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# What Applied Learning Really Looks Like

Anton Howes



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# FOREWORD



**SHARON DAVIES**  
Chief Executive, Young Enterprise

At Young Enterprise, we have been helping young people apply their learning by providing opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems since our first enterprise and financial education programme launched in 1963. This is applied learning in action: creating meaningful, practical learning experiences that help young people acquire and apply knowledge and skills – so they know more, remember more and do more – often showcasing potential career pathways they may not have previously considered.

And now, as we celebrate 60 years of helping them build their futures, we continue to be amazed at the incredible resourcefulness, resilience and creativity of young people we meet, and we are humbled by the commitment and passion of the teachers who support and encourage them.

In the conversations my colleagues and I have with teachers, young people, and their families, we discover that when

young people are given opportunities to make a connection between what they are learning and how they can practically use this knowledge in their future lives, they become much more engaged in lessons. A young person who recently participated in a Young Enterprise programme explained to me how the opportunity helped her re-engage with her education, and her mother described how it had helped increase her attendance. We also regularly hear from teachers about how these interventions can positively impact engagement in learning and progress in attainment.

And yet we know that for many reasons, there isn't a consistent application of practical and real-world-based learning – applied learning – across schools, which means not all young people are accessing these benefits.

Through this report and the case studies it contains, we hope that more teachers and school leaders recognise the value and impact that providing applied learning opportunities can have on individual students and their wider school communities. These opportunities can have enormous potential in helping a young person's personal development – a key element of the Ofsted framework – by providing them with experiences that shape their behaviour and attitudes.

The featured case studies illustrate various applied learning initiatives that schools have introduced to bring learning to life using real-world contexts. One school has taken a holistic approach to embed an applied learning approach across its curriculum; another school is focused on providing students in a specific year group with opportunities to prepare for

life outside of school through a school-wide initiative.

That's what I find so exciting about applied learning – it's not prescriptive. It thrives on creative teaching and learning approaches that help young people join the dots to transfer their new skills and knowledge into different settings. Schools that choose to introduce applied learning can do so in a way that fits their specific context and that meets the needs of their young people. It can be a gradual introduction that embeds across the curriculum over a period of time or as a discrete initiative.

The world of work is fast-changing, and the next generation of workers – Generation Z – are looking for roles that allow them to explore and develop a range of skill sets rather than a job focused on a particular skill. Technological advancements also need to be considered, with the World Economic Forum predicting that up to 97 million roles will be created in artificial intelligence by 2025. That's why it's never been more crucial that this group of passionate, diverse, ambitious and highly adaptable young people are given even more opportunities to build the knowledge that will help them prepare for their future workplaces.

We hope that this report and the case studies inspire teachers and school leaders to consider ways in which they can offer more young people opportunities to learn in real, relatable and practical ways. We also look forward to sparking more conversations that can ultimately create more opportunities to enable young people to discover, develop and celebrate their knowledge, skills and potential, whatever their starting point in life.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- When young people don't understand how the things they learn in school are applicable to their future careers and lives, they are often left disengaged from education.
- Applied learning – simulating real-life contexts, with their relevance made obvious to young people – is the solution to this problem. It boosts their confidence, appears to improve their academic results, and prepares them for the world beyond school.
- This report outlines a few highly successful case studies, showing in detail how teachers and school senior leadership teams can invest in making applied learning work for their pupils – even when time and resources are limited.
- Rather than just being a standalone, extracurricular activity, the most impressive results of applied learning are seen when it is integrated directly into the school timetable – both into the short breaks between classes, and in the classroom itself.
- By integrating applied learning across the curriculum and into the school timetable, the benefits of applied learning can be made available to all schools and all pupils, regardless of their area or background.
- For teachers wishing to introduce applied learning in their schools, the key message is that success begins with individuals taking the initiative. This paper sets out concrete examples of what others have done, to inspire teachers and help them articulate their vision to colleagues, managers, and parents.
- Even small investments in terms of carving out teacher time and making applied learning a priority can pay huge dividends by changing an entire school's culture. Headteachers and senior leadership teams should also cut through potential barriers – such as scepticism from colleagues, bureaucratic permissions procedures, or a lack of time – to teachers wishing to implement applied learning in the classroom. Without support from senior leadership there is always a risk that an initiative becomes just a one-off.
- Policymakers can help spread best practice in applied learning by creating knowledge exchanges through events and conferences, recognise and celebrate schools that have pioneered applied learning, and provide seed funding for the start-up costs of creating applied learning programmes.
- More generally, schools should be encouraged to prepare their pupils for adulthood by emphasising this aim throughout the entire curriculum. And it should be made much easier for schools to reach out to businesses and entrepreneurs for support.





