

# Overture to a promising future

Inspired schemes help to nurture young talent, says **Helena Pozniak**

At the age of nine, Oliver Pritchard-Barrett was doing the rounds of his home town of Modbury in Devon, charging residents five pence to recycle their bottles. "I wanted to earn my own money," says the 17-year-old, who went on to buy and rent music speakers at 14 and now runs his own website design business. As he wants to study design or engineering at university to help him with future start-ups, he plans to reduce his business activities to concentrate on A-levels.

Pritchard-Barrett's entrepreneurial spirit has flourished at Blundell's School in Tiverton, where staff have encouraged him to enter several industry competitions. He picked up a North Devon Manufacturer Award for an AS-level project and was part of the school's winning regional team, which designed a wind tunnel for an Engineering Education Scheme (EES) competition.

"Schemes such as these help students learn real work skills," says Blundell's mathematics teacher Jennifer Olive, who also coordinates industry projects. "The results can be amazing. As a teacher you can't help but take a step back and admire how students have progressed."

And while not every pupil is a complete self-starter, schools are positively awash with entrepreneurial competitions, spawning a host of pupil eco-designers, cupcake bakers and fledgling fashion labels. "Education is more than equipping students with the skills to pass exams successfully," says Karen Ward, head of business studies at the Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL). She oversaw GSAL's entry in the Leeds Enterprise Advisory Programme (Leap), which encourages students to start and run companies for the duration of a school year.

Like other similar enterprise schemes, the annual Leap allows lower-sixth-formers to take responsibility for funding, financing and marketing their products or services. Ward believes these projects allow students to increase their confidence, meet deadlines and manage their time. GSAL's Max Rostron, managing director of Leap entry Chutney, agrees. After a shaky start with his chutney-making



**Key to success:** above, from left: Maddie Mortimer of Latymer Upper School; Young Enterprise at St Peter's School; hat crafting at Downe House

While he intends to study geography at university, "plan B would definitely be to start my own business".

Pupils have been quick to exploit digital environments that they're familiar with. From a tiny budget, students at Latymer Upper School in London have fulfilled many a teenager's dream by launching a digital record label this summer. Their first offering is a whimsical debut track from 17-year-old student Maddie Mortimer, available on iTunes. All proceeds will

secretary of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, which represents independent schools.

Initiatives such as the respected Young Enterprise (YE), aimed at forging links between education and business, are usually extra-curricular. But many sixth-formers sign up with enthusiasm, especially this year when YE is supporting e-commerce projects for the first time. "After the age of 16, students realise they need to broaden their experiences and

As well as an innovative idea, teams need time, energy and determination, adds Whitehouse. His students mentored by a local design business and have come with products such as recycled designer bags embellished with old clock parts. This a team even attended a fashion fair in Sweden. "The students are quite mature," says Turner, creative director of United by Design, who mentors the St Peter's team. "They learn from any setbacks and challenges, and are

“ Education is more