leaders in a variety of sectors.

Private schools are also networking with each other to help pupils develop business and entrepreneurial skills. Putney High is a founding member of the West London Schools Enterprise Network where sixth formers work with others from local schools to develop leadership, negotiation and other skills, mentored by top business brains. Sixth formers also take part in a regular business strategy day with St Paul's Boys' school. 'Through these initiatives and others, our





students develop creativity, confidence and resilience,' Hazlehurst says. 'They learn to work with others as a team, to play to their strengths and compromise when working with others. They also develop confidence as they learn to adapt to new environments and working practices.'

Young people have always run successful side hustles – Richard Branson started selling Christmas trees when he was 10, while Lord Alan Sugar started working for a green grocer when he was 12. Stella McCartney had designed her first jacket by 13 and, at 16, had an internship at fashion house Christian Lacroix. Within a school community, however, enterprises have traditionally been regarded as illicit and thus take place undercover; the key is to bring them out into the open, Jones says. This is what he's striving to do at Bryanston: by making space for personal enterprise within the co-curricular part of the school day, pupils can make a business idea part of their learning experience. 'One of our sixth formers has set up a sustainable fashion initiative – pupils can rent from a bank of dresses with money going to charity. It's amazing what gaps there are in the market in a school,' agrees Ashe. Putney High's Entrepreneurship Club, meanwhile, is a sell out after school activity: pupils develop handmade products to sell at seasonal fairs and take part in a £10 challenge, where they're given £10 to develop a business idea or product and see how much profit they can make. Last year a Year 8 pupil was awarded the Atherton Award for Outstanding Entrepreneurial Achievement for producing a 'Find It' app, reuniting students with lost property.

While some school enterprises go on to become profitable businesses – Jo Malone began making scents when she was at school – the point is not for children to line their own pockets while studying, Jones points out. At all these schools, entrepreneurialism is community-centred in spirit – pupils understand that their business ventures are social enterprises. 'At Stonyhurst entrepreneurship is about giving back to society,' Ashe says. 'This still means pupils can set up a business, run it, deal with customers and complaints – this experience is now an important part of our co-curricular programme.' Besides, learning how can make a difference to your wider community is

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character shaping, according to Alastair Chirnside, warden of St Edward's Oxford, as well as essential to becoming a future captain of industry. The school runs a program called Teddies Collaborates, with pupils in the Lower Sixth partaking in a timetabled volunteering session each week at a local social enterprise be it a charity shop or food bank or local primary school. 'They learn how a job works: if you don't show up, no one is going to stack the shelves for you,' Chirnside continues. 'Afterwards, when pupils are asked about their experience of school, they almost always talk about the

benefits of Teddies Collaborates scheme.'

De Mowbray has been amazed by the quality and relevance of the business ideas being developed at Bryanston. Entrepreneurialism is infectious, she says, and the digital world has made small grassroots businesses easier to commercialise. The DT department ran a Dragon's Den competition last summer term where pupils pitched a business case for a new product and this term pupils will be invited to make a business plan for a school adventure expedition – the winning team will develop their trip with De Mowbray with a view to it later being offered by the school. Meanwhile at Stonyhurst, pupils ran a secret Santa Christmas box scheme: advertising, taking orders, ordering the components, putting the boxes together and then taking orders and delivering. They're also working on a rose delivery business for Valentine's Day. 'We now give them the chance to be involved in creating and selling an annual school Christmas card,' Ashe continues. 'They order 2,000 cards, pack them up and send them out to parents – it's a huge learning curve. Their ideas are brilliant but only by doing proper market research do they get to understand their target market and learn about correct pricing and what will sell well.'

The marketplace at a public school is as brutal as any other, according to De Mowbray, which is why it is the perfect place to hone an idea and test it out. 'You're in a safe space where you can learn about taking risks and there are people to support you if your idea doesn't take off.' Indeed as old Bryanstonian, the designer Sebastian Conran, once remarked, 'Having an idea is five percent of the work, making it happen is 95 percent.' ■