## THE CHALLENGE

The English school education system is tasked with transmitting a huge quantity of subject-specific facts and skills. But this focus on delivering so much content comes with certain problems. Given the sheer quantity of content that pupils must learn for their examinations, teachers are often hard-pressed to find a way to explain how it will all apply to pupils in their lives beyond school. Yet it is not always obvious to young people how learning to solve quadratic equations or analysing an English text may be useful or relevant to their careers, let alone to their lives in general.

Failing to appreciate the usefulness of what they are required to learn, pupils can thus become bored and unengaged, with those sentiments directly reflected in their examination results. The effect can be even more pronounced among pupils without additional support or encouragement from other mentors or from their parents at home – adult guides who often add the context of knowledge's usefulness, which is not always set out in the classroom.

At the same time, young people are often left unprepared for the world beyond school, to the detriment of both themselves and their future employers. If they do not appreciate how the knowledge they are learning will actually be applied, or lack the experience of actually applying it, then they often

fail to translate it into a useful skill. Employers frequently complain of young candidates lacking the relevant skills they need, even though successive updates to the curriculum have focused on preparing pupils for the world of work. In a more general sense, too, schools often struggle to prepare pupils for taking financial responsibilities like managing savings, budgeting, and understanding taxes – things that are essential to everyone, and especially to would-be entrepreneurs.

Many teachers of course have a knack for explaining how the content they are teaching may be applied, or to design scenarios for pupils to apply their learning. To some teachers, this comes naturally, or they are inspired to work at it. But it often takes considerable extra effort and time, which can





be limiting. Teachers must investigate applications, design in-classroom or extracurricular activities, and even just formulate material in a way that students will appreciate – all of which takes initiative and time, which are often in short supply. Teachers, on the whole, feel like they are already stretched to the limit.

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**“Failing to appreciate the usefulness of what they are required to learn, pupils can thus become bored and unengaged.”**

A focus on applied learning is thus almost never systematic or routine – to the detriment of everyone, and especially pupils. But it can be done. As the following case studies show, many schools have found a way to inject applied learning directly into the classroom and beyond, often on the tightest of budgets, in the most difficult of circumstances, and for pupils from deprived backgrounds.

Strikingly, a few of the cases have been inspired by and helped young people with special education needs (SEN), giving them the confidence and skills they need for the world beyond school, and often enabling them to attain levels of independence that their parents had not thought possible. Applied learning at its best can have spectacular results.

This is not to say, of course, that implementing applied learning programmes or infusing it into the curriculum is always straightforward. There are often challenges along the way, as the case studies will show. But the aim of this report is to give a handful of concrete, detailed examples of what the term “applied learning” actually means in practice – to show how it works, how it can be tried by other schools, and the remarkable effects it has on pupils, teachers, parents, and their wider communities. The aim is to show teachers the tried and tested methods they can use in the classroom and beyond. And to demonstrate to school senior leadership teams, to parents, and to policymakers, the benefits of encouraging applied learning’s wider adoption. All of them stand to benefit, and all of them have a part to play.

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**“Applied learning at its best can have spectacular results.”**

Not all of the teachers who were interviewed have been highlighted as case studies – there was space for only a few stand-out examples. But more general conclusions and lessons have been drawn from all of the schools that took part in our investigation, in order to inform managers, parents, and policymakers how they might encourage more applied learning.

## CASE STUDY

## WOODFIELD SCHOOL, BRENT

This small academy, of under 200 pupils, caters specifically to pupils with special education needs, aged 11-19. It is one of a number of SEN schools doing pioneering work with applied learning.

