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Can you tell us a little bit about your school? What is your approach to career related learning?

We are an average sized primary school situated to the south west of Bath. Our catchment is ex-mining heritage with manufacturing still the main source of income and employment for our local families. We have an average number of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium grant. Our school is a happy inclusive place where children and the community enjoy working together.

Our approach to career learning is fairly simple – to provide children with the opportunities to broaden their horizons and tap into their interests and skills so that they see relevance and purpose to their time in school.

What did you want to be when you grew up and why?

I wasn't sure! I knew that I wanted to work with people and to make a difference in some way. It was only after graduating from university that I considered teaching. And now headship!

What has been the best thing about being part of Primary Futures?

The opportunity to meet with volunteers – some of whom we have kept in touch with!

Has a Primary Futures volunteer come in that has a job you hadn't heard of before or had access to? If so, please can you give us an example?

There are so many visitors who have been over the years but standout volunteers from careers we hadn't considered include:

- A nuclear submariner who gave a brilliant demonstration as to how submarines work!
- An expedition leader – we didn't appreciate that this could be a career!
- A safety critical engineer – we were all fascinated by this – essentially if it goes wrong, people will get hurt or die.

What inspired your school to sign up to Primary Futures?

I was looking for a simple yet effective way to engage with volunteers from the world of work and this has been a real saviour for me! The support from Jessica (Primary School Engagement Coordinator) has also been useful as she clearly keeps an eye on how many volunteers are responding. It has also opened our eyes to the range of careers that are out there too!

Was there an especially inspiring moment that happened at one of the events?

All the events have been brilliantly received and there is a real buzz in the school! One particular successful moment was the response from a Year 3 girl to our STEM related event. Her family are of Slovakian heritage and was fairly shy in her approach to school and while her English is good, her communication and confidence was low.

Following our career event focusing on STEM careers, Tam was so inspired that she went home and told her parents about the visitors to school. They were so inspired that they bought her a pneumatic robot arm kit that she then made at home (while also filming it through a go pro camera!) which she then put together as a film to show in school.

When she brought in the completed arm and showed her film (which she edited and added music to) the whole school was astounded! They all gave her a big round of applause and Tam looked ten feet tall! It was a hugely humbling moment and a real indication of the power of events such as these.

Tam is now demonstrating real success in her learning, particularly science and technology, and continues to inspire us all with her knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. She loves developing her own learning and has recently enjoyed working with chemicals in a chemistry kit! Tam is also now a more confident and outgoing young lady with an aspiration to be an astronaut. Incredible!

What events has the school hosted/taken part in?

We have a successful yearly careers event at which a range of volunteers attend. Teachers also have conversations on a daily basis with children to relate their learning in the classroom to the real world. We also make use of our secondary school facilities to host careers events such as tech or science events. Next year we are planning to link up with local schools and host a combined 'Fantastic Futures' event which should be exciting!

How would you describe the children's aspirations at your school before and after the Primary Futures event/activities?

It has been interesting to me to see that our children and young people actually have, on the whole, good aspirations. What is noticeable however is that they only have a limited 'knowledge' of what they might do. This is why the engagement in career related learning and events has been so successful as it has opened our children's eyes to a large range of careers opportunities that they would not normally have experienced.

We 'theme' our events so that they focus on a key aspect of careers that link with our school work at the time. For example, in the past we have focused on STEM careers, outdoor careers and local careers. By inviting volunteers in from these worlds of work has allowed our children to really engage and see purpose to their learning at school. In addition, we also have a commitment in our day to day teaching to talk about careers during the school day. In this way, the children are able to relate their learning directly to a profession. This then motivates them to follow their interests and skills.

When is your next Primary Futures activity?

We will shortly be planning our March 2020 event in line with the National Careers Week dates. We are also looking to pair up with another local school and plan a cross school event, hopefully before Christmas.

What difference has Primary Futures made to the school and your pupils?

There is now far more of a real purpose to our teaching and learning. We are now making more connections between the world of work and what children are learning in school and in return, children are talking more about what they want to do. In addition, children are also more confident in talking about their interests and skills. We have a far more 'can do' culture in school. Ofsted were also really impressed with the way in which children could talk about the next stage of their learning and how this fits into future careers. The report is due out shortly.

Would you recommend Primary Futures to other schools? What would you say to encourage them to sign up?

Yes, definitely. In fact, I presented to my local network a couple of years ago and publicised the site/resources. They were really interested in this and I know that since then some have registered and now use the site. My presentation to them highlighted the overarching benefits combined with the ease of use. And it's free!

What would you say to volunteers thinking of signing up to Primary Futures?

It is such a rewarding experience. The most successful volunteers have brought something to show or share with the children so that the sessions are as interactive as possible. My advice is to be aware of the age of the audience and be prepared for lots of questions! Some questions are quite far out (and sometimes not related to the sessions!) but it's always interesting to see which direction the children are taking their thoughts. Ultimately, it's a really enjoyable experience and all volunteers have commented on how interesting it has been.

All the events have been brilliantly received and there is a real buzz in the school!