



## ENABLING ENTERPRISE

TOM RAVENSCROFT

# Blending academic and practical learning

Tom Ravenscroft is not alone in thinking an academically stuffed curriculum does little to develop pupils' independent innovation and does not bode well for the future workforce. So he's developed a curriculum that tries to turn the situation around – and he's done it almost single-handedly (all right, with a team of 30).

"Most of the time I feel frustrated," admits the former teacher, an Oxford graduate in economics and management. After more than eight years, his curriculum is in 1 per cent of schools. It sounds small, but it is a significant achievement. "When I know the majority are getting nothing like this, and when you see the impact, that's just frustrating."

Enterprise is a word thrown around frequently, but under Ravenscroft's leadership it appears to mean doing things for yourself that do not involve solely a pen, paper and textbook. Schools sign up to trips to workplaces, 30 hours of lessons, and a "challenge" day where pupils work on a project, all for about £25 per pupil for the year. Usually it's a whole-cohort package – and it begins with three-year-olds.

But what do you teach a three-year-old about enterprise? Ravenscroft says that they begin teaching how to understand other people's point of view through spotting emotions in pictures. They have a go at responsibility by putting on a bakery show. In fact, primary schools have been big enthusiasts for Enabling Enterprise, with some heads basing whole-school approaches around its eight goals, such as "aiming high", "creativity" and "problem-solving", and saying they'd rather lose other projects than their one-hour of enterprise a week.

Secondary schools are also keen, especially for trips and challenge days over the year, before becoming more reluctant when exam season kicks off in year 10.

What they're missing out on becomes clear. "One of my favourite bits is where they make their own radio show – news bulletins, comedy panel shows, sports journalism,"

Ravenscroft says. "And another where they go to law firms and are divided into teams to develop a compelling case and deliver the argument." Pupils have had a go at designing buildings with engineers, and even setting up political parties, writing manifestos that have given their teachers "a really interesting

“**Pupils say it's the only lesson where they're not told exactly what to do**

insight" into what they care about.

"A kid said to me the other day, it's the only lesson where they're not told exactly what to do."

Ravenscroft developed the programme after feeling that pupils needed a blend of academic and practical learning, which he delivered when he taught BTEC business in the late 2000s.

"I couldn't believe how long it was taking us to get through the content – the students had just never developed the ability to self-manage or organise," he says.

"They clearly had not much idea of what a business actually was." To get everyone on the same page, Ravenscroft took his pupils to visit trading businesses – and then made pupils set up their own, with lessons on running their own meetings and sorting accounts.

Ravenscroft then left teaching to become a management consultant and made himself "quite ill" by working on Enabling Enterprise by night.

About 260,000 pupils have taken part since its launch and the company now has offices in London, Birmingham and Manchester. His team trains staff in schools to deliver the programme so that the project continues year-on-year.



## FIRST STORY

MONICA PARLE

# Pupils write for joy, not for results

It's not often that a school has a writer-in-residence. Yet this is the vision of Katie Waldegrave, a teacher, and author William Fiennes. Both had become dispirited to see children writing "mostly for exams".

Nearly a decade on, the First Story baton has been handed to Mónica Parle, also a writer.

"Many pupils have never written a story before they come to us, except for exams," says Parle.

The exams focus in schools means that "for the first four or five sessions, students keep asking if they are allowed to write this or that, if something's OK".

While there are rules to the writing games in First Story, its entire premise rests on it being an after-school workshop, where writing is pursued simply for joy, not for results. (Though its website still lets schools know there is a "positive correlation between exam results and participation in the First Story programme").

"My daughter is at primary school and she is still doing creative things. We felt secondary level is the stage where creativity is really sucked out," says Parle. Worst of all, teachers can "lose the joy and the reason they went into teaching in the first place".

Through the programme a teacher can sit alongside a novelist, performance poet or spoken word artist in a weekly after-school session with up to 21 pupils – and Parle says her team is "pretty heavy-handed" in making sure pupils from lower-income families join in.

In autumn, the pupils play word games. In spring they write two pieces of their own, which in summer are published in an anthology. A favourite game involves pupils writing a list of concrete and abstract nouns, and then making sentences by matching them in random ways. "You're showing them that some of the best writing is through making an illogical leap."

Another involves someone shouting out an object, and everyone writing a sentence that features that object. Then another person



shouting an object, and everyone writes a second sentence, and so on, to create a story.

"We find that constraint and limits make pupils use words they wouldn't usually use," says Parle. Another rule-breaker for pupils is seeing a professional writer hit writer's block themselves. "That's great for pupils to see."

About 4,650 pupils have taken part since a pilot in 2007. There are 73 "residencies" this year, each costing £4,200, on top of 320 run so far. About 150 authors have been involved, and authors such as Malorie Blackman and Mark Haddon have visited schools when anthologies are first published. "You could hear this silence as the children realised who it was."

### In The Dream

by First Story pupil Samawado Farah

In the dream my mother said:

'Do not end up like me.'

I wake and touch my face, that is so much like her own.

I think of my grandmother

and her mother and her mother

until they blend into one long-haired woman,

who gives up her dreams

for money, for country, for men, for me.

When I have a daughter I hope she overthrows me.

I hope she is better than anything I could imagine,

I hope she has a heart embroidered with this poem.