

Children who skip school could be tomorrow's entrepreneurs

PAUL MUNRO

MANY children who bunk off school have the same attributes and attitudes as leading entrepreneurs, a study has revealed.

The two-year study suggests that pupils labelled as troublesome under-achievers have the makings of tomorrow's business brains.

Gavin Devereux, managing director of TTI Mindscreen, has launched two successful companies despite having been labelled a "remedial" student in his youth.

He started developing the programme in 1998, to show young people in a similar situation today that there was a way forward. Working with disaffected children from Edinburgh's Wester Hailes Education Centre,

(WHEC), the company's research was put to the test with encouraging results.

One pupil, who recorded 31 absences before joining the programme, cut that to two, while another went from a truancy rate of 35 days to perfect attendance.

Mr Devereux said: "The programme had a big impact on how the kids saw the world and how they could behave in the world."

The 15 "challenging" candidates, chosen from 100 13-year-old pupils at WHEC, possessed entrepreneurial characteristics and attitudes, including drive, optimism, enthusiasm. They had a "return on investment" approach to life, but had no interest in school.

Using extra-curricular activities, attended on a voluntary basis, the 12-month trial gave

practical demonstrations of the relevance of education to their future livelihoods.

They developed leadership and team-building skills, learned how to register a new company and to make presentations and speeches. The programme also involved buying, packaging and pricing goods which they then sold at Ingliston Market.

Nicky Cranston, 15, has no

doubt that he has benefited from the new approach.

He said: "School wasn't interesting for me. It was quite boring and I just didn't turn up. The course has helped a lot. I got more into school, especially maths. My grades are getting better."

Nicky now plans to go to college for a business studies course.

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Bright future for problem pupils

NICOLA INNES

ALL is not lost for persistent truants who have been found to possess the same attributes as successful business tycoons.

They may be problem pupils today, but they are tomorrow's entrepreneurs, according to research.

Of 52 business people questioned, more than 80 per cent showed similar characteristics to persistent truants - thriving in a changing environment, working best under pressure and showing remarkable levels

of independence. They also had the initiative to take unconventional risks, according to the study carried out by consultants Target Training International Mindscreen (TTI).

Almost 40 per cent of the entrepreneurs questioned were unhappy at school. As a result, they left early with few or no qualifications.

The firm has put the theory to the test by working with disenchanted teenagers from the Wester Hailes Education Centre, Edinburgh, on entrepreneurial skills. It is a pilot project which

they say has transformed some of the youngsters' behaviour.

The project, called Entrepreneurial Spirit, has helped integrate truant children and those with behavioural problems back into the education system.

Gavin Devereux, the managing director of TTI, said: "Too often challenging young people are viewed by the education system as disruptive or are deemed as underachievers when, if given the correct encouragement and support, could actually be the next Richard Branson."