

Year 12/13 Options Day: Finham Park School, Coventry on June 12 2014.

Introduction:

Finham Park Secondary School in Coventry held their biggest ever careers event for year 12 and 13 students considering options other than university. The Careers Adviser, Jo Hooke, undertook most of the organising – making contact with attendees, sending out emails, letters and phone calls.

How it worked:

170 Year 12 students were invited to attend from Finham Park School and 10 Year 13 students invited from a neighbouring school, Bishop Ullathorne.

The aim was to introduce students to options other than HE - ie apprenticeships, HNC programmes, traineeships, also sponsored degrees and entrepreneurship/self-employment, in addition to potential summer jobs, work experience and Post 18 training opportunities

We achieved this objective by inviting many local, national and international employers, training providers and welcoming former Finham Park School students who had progressed to successful apprenticeship roles.

Letters were sent to employers, providers and apprentices about a month before the event outlining the objectives of the event and reiterating the good practice brief. When they confirmed their attendance, a pro forma was sent asking their requirements (resources, computer access, etc)

Volunteers were sought from the Inspiring the Future website, following the presentation at a local school of their service. Volunteers from the site contacted me and Sainsbury's were very supportive and responded that they would participate with three of their staff and one part time member, again a member of Finham Park School, who worked for them on a casual basis. Other responders apologised that they were unable to make this date, but offered their attendance at any future event. The website is a fantastic resource to use for schools and I mentioned this to our participants that they may wish to engage their employees as volunteers for similar events.

Ms Kam Purewal, Assistant Head of 6th form organised the venue, - this was challenging, as the theatre was used for external examinations, however with the support of the school, the Sports Hall was utilised. As the response was so great (35 organisations) it was decided to split the visitors in two – half of whom were in the sports hall and half in the 6th form area. Tables were laid out in at the edge of both locations, and visitors manned each with literature and a name sign – this was organised alphabetically, so students had to visit each stand and network as much as possible.

Parking is at a premium, so Jo approached the small garden centre next door, (a charitable organisation) who kindly offered their car park facility. (a donation will be offered, if funding is provided by Inspiring the Future) Visitors were met by 6th form student guides and signage clearly showed them where to access the careers event.

At the entrance to the sports hall, student guides met, greeted and registered the visitors and issued them with name badges and shown a table plan of each venue.

Students were prepared beforehand gaining information through a Year 12 assembly and were given a guide of employers (so that they could research companies) and were advised to bring their CV with them and to dress professionally and smartly.

The event was split into two – one hour in one location, a break for light refreshments and a further hour.

Evaluation

This was the first time Finham Park had run such an activity and the feedback from students and attendees was very positive. Some comments from visitors:

- “Really useful event – I spoke to some really good students who were genuinely interested in the opportunities we have to offer.” - BMW
- “I feel the event was very successful all the students were participating asking questions and using their hand-out sheets for guidance on what to ask. Several students were very interested and determined taking advantage of the day, one even handed in their CV. I feel that they made the most out of it. It is a great opportunity as it opens their eyes to the real world and gives them a lot of options for life after school which is brilliant as I never got that opportunity I thought my only options were sixth form and university.” - Coventry City Council (Apprentice)
- “I thought it was a great event. Keen to get involved in offering more support. Have you a language Department/CyberIT course in 6th form, I’m working with getting the Intelligence Corp into 6th forms, the format would be an Army Careers presentation followed by a chat with a JNCO from the Intelligence Corp.” - Mike Clarke, Army

The students were all given evaluation forms, some of which were sent to Inspiring the Future. Some comments:

- ‘It was great to see such a variety of employers in school. Can we run something like this again next year?’ – Michael
- ‘Very good, I gave my details to the NHS and hope to get some valuable work experience next term - Jasmin
- ‘I enjoyed speaking to the apprentices and found out much more about this option’ - Ben

One of the students attending, spoke to Angel and Co, solicitors and was invited for an interview. As a result of this, she was offered a five year traineeship – something that the company had never offered in the past.

Attendees expressed a wish to continue their involvement in school, either delivering presentations in assembly, visiting subject classes or attending parents and careers events. We will use the Inspiring the Future website to identify certain organisations for specific subject areas. This will be fed back when I deliver the updated presentation to our Board of Governors next term.

Feedback forms were given to participants and students and, due to lack of time, we were unable to have a full debrief amongst staff. However, some points for any future events:

- Teaching staff were invited – again, essential for them to understand the options post 18, due to examinations taking place, only a few attended, but the Head teacher spoke to all participants.
- The attending marketing team from Warwickshire College suggested some ‘break out’ events – for example, their Peter Jones Academy offered a separate presentation. This feedback was valuable for improving our next event.

- One colleague mentioned that it may be beneficial to have representatives from industry to mingle more with students – rather than behind a table, offering more interaction between both parties. This could be mentioned in the brief before the event.
- I attempted to invite representatives from as many subject areas as possible (finance, business, law, medicine, etc) and there were omissions – media, art and design and this will be addressed for future events.
- As this was aimed at Yr 12/13 students, for younger students, I may ask participants to have small workshops, interactive sessions etc to stimulate interest.



Inspiring the Future Volunteers from Sainsbury's



IBM Stand with two apprentices



Media release of our careers event - as featured in Coventry Evening Telegraph (31/07/2014)

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