

Start those career conversations early

Dee Conlon explains why careers education ought to begin from the moment your Y7s set foot inside the school gates...

At Sir Frederick Gibberd College, careers education starts from the moment students walk through the door in Year 7 and is embedded into our everyday practice

For us, careers education is part of our vision for students to undergo an overall personal growth that will genuinely shape their future. It includes social skills and behaviours, so that our children grow up to be *successful individuals* who have *future aspirations* and *good habits*. Our aim is to ensure that learners receive high quality advice on all routes available to them, which is why we begin talking to them about their post-16 and post-18 career options right from the start.

Make the connections

At the beginning of the school year we hold an Orientation Week, during which Year 7 – and eventually Year 12, once our sixth form opens in September 2021 – take part in activities, seminars, trips and workshops that focus on their spiritual, moral and social development. The students get to engage with various professionals, charity and voluntary organisations, and I personally deliver a workshop on aspiration, where students are introduced to their post-16 and post-18

options, whether it be sixth form, college or an apprenticeship, and subsequently university, work or training.

Throughout the year, our teachers embed careers content into the curriculum, thus bringing their subjects to life, and frequently make connections between classroom learning and students' aspirations.

In science, for example, students took part in The Tomorrow's Engineers Week Big Assembly (see bigassembly.org), which featured a panel of inspirational engineers. This was followed up with a trip organised by the science faculty, during which students were able to see engineering knowledge and skills being put into action and learn about other science-related careers.

At the end of every half term we have timetabled 'Discovery Hour' seminars. The aim of these sessions is to deliver university-style teaching, extend the curriculum and link subjects to careers and everyday life, while inspiring our students. These are followed up with home learning tasks that we ask the students'

parents/carers to get involved with. This helps engage them in their children's learning and initiate wider conversations around their children's career aspirations and long-term future.

Hone those 'soft skills'

The careers programme in place at Sir Frederick Gibberd College is also closely linked to PSHE and the teaching of British Values. We recently advertised 'student vacancies' within our school, inviting students to submit job applications for positions such as 'Gibberd Store Assistant', 'Charity Lead', 'Assistant Coach', 'Eco Warrior' and 'Librarian'. Our school also leads a Community Involvement Event each half term, where students, parents/carers and members of the local community come together to volunteer for good causes. By exposing our students to such experiences and opportunities, we help them to develop soft skills of the kind that are highly desired by employers, which will enable them to function and thrive in teams and organisations of all sizes.

This March we will be holding our first Careers Week, for which we've organised an exciting array of activities, workshops and trips. We are very much looking forward to extending our careers provision yet further to all year groups as our school grows, so that every one of our young people can be supported in making informed decisions regarding their future.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dee Conlon is headteacher of Sir Frederick Gibberd College – a brand new 11 to 18 school that opened in September 2019 in Harlow, Essex.