

Meaningful Learning Experiences

Strategic Commitment	✓	The school has a strategic commitment to enriched learning
Curriculum Provision	✓	Enriching English was important for a new GCSE course
Employer Partnerships	✓	Nottingham Post had not previously partnered with a school
Reflective Young People		
Informed Career Choices	✓	Raising aspirations is a vital aim in this AP school

Local newspaper helps alternative provision school reveal the value of GCSE English skills

Stone Soup Academy is an outstanding (Ofsted) alternative provision school located in a period building in the Lace Market area of Nottingham. With a reputation for innovation and achieving academic success with students that have failed to thrive in mainstream schools, Stone Soup had chosen to switch from teaching Functional English to the more demanding GCSE qualification.

Part of the curriculum requires students to learning about ‘writing to argue, persuade or advise’. The head of English stated that, *‘I think it would be great for them to engage in a real life writing task in which they could get some feedback and possibly for some of their work to be published’*.

A discussion with the Nottingham Post revealed that, although they supported post-graduate students studying journalism, they had not managed to engage with local schools. Using guidance from the editor about what is needed to make a successful article, students prepared extended writing pieces in the form of a letter to the editor on the theme of: *‘Schools have just become exam factories and do not prepare students for real life’...To what extent do you agree with his statement?*

Completed work was sent to the Digital Publishing Editor, who visited the school to talk about life as a journalist and to answer students’ questions – of which there were many. Impressed by the quality of the work, the newspaper decided to publish a selection from the letters in a ‘First Person’ section of the newspaper.

Benefits for the Students

- Students initially did not believe that their work was going to be sent to a real newspaper that would provide feedback, having been used to ‘let’s imagine’ scenarios in the classroom
- *‘At first I thought this is going to be hard ... but after hearing someone was going to come in, I was quite excited about it’*
- *‘If you’re writing an article for an exam, the audience is fictional ... it’s a lot different, because you have to think about what’s interesting and will grab their attention, but still stay true to the facts’*

Benefits for the School

- The projects supported the schools aim to, ‘... inspire and motivate our students to help them understand the relevance of English in their everyday lives’ (academy website)
- Bringing subject learning to life contributes to the school’s aim to help students by, ‘...re-igniting their interest in academic studies and vocational practice’
- The link with Nottingham Post provides a basis for developing further partnerships with employers that can enrich learning and develop students’ aspirations

Benefits for the Employer

- Nottingham Post has found work experience placements for school children are not productive, but had been unable to find other ways of partnering with local schools
- The publisher made it clear at the outset of the project that publication of material was highly unlikely. Yet, the quality of student work has resulted in usable material
- The success of this project has provided a basis for discussion with the main local careers service about the potential for similar partnership working with other schools



As part of their GCSE English studies, students sent a letter to the editor of Nottingham Post, who had presented a challenge through a set of PowerPoint slides shown in the classroom. The Digital Publisher visited the school to provide feedback about the students’ work and talk with students about her career in journalism.