

ENRICH AND ENGAGE

Preparation for life is key, says *Joe Knight*, headmaster of The White House Prep

The importance of enhancing the curriculum and taking learning to a more practical level from an early age cannot be underestimated. Research suggests giving children independence in these areas builds happier, more confident children who are less anxious.

As the headmaster of a family-owned prep school in London, we take the 'prep' in preparing children seriously. This isn't just preparation for their future schools but also for life, by offering enrichment programmes from Reception to Year 6 in which children learn soft skills and are exposed to different experiences that help to prepare them for their secondary school years ahead.

When thinking about such enrichment programmes, it is essential to consider what passions, interests or hobbies the children have to captivate their minds. Whilst clubs such as debating, film club, touch typing and coding offer core skills, these are becoming standard offerings which don't truly elevate the child's experience at school or allow them the independence to make and learn from their mistakes, thus building more confident learners who are happy to have a go at things.

At The White House Prep School, we are offering an innovative and well-thought out alternative across three phases of the school. Appropriately named Nurture, Choice and Futures, the cross-curricular enrichment programme offered at The White House truly does find ways to extend, enrich and intrigue children in aspects of everyday life which will benefit them both practically and in terms of their mental preparation for their future.

The Nurture programme – broadening educational opportunities outside of the classroom – begins in Early Years, where children work in small groups to make a purposeful and meaningful difference in our community. Children are introduced to the financial and retail world,

and develop fine motor skills such as using a knife as they plan, purchase and prepare food. This evolves with children's interests and recently a 'road' was set up in the playground to help teach children about road safety, and gain practice on scooters and bikes in a safe environment.

As pupils move up in the years, our Enterprise lessons for Years 3-5 become more creative and profit driven to teach about real-world money situations, how to budget and how to market to drive sales and interest. Alongside this runs our Choice programme which allows pupils to elect one period a week to follow a subject of their choosing, anything from STEM to Performing Arts, Alternative Sports and Public Speaking.

In Year 6 Life Skills, our 'Futures' programme turns to preparing the boys and girls for life, not just careers: challenges in geography see children given the task to navigate public transport (with teacher supervision from distance) from school to Covent Garden; children have practical science lessons with a top surgeon who leads them in a heart dissection (not human!) and also complete a first aid training including CPR; Spanish lessons switch to conversational as the leavers prepare for their residential trip to Seville; Latin vocabulary focuses on legal terminology before a visit to the law courts.

While enthusing children with curriculum extending opportunities can never be sidelined in a school, it is the life skills and financial awareness, exposure to independence – and to daily pursuits – which will make our young citizens be future-proof in everyday life.

One thing, which I believe is critically important if this is going to be a relevant programme, is that every year what we provide has to be reviewed, reinvigorated and made current if it's going to keep pace with our dynamic and evolving lifestyles. ■



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