Teachers and parents at SEN schools are more focused than most on preparing pupils for adulthood, with many pupils often lacking the skills to save, apply for jobs, carry out jobs, distinguish between needs and wants when purchasing things, or purchase things independently in a shop. Some pupils, for example, might need to be physically accompanied in a shop by a parent, or to be guided by them throughout the entire transaction process over FaceTime.

To respond to this need, teachers at Woodfield have used applied learning to embed financial literacy and preparation for independent adulthood throughout all of Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. This began within Maths lessons, but has since expanded to include all other subjects, with a specific lesson to teach financial education, and with pupils even running a cafe for the school.

Within Maths lessons, for example, pupils are taught how to post a parcel, then actually go into a Post Office and do it: they calculate the weights, dimensions, and cost of the package, do calculations with the currency, and go through all the stages of making a purchase, such as asking the right questions of the shopkeeper, calculating change, and waiting to receive change. To complement this, within Art lessons pupils are taught to recognise different coins and notes by designing their own. In English lessons they are taught how to write CVs and covering letters, to prepare them for the world of work. And in Food Technology the teacher oversees the students running a cafe, with pupils learning how to shop on a budget in a supermarket from which to prepare meals in a kitchenette. Across a range of subjects, real-world financial literacy and preparation for the world beyond school is injected into the curriculum.

In Key Stages 4 and 5, the lessons from the curriculum are applied again and reinforced through experience days: at a food bank and their allotment, running real car washes, and charging staff for real manicures (the school has a practice hair and nails salon with mannequin heads). Although some of these work experience days for SEN students are dependent on the school's facilities, others are not. The car wash service, for example, is not just an opportunity for pupils to undertake real job responsibilities in a safe and controlled setting, but is also integrated with other lessons to prepare them for it – to design advertisements in their Art and ICT classes, for example.

This approach to applied learning has had dramatic effects. Pupils respond to opportunities to apply their learning with great enthusiasm. They enjoy engaging with the community outside of school, especially as their confidence grows. They even generate ideas for further applied lessons themselves. Once the framework for applying learning was established by teachers, it was the young people who then suggested further ideas for lessons on writing letters home to their parents as part of their English classes, for example, or who suggested being taught how they would make transactions in their favourite shops like JD Sports – yet another opportunity, too, for pupils to be taught how to keep to a budget, and distinguish between needs and wants.

Crucially, pupils are taught to apply learning in as direct and real a way as possible. The ideal when it comes to financial education, for example, is not to use fake money, but to use real money – all the better to prepare them for the real world after school. Parents report their children coming home after an Art lesson designing currency and being suddenly more

noticeably aware of money, in a way they had never been before – an awareness that can be crucial to many SEN pupils when it comes to making transactions independently, such as when remembering to check they are being charged the correct amounts, and to ask for and receive change.

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**“Crucially, pupils are taught to apply learning in as direct and real a way as possible.”**

Parents have even been pleasantly surprised by pupils coming home and asking for a budget in order to cook for the family, or asking to do paid chores because they’ve been properly introduced to concepts like earning, saving, and doing jobs. In some cases, the emphasis on applied learning has even been extended beyond the school setting by parents. Some parents have for example forged relationships with particular shopkeepers, for their children to practise making real-life transactions with a more familiar and supportive face – someone to remind them to check for change, count their change, and so on, without the parents needing to guide their child through the entire process. And parents have started suggesting additional applied lessons for the school to address: for example to educate pupils around the risks of within-app payments or buying games on their phones.

Woodfield has experienced a few challenges along the way. Engagement with the outside world requires quite a bit of additional paperwork, including performing risk assessments and requesting Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal record checks on external contacts coming into the school. These are things that require resources and time, and thus for management to be supportive.

As a result of these demands on teachers’ time, the introduction of more applied financial education into the curriculum did initially face scepticism from some teachers. This mild opposition to applied learning was overcome, however, by the lead teacher articulating the overall vision of pupils being equipped for the world beyond school, making

the time investment to train and support the other teachers, and having senior leadership fully onboard. The lead, for example, is supported to carve out sessions with other teachers in which to give them ideas for what they can do in their lessons, to share experiences of how prior ideas went, and to thus work out how to improve upon them.

