# Twinkle Treats

David Morrissey

The Young Enterprise Awards are not about winning; they’re about team enterprise and learning by doing. The students have to get out there, meet people, run a service and make things. This forces them to develop their social skills, their team working and practical skills.

Our school helps young people with moderate learning difficulties, ASD, emotional and developmental learning difficulties. Every year, the Year 11 students get involved in the team programme. They all have a Statement of Special Educational Need and all their needs have to be considered individually. The great thing about the programme is that everybody can be included in order that their personal qualities and skills are used to the best of their ability.

The students all run the same business but they make different products or run different services so that all students are catered for and feel that they have made a positive contribution. Last year we had a group that turned old pairs of jeans into shoulder bags using sewing machines. Another group ran a shopping service for members of staff; and yet another put together ingredient packs, with instructions, to make fruitcakes with no sugar, based on a Jamie Oliver idea.

At the start of the programme, their main difficulty is lack of confidence when communicating with people. The young people have often had bad experiences before they come to us. Their self-esteem is low and it takes a long time to rebuild that. Part of the process is to prepare them for the ‘big wide world’. On the programme, they get used to speaking to people, working to deadlines, going out and promoting the product; these different aspects of communication present them with their biggest obstacles.

For example, one student started the year almost mute. She would really only speak to one member of staff and would hardly speak to me at all, but by the end of the programme, she was annoyed that she couldn’t speak in one of the team programme finals in front of 200 people! She loved it; she had made ginormous strides.

In 2012, we won the award for the best company. Presenting to the judges was voluntary. Of the 19 pupils who took part in the programme, 12 went to the finals. They were all delighted with their win.

As a school, we love the programme. It fits in beautifully with what we do. It creates a really relevant project and the pupils see the point of it all. Their confidence grows and they start to think: ‘I can do this.’

We love the way the pupils have got to go out and communicate: the nature of public speaking is so relevant, and the pupils become good at it because they know what they are talking about, which boosts their confidence hugely. In fact, at the end of their last year in the school, all the pupils leaving have to give a little speech to the school. The students who have taken part in Young Enterprise have no problem with this.

## Tips:

* Be brave. The team programme is not an easy thing to organise and takes a lot of creative ideas.
* Don’t be afraid of pushing the pupils and making them do things.
* Things will go wrong. It doesn’t matter so long as you sit down with the students and discuss it. It’s about learning not to be afraid to make mistakes.
* Make it practical, hands-on, getting out into the world.
* Make contact with the local community because they can be really supportive.
* Trust people to deliver.

*[pic] David Morrissey is a teacher at St Philip’s School in Kingston for children aged between 11- and 19-years-old.*