

Berkshire Careers Hub Case Study: Beechwood School

Beechwood

Berkshire Careers Hub prides itself in helping schools face challenges head on and to encourage solutions. With our assistance, Beechwood School has found a renewed focus on apprenticeship pathways, creating a 367% increase in the number of young people reporting an apprenticeship as their post secondary destination.

Petya Krasteva- Ilkova has been a teacher for 14 years, with 11 of those spent at Beechwood, having come from a background in project management. Petya currently holds several positions at Beechwood School in Slough, as Science Teacher, STEM Lead and as Director for Careers across the school.

With 2 hours per week allocated to careers, Petya has been able to really embed the topic into the curriculum and has achieved an extraordinary amount in driving excellence and achieving 7 Gatsby Benchmarks in the most recent evaluation. Petya has also accepted a position as Careers Ambassador via the CEC and has helped a number of other schools develop their own programs.



Petya Krasteva-Ilkova, Science Teacher, Director of Careers, STEM Lead at Beechwood School meets with Ray McGroarty, Enterprise Coordinator, CEC

What challenge did the school face and how was this identified?

Petya noticed from analysis of the school's destination data, that the take up of apprenticeships was low compared to other pathways and decided that a change in this area could be of great advantage to some of the young people at the school.

What actions did you take to address this challenge?

Since the introduction of the Provider Access Legislation (PAL) at the start of 2023, Petya has developed a comprehensive program of provider encounters to help ensure that all the pathways beyond secondary school were well understood by the young people, by parents/carers and staff members. **One of the key questions asked of employers and other providers who visit the school is "do you provide apprenticeships?"** and if so, the request to bring one of their existing apprentices to the encounter often follows which then makes for a really meaningful encounter for the young people at Beechwood.

There are many reasons why apprenticeship take up is relatively low nationwide, particularly for 16-18year olds, for example:

- Apprenticeship starts reducing from the 100's thousands in 2017 to 10's of thousands in 2021.
- Cost of living crisis making it more difficult for young people to support themselves on apprenticeships.

There is scope for larger scale action nationally to help address these factors. However, on a local scale, Petya has found that the renewed focus on apprenticeship pathways, including high level degree apprenticeships has definitely made a difference at Beechwood School.

What were the outcomes of the actions you took?

The program of awareness, with staff, students and parents all benefitting from an increased flow of information, has led to a **massive 367% increase in the number of young people reporting an apprenticeship as their post secondary destination.**

What are your next steps?

The extra focus on apprenticeship pathways has already made a difference but there is scope to further increase the number of young people who consider those pathways. A continued focus on providing encounters with organisations that can talk engagingly with the young people at Beechwood will help do this and will gradually build their confidence, as well as that of parent/carers and staff, in seriously considering these alternative next steps.

If you have any questions on how you too might drive this sort of change at your school, then please contact the Berkshire team at careersandenterprise@thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk.