

Empowering Inclusive Education: Chantelle Cooper's YE Alumna journey and the Impact of Young Enterprise at Chadsgrove School.

Introduction

Chantelle Cooper, an alumna of YE's Company Programme at North Bromsgrove High School, shares her inspiring journey from participating in Young Enterprise's flagship entrepreneurial experience to becoming a dedicated teacher at Chadsgrove School, a special educational needs (SEN) setting. Her story not only highlights the transformative power of Young Enterprise but also showcases how inclusive education can thrive when given the opportunity.



Chantelle taking part in Company Programme in 2009-10 with her Trade Stand

Background

Chantelle's involvement with Young Enterprise began at high school, where she participated in Company Programme alongside A levels. Despite initially joining the team due to peer influence, she found herself drawn to the competition and the entrepreneurial spirit. This experience laid the foundation for her future career in education.

Transition to Inclusive Education

After earning her degree in Sports Studies and Physical Education, Chantelle discovered her passion for teaching pupils on a Pre-Formal pathway at Chadsgrove School. Her journey began as a Teaching Assistant, gradually progressing to teaching ICT and then PE, before teaching Post 16 Pre-Formal Learners, as she has done for the last 2 years.

Introducing Young Enterprise to Chadsgrove

Inspired by her positive experience with Young Enterprise, Chantelle introduced the programme to Chadsgrove School, emphasising the importance of inclusivity in such initiatives. She collaborated with the school's careers advisor and received support from senior leadership to integrate Young Enterprise into the curriculum, providing pupils on a Pre-Formal pathway a chance to compete on an equal footing.

Adapting the Programme for Inclusivity

Chantelle, driven by a commitment to prioritise her students' needs, worked with Young Enterprise contacts to make necessary adjustments to the Programme. She emphasised the value of meaningful experiences over financial gains, ensuring the programme aligned with the students' learning objectives. Chantelle's proactive approach created a platform for her students to showcase their abilities, using communication tools such as symbols and switches.

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Student Projects and Community Engagement

Chantelle's students, participating in the Team Programme, created gift hampers for dogs with decorative bones made from stuffed fabric. The project not only showcased their creativity and sustainable approach to sourcing materials, but also involved trips to craft stores, engaging with the community, and promoting dog adoption via local shelters. The positive impact on the students' thinking and communication skills was evident.

Advocacy for Inclusive Competition

Chantelle strongly advocates for inclusive competition in Young Enterprise, challenging the norm that separates mainstream and special schools. Her belief in equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, was reflected in her decision to compete alongside mainstream schools, fostering a sense of acceptance and unity.



Chantelle in 2023 at Worcester Trade Fair with Chadsgrove team's Petipaws stand

Long-Term Impact and Collaboration

Chantelle's commitment to inclusive education extends beyond her classroom. She envisions other SEN schools participating in Young Enterprise and invites educators to witness Chadsgrove teams' successes. Her commitment to support the YE teacher network focused on developing the Team Programme opportunity demonstrates a strategic approach to sharing insights and improving offerings for schools facing similar challenges.

Building Bridges Between Schools

Through Young Enterprise, Chantelle established connections with mainstream schools, breaking down barriers and fostering understanding between different educational settings. She firmly believes that the collaborative relationships formed at Trade Fairs and YE events contribute to building a more inclusive society.

Personal and Professional Growth

Reflecting on her own journey, Chantelle acknowledges the lasting impact of Young Enterprise on her personal and professional development. The programme provided her with essential life skills, including effective communication, public speaking, time management, and the ability to navigate unfamiliar situations – skills she continues to apply in her role as an educator and as an advocate for YE's programmes.

Conclusion

Chantelle Cooper's story exemplifies the potential for positive change when inclusive education and entrepreneurial spirit converge. Young Enterprise, through its adaptive programmes, has not only empowered pupils on a Pre-Formal pathway but has also created a model for inclusive competition that goes beyond the traditional norms of education. Chantelle's journey stands as a testament to the transformative power of education when tailored to meet the diverse needs of every learner.