

7 The International Languages and Science Careers Fair: focussing minds and making connections

Natalie Orr¹ and Matthew Birtchnell²

1. Introduction

Dartford Grammar School is a selective academy and an International Baccalaureate World School with a strong, central international ethos. All 797 students in Key Stages 3 and 4 study two foreign languages up to GCSE level (including Chinese or Japanese) and all 537 students in the sixth form study at least one foreign language. To ensure a complete ‘learner journey’ for the students, from Year 7 to Year 13 and beyond, and to help give purpose to their language learning, the school recognises the importance of providing international and expert careers advice. We have a range of initiatives to enable this to be achieved, but the main focus to provide key information to students, and to introduce them to the possible opportunities available in the future, is through our annual International Languages and Science Careers Fair.

Keywords: international, expert, advice, opportunities.

2. What we did

2.1. Initial stage

It was important to reflect the school’s specialisms of Modern Foreign Languages and Science, together with the ethos of “a learning community

1. Dartford Grammar School, Dartford, United Kingdom; norr@dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk

2. Dartford Grammar School, Dartford, United Kingdom; MBirtchnell@dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk

How to cite this chapter: Orr, N., & Birtchnell, M. (2016). The International Languages and Science Careers Fair: focussing minds and making connections. In E. Corradini, K. Borthwick and A. Gallagher-Brett (Eds), *Employability for languages: a handbook* (pp. 47-50). Dublin: Research-publishing.net. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.cbg2016.462>

developing international citizens”³. As a result, it was decided to organise a Careers Fair with the aim of promoting international careers; careers in which knowledge of languages is of benefit or of great importance and careers which are STEM related. It was also important to challenge student perceptions about potential careers related to languages and to encourage gender equality in terms of inspiring both male and female students to have an open mind when considering university choices and future employment pathways. Both specialism departments sought to provide students with the opportunity to speak to representatives from a wide range of fields and to allow students to reflect on their future career paths.

It was decided, in order to focus the minds of Year 12 students (half of whom recently started at Dartford Grammar School) and to inform the learners in Year 11 (who were about to undertake work experience and prepare for mock exams), that the optimum time for the event to take place would be in October. A range of relevant careers were identified and organisations were invited to send delegates, and individuals were approached to attend. The network of contacts available through alumni, colleagues, friends and parents of students was also accessed in order to provide a wide range of high quality representatives, and we were pleasantly surprised by the speed with which they were willing to engage with us.

2.2. Preparing students

In order to maximise the impact of the programme on students, all delegates were asked to complete an information sheet providing general details about themselves, their organisation/occupation, career path, university choice, qualifications, skills and the like. Form time was used prior to the event to allow students to access this information on the school intranet. Each student then identified at least three delegates with whom they would speak to on the day and they were able to prepare questions on issues which they felt were personally important to them and their chosen careers.

3. <http://www.dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk/>

2.3. Plan of the day

The organisation of the day enabled students to speak to representatives individually, as well as to attend keynote speeches and informal discussion groups. The day began at 11.00a.m. with a keynote speech to the Year 11 cohort at Dartford, before it was split into two groups: one group speaking to delegates whilst the other accessed further input from a guest speaker. The groups swapped after approximately half an hour. After lunch, whilst Dartford Year 12 students listened to talks from two representatives from industry, learners from other local secondary schools were invited to speak directly to delegates. This activity was designed as an excursion for high-attainers in Science and Languages, and also for those interested in pursuing related subjects at university. Dartford Grammar students were then given time to speak to delegates following the keynote talks from 2.30 to 4.00pm. Running concurrently with this programme were a series of thirty minute informal talks on a variety of themes which students were able to attend. The event closed at 4.00p.m.

In total, there were about forty different organisations or careers present on the day, ranging from large companies such as Bank of America Merrill Lynch (Finance), Clifford Chance LLP (Law) and BAE systems (Engineering), to organisations such as Transport for London, NHS, Metropolitan Police Service and the Army, and individuals representing fields of International Business, Education and IT.

3. Discussion of outcomes

To evaluate the impact of the event, a questionnaire was completed by both students and delegates. Local schools provided positive feedback and the vast majority of delegates thought it to be a “purposeful, informative and well organised” opportunity. Of central importance to this success was the pre-event preparation with students, which enabled them to be well informed and focussed on what they, as individuals, wanted to achieve from the day. This preparation was also appreciated by the delegates who praised the open mindedness of

the students, together with their exemplary behaviour, excellent attitude and carefully targeted questions.

Student feedback showed that the delegates chosen represented the majority of the careers in which they were interested, and provided them with essential information which they needed to reinforce or reshape their choices. Significantly, the feedback also identified the students' increased awareness of the prominence of language ability in many of their career choices. Many students felt encouraged to continue to study a language at university level through a combined degree and the event raised awareness of the benefits of being able to speak a second or third language when applying for employment, particularly with international companies.

As organisers of the event, we feel that there are still further opportunities remaining to develop the expertise provided by the alumni network to promote careers in science and language subjects, as well as more generally developing the range of careers/organisations represented. We would also like to increase the number of students from other schools who are able to access the event.

4. Conclusion

A key aim of the International Science and Languages Careers Fair is to broaden the students' international outlook in terms of future study and career choices. Dartford Grammar School is confident that this objective has been successfully achieved and that the provision of expert advice has been strengthened through this event. A continuing aim will be to ensure that delegates return each year. For this to happen, delegates must appreciate that the school is dedicated to investing serious effort and valuable time to the careers' advice provided by the school.

Reference and link

Dartford grammar school: <http://www.dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk/>



Published by Research-publishing.net, not-for-profit association
Dublin, Ireland; Voillans, France, info@research-publishing.net

© 2016 by Erika Corradini, Kate Borthwick, and Angela Gallagher-Brett (collective work)
© 2016 by Authors (individual work)

Employability for languages: a handbook
Edited by Erika Corradini, Kate Borthwick, and Angela Gallagher-Brett

Rights: All articles in this collection are published under the Attribution-NonCommercial -NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Under this licence, the contents are freely available online as PDF files (<http://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.cb2016.9781908416384>) for anybody to read, download, copy, and redistribute provided that the author(s), editorial team, and publisher are properly cited. Commercial use and derivative works are, however, not permitted.



Disclaimer: Research-publishing.net does not take any responsibility for the content of the pages written by the authors of this book. The authors have recognised that the work described was not published before, or that it was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. While the information in this book are believed to be true and accurate on the date of its going to press, neither the editorial team, nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein. While Research-publishing.net is committed to publishing works of integrity, the words are the authors' alone.

Trademark notice: product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Copyrighted material: every effort has been made by the editorial team to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this book. In the event of errors or omissions, please notify the publisher of any corrections that will need to be incorporated in future editions of this book.

Typeset by Research-publishing.net
Cover design and frog picture by © 2016 Raphaël Savina (raphael@savina.net)
Cover illustration by © 2016 Nicolas Fenix (www.nicolasfenix.com)

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-37-7 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)
Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-38-4 (Ebook, PDF, colour)
ISBN13: 978-1-908416-39-1 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

Legal deposit, Ireland: The National Library of Ireland, The Library of Trinity College, The Library of the University of Limerick, The Library of Dublin City University, The Library of NUI Cork, The Library of NUI Maynooth, The Library of University College Dublin, The Library of NUI Galway.

Legal deposit, United Kingdom: The British Library.
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: juin 2016.