

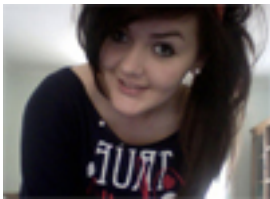


[Work experience for Year 10 school students](#)

Opinion piece by [work experience](#) students [Hannah Mason](#), [Yasmin Redfearn](#), and [Kathrine Payne](#)

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Hannah's □ comments on work experience:



Work experience is an opportunity for year ten students, that's 14-15 years in old money, to take time out from school – usually two weeks – to work with a local business or two. During the placement students are put in to a real working job environment and asked to undertake tasks they would be expected to complete if employed on a permanent basis. Students are able to find out what skills employers actually look for when they're hiring someone for a job vacancy. As well as learning about their chosen work experience from the inside, the student should also develop their self confidence and communication skills through practical situations they are responsible for. This actively influences their life now and for the future, both on a personal level and for the world of work, helping them when looking for a job, as social

skills are extremely important in a working environment.

I asked some other Year 10 students on work experience how they've got on with their placements. First off, I asked Sam Mansfield about his time at [MillTown Studios](#) in New Mills (behind the Town Hall). What Sam liked about his work experience at MillTown Studios was that 'It's relaxed, probably because I already know John who runs it. I've learnt some new stuff, but most of the time I'm doing things I enjoy doing, so it's a lot more fun than school and you get more from it.'

Asking Sam what he disliked about his work experience he had nothing but good praise, saying 'there is nothing really, since John organizes all our hours and what we do to suite us' he also went on to say 'I can still do other stuff in the day and am not really losing any free time.

When asked his views on how work experience was helping him, he replied that 'work experience helps you know whether or not you would want a career in the work line in that field, and also helps you understand more about what that work involves. But most importantly it teaches you some skills you might not otherwise learn in school, and makes you realize how different work is to school.' Asked if he felt there was anything that could improve work experience has a whole, Sam like many other students I asked, said that they wished it could be longer than just two weeks and maybe extend it to four weeks.

Some other student's I asked were Milly Snelson, Jo Brook, Joseph Halsal and Emily Essex and they all had something positive to say about work experience. Milly said "I went to Springfield Day Nursery in Thornsett, and liked it because it was a new experience and the children are adorable. It was also fun to do the activities. I disliked the repetition, as when you weren't doing an activity or playing you were just sat watching the children. It is helpful because it makes you learn something, and helps you decide if you really want to persue as a career or not. It also enables you to find out what a working environment is like, and gives you a new experience."

Many students felt their job did have a repetitive side, but also realized that is what a job will entail when you are older, and having to repeat things is going to be very common in most jobs. Jo Brook, who has been working at the Lavender Room Florist in Disley, felt that the job has helped her in many ways, saying "I used to be quite shy, especially with talking to strangers and answering the phone and things, but now I feel more confident". And this is what work experience is all about, and not only being able to talk to people over the phone and dealing with any customers, but also it gives young students a chance to build up a working relationship with older people, and be able to communicate and work with them. In the school environment, pupils are used to being in a classroom where all the students are of a similar age to themselves.

For my own work experience, I have been working for Simon Belt at [Simply Better IT](#), researching and writing for the [New Mills Web](#)

and

[Manchester Salon](#)

websites, and I have learnt a lot, like how to interview people and businesses, and I feel my writing skills have improved and I have gained the confidence to talk to strangers. I feel work experience is a brilliant way to show students, what a real working environment is like and how much work we will be required to do. It has also showed me that by getting the best GCSE grades possible, we will have more open doors for jobs we truly want to do in the near future. Work experience at Simply Better IT has been very inspiring in helping me realize what I would like to do as a future job and has given me an insight into the world of journalism which I would probably not have had without this work experience.

Responding to a Press Release sent to the Manchester Salon from the Royal Exchange, we also went to have a look at what school students on work experience there were doing and thought of it. This was a very structured group event for young students, hoping to be able to work in theatre - be it on stage, back stage or even in marketing. We shadowed a session where the students were looking at posters advertising previous performances, and discussing why certain pictures, fonts and words were used and what effect they conveyed. I found this extremely interesting and believe the Royal Exchange gives their placements some great work experience. Questioning Chris Wright about why they offer work placements, he said that they are always getting emails and phone call requesting work experience placements. He feels it helps them out as well as the students as the Royal Exchange is publicly funded and very much a community theatre, so like to show at least some people what happens behind the scenes, which also helps to advertise the theatre. By showing these young hopefuls the ways of theatre, the Royal Exchange in a few years may be able to give them a

job if they are suitably impressed.

So to conclude, work experience is a brilliant way to help students learn all about a working environment and teaches us skills we would not learn at school. It also helps young students because employers do not just look at qualifications they also look at any work experience you may have in their field of work, which can give you that extra edge. It also helps you develop an understanding of the world of work and an awareness of your own skills and abilities. The experience may also help you get your first actual job, as some employers may like you so much, they can offer you a permanent or part time job.

Yasmin's comments on work experience:



Work experience is an opportunity for Year Ten students to take out usually 2 weeks from school and visit a work place of their choice. It is normally in the area that they would like to pursue a career in. This is a chance for the students to experience what working in a real job environment is like. Hopefully from this experience the student will have an insight into the bigger world. It also gives them more self confidence

and they will be working with many people of different ages and also gives them a chance to show people that they are able to work in situations out of their comfort zones.

I spoke to other Year 10 students that are currently doing Work Experience about how they are finding their placements. Firstly I spoke to Alice Bowden about her two placements at Medulla Hair and Llamados Café both located in the town centre of New Mills. She told me that she has really enjoyed herself because they were both 'very involved with the public' and because it has also given her the chance to learn new skills. I asked her what she disliked about her work experience she replied by telling me she only had good words to say about both placements.

Alice believes work experience does help young people to gain skills and also it is good because even if you don't like your work placement it shows you that that isn't the correct career path for you. Like many other students I spoke to Alice would like to do a placement for longer than two weeks. So maybe this will give students the motivation to try and get a job in the area they would like to work in.

I also spoke to Hannah Berry who is currently doing Work Experience at Glossop and New Mills Leisure Centre. She has enjoyed her two week placement as she said it has given her the chance to learn new skills. Only being able to clean as she is not trained to be a teacher Hannah believes that choosing the right work placement is key. When asked if she believes it should be for a longer period Hannah replied with 'It depends what you're doing. If you are placed somewhere, where you can't do anything but clean then there is no point for doing it longer. If you are doing something that you enjoy and that helps you develop new skills, then yes I do believe it should be longer.'

Many of the students I spoke to did believe that their placement got repetitive but they soon realised that having to repeat things is going to be very common in most jobs.

Ellis Nevett who has been doing his Work Experience at Nevett and Taylor an Insurance Brokers when asked how he has found the past two weeks. He replied by telling me he has found it a good experience

and very interesting. He said it has given him better computer skills and also he has learnt about the business side of things. He has also learnt some less important lessons regarding the scanning and shredding paper.

My own placement took place with Simon Belt at Simply Better IT, I have gained a lot of skills such as how to interact with people of an older age and also how to write appropriate questions that can be used in an interview. I have interviewed many local businesses such as Tricia Designs, Chafes, Spring Bank Arts, Sara Porter. We then wrote a profile on these businesses that were then posted on the New Mills Web. Work Experience was a very good way to show me what I wanted to pursue a career in.

Kathrin's comments on work experience:

Work experience: 2 weeks of making tea and photocopying, right? Wrong. During my two weeks at Simply Better IT, I have planned, interviewed, typed, travelled to Hebden Bridge (found out it was the lesbian capital of the North), typed, read, typed and yes been published on the internet. Our work has included a project to review Melvin Burgess' pre-release proofing copy of 'Kill All Enemies', reviewing it, and travelling to Melvin Burgess' home to interview him. We've also

interviewed people from local businesses and written articles for the New Mills Web and the Manchester Salon. Our subjects have included Sara Porter Photography, the artist Tricia Harrison, New Mills Golf Club and Chafes the Solicitors. Although my chaotic two weeks have left me feeling exhausted, the experience has been both fun and educating. I know for a fact that whilst some of my classmates really have been sweeping up hair, and making coffee for two weeks solid, others have helped both themselves and their employers. I spoke to my friends about their experiences – the good, the bad and the funny – of two weeks in the land of work.

My friend Olivia Avouris spent two weeks at Hague Bar Primary, where she has helped the younger classes with their “reading, writing and brainstorming”, as well as “taking them on trips to the park”. I hadn’t realised before these two weeks that Olivia was interested in either childcare or teaching young children, but when she said how the best part, for her, was seeing “how happy they are when they get something right” I realised that she’s obviously loved being around the children. However, when Olivia told me that the worst part was “seeing how upset they are when something goes wrong”, I did begin to wonder if she had become part of a channel five film.

Becky Parsons, also in my year, has spent one week at Priscilla's Card Shop on Market Street in New Mills. Although she's not entirely set on going into the card-selling industry, Becky's really enjoyed the experience. She's "helped stock the shop, cleaned and worked on the till", as well as actually serving the customers, all of which are useful skills that could help her when she's, for example, applying for a job in a shop. She'll have a head start on all of those necessary skills, due to her one week placement. To add to this, Becky actually has a promise of a Saturday job in autumn off Priscilla, the owner.

Her second week was at our very own New Mills School Business and Enterprise College. I personally am astonished that anyone would actually choose to go back to school, after a chance to flee for two whole weeks, but Becky left organizing her work experience rather late. Here, she has been "decorating the music boards, helping in lessons and lunchtime clubs, and doing administrative work". Despite saying that she enjoys doing the starter activities with the 'kids', Becky says – quite contradictorily – that the worst part is "annoying small children". Perhaps not a career in teaching then... her other comment was that she likes the fact that it's "not a hard job". Becky Parsons, ever the enthusiastic and keen worker.

But it has to be Rhiannon, who has experienced two weeks at First Steps Nursery, who has the most humorous stories and experiences. From her fellow pupil Emily Chadbourne attempting to tie a small boy's shoelaces, and subsequently falling off her chair on top of him, to the ridiculous health and safety restrictions, such as not being allowed to comfort a crying child on the floor, and having to just "leave them there"; Rhiannon's two weeks really sound like an experience. Other, laughable rules include "if child clambers on to knee, this is allowed. However, you are not allowed to pick up child and place on knee." As Rhiannon told me this one, we both had the image of a small child desperately trying to climb up onto her lap, whilst she remained completely still in fear of breaching one of the health and safety 'guidelines'. Whilst work experience at a nursery could be fun, obsessively restrictive rules and regulations threaten to overwhelm the whole experience. Other highlights for Rhiannon include being asked if she was a girl, a boy or a train.

However, it's not all about the students. We travelled to the Royal Exchange Theatre to find out more about their Behind the Scenes Work Week, which was taking place at the same time as our work experience. The scheme was set up after the Education Department realised that they had to do something about the weekly phone calls enquiring about work experience. Having attended the November session, I was fully aware of the kind of activities that took place in these sessions, and just how useful and fascinating the experience is. It was what the Royal Exchange's benefit from the week was that interested me, as I hadn't previously considered this. When we asked Chris Wright, the education director, he responded that the week

creates interest around the Royal Exchange. “It shows the students what sorts of jobs are on offer here at the Royal Exchange”, he says. The hope is that students will be “surprised at how many different jobs are on offer”, and may one day come back to apply for one. The Exchange also hopes to gain a young person’s perspective on their advertising in their ‘Marketing Workshop’, in which students go through posters explaining why it does or does not appeal to them. The Royal Exchange clearly has the balance between students benefitting and the company benefitting from work experience.

To conclude, work experience can benefit the student by showing them what real work is like, and it can help the companies by creating interest in their business, and getting a fresh pair of eyes in. It is a valuable tool in training and educating the young people of today, and the workers of tomorrow.

Note: To read more about the students' experience work with Simply Better IT and what they did, click on this [work experience](#) link.