At Key Stage 3 this training largely takes place in the form of specific ideas that can be slotted into lessons – for example, a “Chocoholics” project for pupils to compare different chocolates, budget for them, and decide which are worth getting. At Key Stages 4 and 5, however, there is a greater degree of strategic direction and development: the heads of department set out overall aims or themes, and then teachers come up with ideas of how to apply them within their classes.

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**“Individual teachers are systematically encouraged to come up with their own ideas of how to create opportunities for applied learning within the curriculum.”**

Something like this had already happened before the introduction of applied learning, but with often somewhat random themes being suggested like “water” or “nature”. Since focusing on preparing the pupils for adulthood, however, recent themes have included “Roles and Responsibilities” and “Jobs”. To a theme like “Roles and Responsibilities”, individual Maths teachers then might suggest that pupils go through how to read timetables, understand saving and borrowing, and prioritise tasks. English teachers might suggest that pupils practise cover-letter writing or conversation skills. Science teachers might suggest how roles and responsibilities relate to conducting experiments. Crucially, although there is an element of strategic priority-setting, individual teachers are systematically encouraged to come up with their own ideas of how to create opportunities for applied learning within the curriculum.

## CASE STUDY

# MANOR SCHOOL, BRENT

Manor School is a school for 4-11 year olds – part of the Rise Partnership Trust – catered to a range of SEN pupils. In this case the life skills teacher, formerly a chef, has created an internal school cafe and food delivery service based in the life skills room – “Manor Eats” – that is run by the pupils themselves.

Manor Eats takes place at 1pm on a Friday, for an hour and a half when pupils are winding down for the end of the week. But it provides a crucial learning opportunity for pupils both working at the cafe and those ordering from it.

Working for Manor Eats is open to pupils in Year 5, but they need to go through a process of applying for specific roles and going through interviews for them. Roles include being the chef, clearing tables, waiting tables, being maître d’, delivering food to classrooms (during the pandemic, they introduced a telephone order service to classes), cleaning, being the cashier, and being a team manager. Everything is designed around pupils having as realistic an experience as possible. Although the pupils earn non-monetary rewards at the end of their stint working there, the pupils do handle real money in the cafe, with ID badges, wearing specific uniforms, and in some cases have to learn to deal with accepting rejections for certain jobs. Both the cafe and delivery sections have their own pupil managers, who have the opportunity to learn the discipline and leadership skills that they would otherwise not have.

Manor Eats is extremely popular with pupils, with many of them wanting to apply for it and taking their roles extremely seriously. Pupils who have done two terms in a particular role often even pursue promotion, with table-clearers wanting to become waiters, waiters applying to be maître d’, and the most ambitious pupils going for the cashier or manager roles. Teachers have found that many pupils’ confidence and communication skills have improved markedly as a result, though some pupils also appreciate the routine of sticking with a more familiar routine. Occasionally a few pupils lose interest, and of course there are no obligations for them to continue in the programme, but on the whole teachers have found that pupils see the Manor Eats roles as being in high demand, carrying with them a great degree of prestige. Participants have markedly improved in their self-esteem, which had become a particular problem over the course of the pandemic.

Ordering from Manor Eats is also an opportunity for many pupils to develop their life skills: they need to choose and order items for themselves, distinguish wants from needs, spend money, and have appropriate behaviour – the kinds of skills that are invaluable in terms of financial literacy in later life.

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## “The biggest barrier has proven to be a lack of resources.”

With the success of the Manor Eats programme, teachers have been exploring more ways to prepare their pupils for the outside world by giving them more opportunities for applying their learning. They have entered Young Enterprise’s Fiver Challenge, for example, in which a few pairs of pupils are given a loan of £5, and have to come up with ideas to make more money from it – they design logos, do market research, develop products and hone a minute-long sales pitch. The school then gives other classes money to spend at the contestants’ stalls, on things like home-made lemonade and other products – again a chance for not only the contestants to develop skills, but for pupils to practise making independent financial transactions in a controlled setting.

