

Lancaster Royal Grammar School.

A high-performing selective school engages with employers to ensure that its students, who excel in academic examinations, also leave school armed with a wide range of life and employability skills.

Lancaster Royal Grammar School is a state grammar school for boys, taking students from a wide area of North West England, with a few coming from further afield. There are 1030 boys on roll including 200 boarders and 350 in the sixth form. It's a very high performing school In 2008 at GCSE 98.3% of all grades were A* to C, 71.4% being grades A* and A. At A-level 78.8% of all entries achieved one of the top two grades. At its last Ofsted inspection, the school was judged "Outstanding" in all categories.

High performing selective and independent schools are increasingly aware of the need to prepare their students with life skills beyond the purely academic, and that the best way to address this need is through employer engagement. Lancaster Royal Grammar School is a prime example of this, and has had contacts with local and national business organisations for many years. Among numerous activities is an innovative two-day conference run jointly with Lancaster Girls' Grammar School. At the Conference -- "Leadership for Life" -- 300 sixth formers are mentored by some fifty members of the local and national business communities as together they tackle a range of group tasks around team-building, communication, problem-solving – skills vital in the business world but not normally part of the academic curriculum.

The school also makes full use of its network of loyal former pupils, some of whom – like Kevin Roberts, CEO Worldwide, of Saatchi and Saatchi – generously give their time to convince students that entrepreneurial skills are as necessary as academic qualifications in the world of work.

A large number of local businesses accept LRGS students on work experience in Year 10 – one boy spent time with a Judge, for example. Businesses also help with career guidance, as do the armed services. And among more long-standing relationships is one with British Energy Generation Ltd, whose Heysham Nuclear Power Station is less than five miles away. This link has been useful in various curriculum areas – in science, for example, students have been able to use ICT to log live data on outputs from the power station.

Enterprise, life skills and work-related learning also figure strongly in the Sixth Form “LIFE” course, which is part of A Level General Studies. Constructed specially for LRGS, with important and sustained input from business partners and other outside organisations, “LIFE” is heavily angled towards skills for life, with four modules – Knowing Yourself, Critical Thinking, Storytelling and Communication, Leadership and Creativity.

Now, as employer engagement and education for enterprise become increasingly important, LRGS has decided it's time to rationalize its various links and collaborations. Jenny Cornell, the school's Development Director, says, “We've now appointed a member of staff as Employer Engagement Co-ordinator, and although this area's been active for a long time, it'll be the Co-ordinator's job to structure it.”

There's no doubt that LRGS takes very seriously its remit to ensure that students emerge as well-rounded, capable individuals ready to participate in and contribute to life beyond school. Headmaster Andrew Jarman sums up --

“At LRGS we are always looking for innovative ways in which we can engage with employers so that the boys are more ready for life beyond school. It is interesting to note how the world of work is, in its turn, increasingly appreciating the benefits of contact with the pupils. As the employers, employees and the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, they are a powerful potential resource for the economy”.