

# Simone Piggin

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

It's a mixed, comprehensive school with a sixth form. We have approximately 1500 students.

We offer a lot of enrichment opportunities to students including vocational courses, inviting in school speakers, work experience, work placements and career focused visits.

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

I wanted to be a Journalist. This is because I was always interested in finding out stories about peoples lives how they lived and what inspired them. I also used to play instruments and was interested in either being a musician or a singer (in addition to being a journalist).

## How would you describe the children's aspirations at your school before and after the Inspiring the Future event/activities?

I would say in general that most of the students' aspirations at our school are quite high. For example, many students get involved in activities outside of school whether it be dance or sports-related and there are students who gain places into prestigious universities. We do, however, have a changing demographic with some young people who actively need more encouragement to aspire for great things. The opportunities offered by Inspiring the Future enable them to use insight into careers which they may feel are not open to them but also find out the routes they can take to achieve those.

## What inspired your school to sign up to Inspiring the Future?

I signed up to Inspiring the Future as I saw an opportunity for our students to gain real insight into careers which they should feel are open to them. I wanted our students to have the wonderful opportunity to have speakers from various fields come into school to tell them all about their careers, the routes that they took, and to make them, in essence, feel like their futures matter to people in the wider community. We are also a state school and so the opportunity to have volunteers coming and not to have to find the funding for this was also a great incentive.

## How long has your school been using Inspiring the Future?

I've been using Inspiring the Future for a year. I believe, however, that another former colleague has also used your services for the sixth form so potentially two years.

## What has been the best thing about being part of Inspiring the Future?

The wonderful and varied opportunities for students. The ease-of-use is also great. I can search for volunteers from a wide range of industries at the click of a button and I know that the people who get in contact are actually keen to participate. Students feedback is also really positive. They are starting to feel more engaged with wider society (beyond the school community) and are now more aware that these opportunities are and should be available to them.

## What events has the school hosted/taken part in?

A trip to the Bank of America with a group of year 12 and year 10 students. Lisa Jobber an NHS nurse from NELFT Trust came in to speak to a group of year 12 Health and Social Care students and Harriet Oliver BBC producer came in to speak to a group of year 12 Media Studies students.

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

Harriet made it very clear to students that they are there many paths available to becoming a journalist and that there should be nothing to stop them from achieving this vocation should they wish to do so.

## What difference has Inspiring the Future made to the school and your pupils?

It has made career advice more of a norm. Students are understanding that they should be thinking about what they want to do when they leave school. This also involves an understanding that they should be considering careers that are of interest to them; ones that engage them. Inspiring the Future offers them the opportunity to find out more about these roles and specific ways in which they can achieve this.

## Describe Inspiring the Future in five words

Inspiring, aspiring, motivational, creative and variety.

## Would you recommend Inspiring the Future to other schools? What would you say to encourage them to sign up?

Yes, I would definitely recommend Inspiring the Future. The opportunities offered to students so far have been inspirational, enabling them to explore a range of different career options without commitment. The fact that it is a free service is also an added bonus with state schools being afforded a wonderful opportunity for their students to engage with learning outside the formal curriculum and, to have a more equal footing with their private school counterparts in terms of enrichment.

## What would you say to volunteers thinking of signing up to Inspiring the Future?

Do it!

## When is your next Inspiring the Future activity?

Jeffrey Acheampong from IT company Ciena (to be arranged for Autumn term 2019).

## Do you have any other comments you'd like to add?

Thank you for offering such a great service! Well done and wishing you many more successful years of building young people's aspirations.

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