The leads on this within the school are also exploring ways in which to inject applied learning – especially on financial education – directly into the taught curriculum. This, however, has proven to be more challenging. Other teachers can be hesitant to take up such methods, as they may perceive it as increasing their workload or cannot work out how to fit it within allotted class times. Overall, the biggest barrier has proven to be a lack of resources: there is only so much time that can be devoted to teacher training and curriculum development, especially given competing demands on that time. Yet their hope is that they will be able to eventually persuade other teachers by bringing them on board with the vision of how it works.



## CASE STUDY

# QUEENSMEAD PRIMARY ACADEMY, LEICESTER

This primary school in Leicester is in an area often written off by others for having low aspirations. But in 2018 it developed a highly sophisticated applied learning programme for its Year 6 students: the Purple Pound, an entire within-school market economy, with pupils aged just 10-11 earning, spending, selling, saving, borrowing, managing, and even banking.

The overall aim of the Purple Pound programme is to immerse pupils in finance culture, to equip them with advanced financial skills from a very young age. The scheme is advertised to Year 5 pupils in the summer, as part of a Careers Week, with Year 6 pupils describing their experiences of the previous year. The Year 5 pupils are then able to apply for a huge list of jobs, though it is not compulsory, and any pupils can drop out of the programme if they like. Despite it being voluntary, however, there is overwhelming demand from pupils to participate because of the prestige, responsibilities, and opportunities to be treated more like adults by the teachers. Pupils tend to take the entire experience extremely seriously.

Teachers create jobs for all applicants, and pupils also help by coming up with suggestions for potential roles they might fill. But they still have to go through an application process, must pitch new roles themselves, write CVs, get invited to interviews or not (for more competitive roles), and get trained by the relevant teachers. Pupils thus deal with adults in a very different way to the usual teacher-pupil relationship.

Pupils typically do their jobs during only one or two playtimes or lunchtimes, in 20-minute stints, though those taking on greater responsibilities might do more. And the roles add real value to other children at the school. Pupils act as library monitors, oversee and organise team sports in the playground, read to the younger pupils, and even offer

translation services for younger pupils when they share a first language. The school has developed a huge list of jobs.

Each week, the pupils then go to the internal bank – again, run and managed by the pupils themselves – and are given their earnings (not in real money, but in Purple Pounds). They then decide whether to save it in the bank or to spend their earnings at the school’s emporium – an opportunity for them to learn about saving, to distinguish between needs and wants, and practise budgeting. The pupil-run emporium stocks a range of items – small toys and stationery items, but not sweets – with pupils themselves undertaking its management and taking on all its responsibilities: they do the selling, stock-taking, pricing, as well as even buying the stock to sell.

When the scheme started, it was with an annual real-money budget of £300, with which to buy the emporium’s stock. Once the scheme became more established, however, it became fully self-financing. This was through creating an “Eventerprise Team”: a group of pupils tasked with finding ways to raise real money, through after-school events for pupils and parents, such as “Pizza Parties”, “Frozen Fridays”, “Popcorn Playtimes”, film-screenings, and discos. The pupils organise the events entirely themselves, coming up with the concepts, designing the advertisements, writing the letter about it to parents (they take the proofreading by teachers very seriously), preparing the budgets, pricing the tickets,



and of course running the events themselves, for example by greeting people at the doors, taking coats, and cleaning up afterwards.

As Evententerprise events require real money, its employees have to pitch each event to the Principal for her approval (who often already knows about it beforehand, though they don't realise that), and the pupils with budget-holding responsibilities then accompany her to the shops to buy the necessary stock, where they themselves also negotiate prices with the shopkeepers (the Principal secretly calls ahead to agree a potential saving). Given the greater responsibilities attached to such roles, they not only tend to come with more prestige among fellow pupils, but they are also paid higher Purple Pound salaries. Purple Pound wages thus reflect the responsibilities and hierarchies present in the real world, with the Purple Pound Supervisor being the top job of all – a very real and competitive managerial role, applied for and fulfilled by a pupil.

