**Written evidence submitted by The Sir Frank Whittle Studio School (BYC046)**

Just to give you some background on who we are, The Sir Frank Whittle Studio School was established in September 2014, accepting students aged 14-19.  We provide students with a distinctive academic and work-related education. A personal coach for every student and high quality work experience with prestigious business partners are just some of the school’s unique features.

Students in KS4 attend work placements 1 day per week, whilst KS5 students have 2 days per week with their employer.  When 40% of your school week is actually spent out at work it is imperative that the right student is matched to the right placement and when that works it can provide the most rewarding and successful outcome.

We receive common feedback that work experience does indeed benefit businesses and motivate them at the same time.  This is evidenced in several ways.

Some view work placements as a valuable ‘talent pipeline’ into their business and we have had a number of students return to their work placement provider post-education to take up full-time roles or apprenticeships.

Other organisations find that having a student come in for regular work experience can be a ‘breath of fresh air’ and they look forward to seeing the student each week.  We have line managers and mentors who cannot wait to share their extensive knowledge with our students.

We have also been told by our employers that having a work experience student present can also make regular employees increase their productivity.

Good quality work experience is ideally linked to the chosen pathway of the student and in our case it is one of the 3 pathways on offer here which are engineering, business or sport. It is one which helps them develop soft skills through real-world experience and makes the transition from education into the labour market a lot smoother.

Some of our young students have no expectations whatsoever when it comes to work experience.  For many it is their first time in any form of employment.  Others are under the impression that work experience will involve sitting in a leather swivel chair like Lord Sugar …..….! It can be difficult to manage these expectations but these is something we try very hard to do from day one.

I find that expectations from businesses can vary greatly.  Many do it from a CSR perspective, and want to portray a positive public image. Some have told us that they want to develop staff by putting them in roles of responsibility managing work experience students. A large number of companies are smaller businesses and do it purely out of the ‘goodness of their hearts.’

For us here at SFWSS the right age for work experience within compulsory education spans both brackets : 14-18. We have had students join us at 14 who have stayed right through with us to do their GCSE’s and then BTEC Level 3 Extended Diplomas.  Their experience of work has evolved greatly as their levels of confidence and maturity have grown.

We are lucky here that work experience is a significant and integral part of the Studio School structure and that we have the budget to employ a work experience co-ordinator whose sole job it is to assist students find suitable work placements. However, in the traditional schooling environment we recognise that embedding work experience in the curriculum in some form is a huge challenge but one which must be tackled head on.

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