



Tech North Talent & Skills Case study

Northern Schools Trust – The Studio Liverpool

Setting the Scene

Sponsored by the Northern Schools Trust in Liverpool, The Studio opened its doors in September 2013 in order to provide a specialist education in gaming and digital media to Liverpool's 14 to 19 year olds. In addition to teaching traditional subjects, including Maths, English and Science, The Studio works very closely with local industry partners in the technology, gaming and digital sectors to create a curriculum tailored towards giving students the skills, knowledge and expertise necessary to work in Liverpool's burgeoning digital economy. In order to develop and maintain its links with industry The Studio is located in Liverpool's Baltic Triangle area which houses Liverpool's growing community of tech startups and digital entrepreneurs.



What Worked?

All Studio School embed a CREATE skills framework which means that The Studio is characterised by a relentless focus on nurturing the skills, aptitudes and attitudes that will help its pupils succeed in gaining and thriving in employment. This framework focuses on developing students' communication skills and emotional intelligence whilst also encouraging an enterprising attitude to learning and work. In particular, The Studio is eager to prepare its students for the dynamic and ever-changing nature of work in the creative, digital and technology industries, focusing on freelance work, portfolio careers and starting up businesses. The strong relationship that The Studio has with local employers means that it is able to offer a unique brand of careers guidance that draws on the real experiences of people working in the digital economy.

Innovation

Working in conjunction with their industry partners The Studio defined and established three Pathways - Coding, Creativity and Entrepreneurship - that reflect the skills that are essential for working in the digital and creative sectors. Students are able to choose subjects from these Pathways reflective of their career aspirations. This innovative way of framing students' decisions means that they have a greater awareness and appreciation of how the choices they make can shape and define their future. In addition The Studio has a nine to five school day which helps to prepare students for the world of work.

The Studio's approach to PSHE and Citizenship is also very innovative in the way that it addresses the important place that digital citizenship and digital leadership have in today's world. Students

learn not just how to use technology safely and responsibly, but also how to define their online identity and explore wider social, economic and personal ideas in a digital context.



Lessons To Share

The Studio would not be possible without high levels of participation and support from local creative and digital businesses. Developing these links takes time, patience and a positive attitude towards engaging with employers and key stakeholders in the local technology community. It is very important that as well as inviting the community into the school you also go out into the community to develop these relationships and explain the purpose and mutual benefits of switched on, enterprising and digitally fluent learners. It is also important subjects that are not obviously related to digital, such as History and English, are properly incorporated into the school's vision and approach, for example by exploring the historical context of games such as Assassin's Creed.

Success and Progress

In May 2015, after its first inspection, Ofsted rated The Studio as Good with many Outstanding features. In particular The Studio was praised for its commitment to and provision of clear and effective careers guidance that incorporated strong progression routes to apprenticeships and employment, especially in the digital and creative sectors. Ofsted were also particularly impressed by the mature and professional manner in which students at The Studio school conducted themselves, commenting that students appeared to see their teachers as partners and collaborators in their learning.

Where Next

The Studio will look to continue and expand its engagement with local employers in order to ensure the success of its students. This includes looking at new and innovative ways to embed employer perspectives into the curriculum. For example, The Studio is looking into working with employers to design and deliver new Trailblazer Apprenticeships which it hopes will help to reinforce and strengthen links between The Studio and the industries that it support.

Key Quotes

"The school itself is based in the Contemporary Urban Centre, which is in the Baltic Triangle, and that is recognised as the hub for digital technology in the city. So having that on your doorstep is obviously a big asset to those students because where as other schools may choose to go along the two weeks of work experience in Year 10 route we engage with those industry partners really regularly. They are part of the fabric of the school and what we do."

- Rebecca Jones, Education Manager, Northern Schools Trust

“The Studio is a thriving learning hub providing innovative, partner-led applied education for the next generation of creative and digital entrepreneurs. The Studio blurs the divide between school and employment by providing a professional environment and ethos in which future digital leaders can thrive. We are future focused and work closely with our partners to shape our curriculum to ensure our students are ‘Industry Ready’. One outcome of this is a set of KPIs that our student work towards. These identify core entry level employability skills for the coding, creative and digital sectors. As these gain currency with employers they will serve as a way of accrediting our students’ wider learning through projects, mentorship, masterclasses and internships that ensure they are ‘ahead of the game’ in the employment market. We respond flexibly to the curriculum needs of our students and align these to emerging opportunities such as new Trailblazer apprenticeship frameworks. Studio teachers are creative and draw on sector approaches that pique the interest and improve the performance of our students. Gamification techniques motivate students and project management tools help them become self-organising, independent learners. Entrepreneurship is at the heart of what we do and how we do it. Mentorship supports our students and incubation is an increasing focus as our students’ marketable prototypes come to fruition. Close links with Liverpool Vision ensure we are strategically aligned to the pattern of inward investment into the City and we actively support this by showcasing the contribution we can make to Liverpool’s talent pipeline in the creative, digital and technology sectors.”

- Shaun McInerney, Principal of The Studio School

Data

Studio School students received a 97% A level pass rate across all courses and 97% of students successfully met their University offers.

There are 300 students in total

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URL's

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WE ARE TECH NORTH