Many pupils gain very real experiences of teamwork, management and leadership, having to make sure that other pupils are turning up for their jobs and performing them, and even learning to handle potentially challenging situations like what to do when other pupils are shirking their responsibilities. The scheme is of course entirely voluntary, and the children can drop out of it at any time, but there is an understanding that dropping out should at least involve prior notification. When such challenges arise, pupils may go

to teachers for advice and support as to what to do, but also demonstrate extraordinary communication and leadership skills in dealing with such situations, sometimes beyond the capabilities of many adults.

The reaction from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, with some even volunteering to help. When it first started, for example, one parent came in to give the pupils advice about how to do interviews, and talked about how they interviewed candidates in their own managerial role.

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**“The applied learning scheme has become increasingly sophisticated over time, as teachers discover just how much more complexity the pupils are able to handle.”**

It has also been popular with the teachers. Teachers report much greater general levels of maturity during playtimes, with pupils often being very diligent about having to make time to complete their work, taking great pride in it. Many of the top jobs are very coveted, and some pupils will even take on so many extra jobs – by volunteering more of their time – that in total they end up earning as much as the individually highest-paying roles. Year 6 pupils at the Careers Fair love to show off to the year below, and they tend to become

extremely curious about financial concepts like profit and loss and opportunity cost, because they have real-world relevance to them.

The scheme has become increasingly sophisticated over time, as teachers discover just how much more complexity the pupils are able to handle. The bank has even introduced loans, so that pupils can purchase items from the emporium earlier than otherwise (though they have not yet introduced interest rates). The pupils who act as bank manager and Purple Pound Supervisor interview the candidates for the loan, examine their timesheets, and assess their risk. (So far, nobody has defaulted.) By introducing loans, pupils have also had the opportunity to learn how they work, to be warned about predatory lending practices, and about where the money comes from – most of them are highly aware of loans in a general sense, through their parents' experiences, so teachers felt it was valuable for the pupils to understand.

Getting the scheme set up required a great deal of time investment from a few teachers, and was very hands-on. It is notable that all of the Year 6 teachers were already on the school's senior leadership team, so in terms of persuading teachers its introduction was straightforward – they were all onboard with the vision from the outset. Once the children knew what they were doing, however, and had become accustomed to it, the whole scheme became progressively easier and easier, allowing for its further expansion.

It has even attracted support and involvement from teachers for lower years too – seeing its success, they for example volunteer to supervise the children at the after-school events organised by the pupil Evententerprise Team. Recognising the importance of preparing their pupils for the real world, and seeing its extraordinary results, they now all see it as their moral duty to get involved.

Indeed, the scheme has even brought significant benefits to teachers and the school more generally. Before the Purple Pound's introduction, the library was often very busy and messy, taking up a lot of the learning mentor's time to tidy up after the children. Now it is always spotless and tidy, however, because of the pupil library monitors. Likewise, the Purple Pound has freed up teacher time in many other regards –

always an issue when funds and staff are short. This is because the pupil employees are often able to undertake some tasks themselves, such as listening to the younger children read (which might otherwise require hiring in teaching assistants), or organising team sports – setting out and collecting the equipment, etc. The scheme has also been a major help in enabling targeted support for pupils that might otherwise be unaffordable. In one year, for example, the school had a high influx of Eastern European children to its earlier years, and so some of the Year 6 employees provided ad hoc translation support, and provided the younger children with language breaks.

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**“Recognising the importance of preparing their pupils for the real world, and seeing its extraordinary results, [teachers] now all see it as their moral duty to get involved.”**

The Purple Pound scheme shows the extraordinary potential of applied learning even in the context of limited resources. Although the later creation of an Evententerprise team requires pupils (and thus also some responsible adults) to be able to volunteer their time for after-school one-off events, the core of the Purple Pound takes place during scheduled break times during the school day. This is especially important given the different needs of parents, who might not all be able to accommodate it as an extracurricular activity. It thus makes the scheme accessible to all pupils.

Nor does the scheme encroach directly on curriculum time, given the school's separate need to raise and maintain academic standards. Although the Purple Pound scheme does often complement academic work, its designers are adamant that it should not reward academic achievement, as they want pupils to give up and thus value their own free time for their tasks, rather than simply having it as part of lessons – a foundational principle of the culture of finance. The designers believe that basing the rewards on academic ability would reinforce pupils' inequalities in background, rather than creating a level playing field. This is, again, about making the scheme accessible to all.





## HOW TO APPLY LEARNING

As the three case studies show, applied learning can be undertaken with limited resources and under the most challenging of circumstances.

But these cases stand out because they are so unusual. Although many more schools were interviewed as part of this research, none applied learning in quite so far-ranging a way. Some schools partook in Young Enterprise programmes, and had teachers who went well above and beyond to give their students the opportunity to participate in them – teachers often need to volunteer their own lunchtimes and evenings so that pupils can take part in such opportunities. This is often possible when teachers are committed and don't have many other demands on their time. But in many cases giving pupils the opportunity to participate in after-school applied learning activities was incompatible with raising families of their own.

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**“Applied learning can be undertaken with limited resources and under the most challenging of circumstances.”**

Much the same barriers face pupils themselves. In deprived areas, parents can often struggle more with adjusting their

schedules around pupil after-school activities – late pickup times can be a big problem, especially for younger pupils. So even when teachers go above and beyond to offer after-school opportunities for applied learning, not all pupils can afford to participate.

What makes the case studies stand out is how they have been able to so successfully integrate applied learning into the school timetable – both into the short breaks between classes, and in the classroom itself. They are models to inspire and be emulated, especially as they introduce applied learning in a way that can benefit all pupils, regardless of their circumstances. Indeed, the schools in the case studies often go well beyond many independent schools in how they make use of applied learning, despite having fewer resources at their disposal.

For **teachers** who wish to introduce applied learning in their schools, the best thing they can do is begin. It takes up-front investment in time and attention to get a programme up and running, but once up and running it gets significantly easier



over time as more teachers become involved and the pupils themselves become accustomed to it. All of the initiatives described here had very small beginnings, and only expanded to their current developed state after years of experimentation and development. And they expanded because they ended up being so immensely fun and rewarding. But they were also all the result of individual initiative, from a handful of champions who obtained support from colleagues, managers, and parents by articulating a vision of how the initiatives would look in practice. It thus falls on individual teachers to make the case, and be champions of applied learning themselves. Articulating the vision is something that may be begun simply by persuading colleagues to read this paper's case studies.

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### **"Applied learning should be considered a priority for policymakers."**

For **headteachers and senior leadership teams** who wish to support applied learning, they need to support the programmes wholeheartedly. The Purple Pound programme was itself designed and implemented by the senior leadership team. This can help to cut directly through potential barriers involving official approvals and permission, where such barriers exist. And it is often worth carving out time for applied learning's champions to be able to systematically train and inspire their colleagues. This is one of the features that stands out in particular in the case of Woodfield School, where applied learning has been so successfully injected into

the classroom itself. A small investment in terms of carving out teacher time and making applied learning a priority has paid large dividends in terms of changing the entire school's culture. Across many of the schools we interviewed, and not just those featured in detail here, teachers reported noticeable changes to pupils' attitudes and engagement with learning. Pupils gained in both confidence and maturity, leading to improved attainment and even reducing misbehaviour in both the classroom and during break times. Senior leadership teams can thus encourage applied learning by:

- Articulating to teachers why applied learning matters, and how it aligns with a whole range of other school priorities such as increasing attainment, reducing persistent absence, and increasing the school's contribution to Ofsted's Personal Development judgement.
- Creating an environment for teachers championing applied learning to succeed. This can mean carving out time for teachers, making appropriate spaces available, and making it easier for them to engage with external delivery partners. It can also mean arranging for staff to be trained, to address issues around confidence or lack of knowledge.
- Reaching out to others for support. It's not always worth reinventing the wheel, especially when there are already so many examples of applied learning being implemented successfully. It is often well worth reaching out to schools that already practise applied learning, as well as to organisations that offer free or low-cost support.




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## “Applied learning is an underutilised but powerful tool to prepare young people for the real world.”

Lastly, applied learning should be considered a priority for **policymakers**. The anecdotal feedback from those involved in this report is that providing applied learning opportunities enables young people to think differently about their learning, potentially increasing engagement and attainment, and helping to develop a range of crucial skills such as confidence, teamwork, self-reliance and creativity. But with the lack of consistent application across schools, these benefits are not being felt by all young people. In order for this to happen, applied learning might be encouraged in the following ways:

- Create a knowledge exchange, through events or conferences, for best-practice in applied learning to be shared between teachers at different schools. One of the best ways to support schools in introducing applied learning is for them to see how others have successfully managed it under similar circumstances.
- Recognise and celebrate schools that are pioneering applied learning, perhaps through an annual award. This would showcase their approaches and the outcomes they achieve for young people, the schools themselves, and their wider communities.
- Create a small pool of seed funding for schools to implement applied learning schemes that may require additional resources to get off the ground, to be used until the schemes can become self-sufficient. These funds might be used for carving out teacher time, for example, or obtaining an initial stock, as in the case of the Purple Pound emporium’s initial stock budget of £300.
- Emphasise preparation for adulthood throughout the entire curriculum. This would empower teachers to implement applied learning programmes across all school years, and to justify the investment to senior leadership teams and parents, including for students who are studying for examinations.
- Encourage businesses and non-profits to reach out to schools to offer support for applied learning – through talks, visits, work experience days, and even funding. Policymakers may be able to reduce schools’ administrative burden of engaging with the outside world, by creating a database of volunteers who have already undergone the necessary DBS checks.

For the schools that took part in this research, the benefits of encouraging applied learning are clear. The teachers who run applied learning programmes report significant improvements in pupil engagement, maturity, and confidence, as well as skills like teamwork, creativity, self-reliance, and leadership. Applied learning is an underutilised but powerful tool to prepare young people for the real world. But more needs to be done so that many more young people can benefit from it.





### About The Entrepreneurs Network

The Entrepreneurs Network is a think tank for Britain's most ambitious entrepreneurs. We support entrepreneurs by:

- producing cutting-edge research into the best policies to support entrepreneurship;
- campaigning for policy changes that will help entrepreneurship flourish;
- hosting regular events and webinars to bridge the gap between entrepreneurs and policymakers;
- updating entrepreneurs on how policy changes will impact their business;
- making the case in the media for entrepreneurs' contributions to society.

We are the Secretariat of the APPG for Entrepreneurship, which was set up to encourage, support and promote entrepreneurship and to engage with entrepreneurs; and to ensure that Parliament is kept up to date on what is needed to create and sustain the most favourable conditions for entrepreneurship.



### About Young Enterprise

Young Enterprise is a national financial and enterprise education charity that motivates young people to succeed in the changing world of work by equipping them with the work skills, knowledge and confidence they need. Founded in 1962, Young Enterprise is part of the global network JA Worldwide, operating in 120 countries.

We believe that no young person should be left behind. Our vision is that every young person is provided with the opportunity to learn the vital skills needed to earn and look after their money, develop an enterprising mindset and make a valuable contribution to their communities and wider society.

Our mission is to empower young people to discover, develop and celebrate their skills and potential. All our programmes and services are designed to provide young people with real and relevant learning opportunities. These opportunities focus on developing the skills, competencies and mindset required to navigate complex and changeable future pathways successfully. Academic attainment on its own is not enough for many young people. Young Enterprise provides the real-life scenarios in which learning can be applied in practical ways and, in doing so, supports the development of crucial skills, competencies and mindsets.

It is critical that such meaningful opportunities for young people are complemented with appropriate support. This support can come from various sources, including educators, parents, carers, Young Enterprise volunteers and staff, and many others. This is why we have committed to partnering with all educators to ensure that young people do not just receive meaningful provision but that this is combined with appropriate support. The two combined can change young people's futures

For more information on Young Enterprise, visit [young-enterprise.org.uk](http://young-enterprise.org.uk).

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