

CASE STUDY

UBS: ENHANCING LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

This case study outlines the partnership between UBS and the Bridge Academy in Hackney.

Background

The Bridge Academy has a student population in the top 5% for disadvantage. In 2007, when Bridge opened with 180 Year 7s, almost half of secondary-age students in Hackney had to leave the borough to find a school place; Hackney was ranked worst for English, mathematics, and science. Global financial services firm, UBS co-founded the school to help address this stark local educational need.

Despite considerable economic development over the past two decades, Hackney is polarised, with areas of acute deprivation.

63%

of Bridge students are eligible for pupil premium

70%

of Sixth Form students have parents who did not go to university

The UBS-Bridge partnership aims to close the destinations and attainment gaps between disadvantaged and other students, to promote social mobility.



- 2019 KS4 results put Bridge in the top 10% of schools nationally for progress made by disadvantaged students.
- In 2020, 82% of Year 13s accepted places at university; 26% accepted places at Russell Group (national average 12%) and; 48% at top third universities (national average 17%).
- Five former Bridge students work at UBS.

What did UBS do?

UBS volunteers support several curriculum subjects including computer science, economics, geography, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. The aim is to enrich the curriculum and show how subject learning is used in the world of work.

UBS volunteers also contribute to the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, including careers-related learning and financial literacy, and help students to improve their reading and maths through the Breakfast Clubs.



As a crucial skill, reading is in the school timetable for students in Key Stages 3 and 4.

The following examples show how UBS volunteers worked with Bridge teachers to co-create and contextualise aspects of the curriculum, including reading, in KS3 and 5. Projects are regularly evaluated with feedback from teachers, students, and volunteers; the feedback referenced in the impact sections is from recent surveys.

Year 7 Maths and Reading Breakfast Clubs

Designed to improve the maths and reading skills of low-attaining Year 7s, the weekly Breakfast Clubs provide one-to-one or small group support for 30-40 minutes before school.

Volunteers are trained by the lead teachers and work through the school's maths booklet or read and discuss books selected with the students. Volunteers also talk about their jobs, and the usefulness of maths and English.

Most participating students are eligible for free school meals, have English as an additional language or have special educational needs. Clubs usually run from November to July.

During lockdown, it was agreed that the Clubs would not work effectively virtually so, to provide completion and improve students' maths and reading skills, and enjoyment, volunteers sent letters with books and games to students.

Impact

Reading Breakfast Club

- The average improvement in reading age is nine months each term, from five hours of volunteer support.
- Teachers report improvements in comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and the enjoyment of reading.
- Student feedback found that 100% of students said it encouraged them to read

more at home, helped them to make good progress, and improved their confidence.

Maths Breakfast Club

- Evaluation showed students' maths skills improved twice as much as from a control group.
- Student feedback found that 100% of students said that the Club had improved their maths skills, confidence, and enjoyment of maths.

Years 8 & 9 Risky Business and Virtual Trading

Created before the Sixth Form opened, Risky Business (Year 8) and Virtual Trading (Year 9) were developed to stretch top-set mathematics' students, improve their understanding of probability and encourage them to study mathematics A-level. Both involved day-long workshops at UBS with students working on real-world scenarios with volunteers. Virtual Trading also included classroom sessions led by volunteers.

Student and teacher feedback was excellent and in the first four years of the Sixth Form, mathematics was the most popular A-level. Over the years, around 40% of mathematics A-level students have been female. Encouraging more female students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects is a national careers' objective, and part of Gatsby Benchmark 3.

How was this activity adapted?

Whilst the Year 8 and 9 workshops were popular with students and teachers, with timetabling changes and the original aims met, UBS and Bridge decided to concentrate volunteer support on A-level mathematics instead.

A-level Mathematics

Under the banner 'When will I ever use it?' the first A-level mathematics workshops were entitled: 'how statistics can be used and misused',

and 'differentiation on the trading floor'. Initially the workshops were annual, but this was changed to every other year with Year 12s and 13s attending.

A new series of workshops on algorithms, modelling techniques and machine learning with experts in quantitative analysis were postponed due to the March 2020 lockdown.

UBS volunteers also mentor students studying A-level mathematics and further mathematics in the spring term, providing another opportunity to contextualise aspects of the curriculum.

In 2021, as a result of COVID-19, some Year 13 students wanted extra support with new maths topics in preparation for studying computer science, engineering, and physics degrees at top universities. UBS volunteers worked with teachers and Bridge alumni to provide virtual mentoring and create relevant workshops.

Impact

- Teachers describe the A-level mathematics workshops as inspiring, meaningful, and enriching, and report that students often mention them in their personal statements.
- All students (100%) said that the workshops were enjoyable; 90% said that they improved their understanding of how mathematical theory can be applied in real life.
- All students (100%) enjoyed the maths mentoring; they said it improved their mathematics skills. Teachers report that the one-to-one support helps students to make academic progress.
- Since the Sixth Form opened in 2012, mathematics has been one of the top four most popular A-levels, in all years bar one.
- In the last four years, Bridge has twice been in the top 1% for student progress in A-level mathematics.

- Since 2014, 45% of Bridge Year 13 leavers going to university in the UK have accepted places to study STEM degrees, and ten students have gone to Oxford or Cambridge, eight to study STEM subjects.

Why is the programme structured this way?

Soon after the Academy opened, it was identified that volunteer support for improving some students' maths and reading skills would contribute to supporting progression in all academic subjects.

Qualifications in mathematics and English are also vital for entry into many post-16 qualifications and career pathways.

The Breakfast Clubs enable students who need additional help with maths and English to benefit from non-specialist volunteers, whilst the curriculum support utilises UBS experts in mathematics. Planning the volunteering in this way enables Bridge to access the right knowledge and skills whilst providing UBS volunteers with an engaging experience which is valued by teachers and students.

"UBS HAS HELPED TO SUPPORT LEARNING, RAISE ASPIRATIONS AND PROVIDE ROLE MODELS...UBS CONTRIBUTES EXPERTISE TO ENRICH THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUR PUPILS."

Ofsted

CREATING A REAL-WORLD, CURRICULUM-LINKED MATHEMATICS PROJECT

Broadening the curriculum by providing insights from the world of work

As mathematics is one of The Bridge Academy's specialisms, since the Academy opened, UBS and Bridge teachers have explored ways of working together that would:

- Enrich the mathematics curriculum and deepen understanding of the subject.

- Encourage more students to study mathematics at A-level and beyond.
- Raise awareness of its relevance to many careers.
- Improve mathematics' skills, confidence, and enjoyment.
- Develop skills such as those identified by the Skills Builder Universal Framework: listening, speaking, problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership and teamwork.

Projects were co-created through the following steps:

- UBS experts worked with Bridge mathematics teachers to identify how mathematics is used in different areas of UBS, and what would make a stimulating workshop.
- Teachers mapped the ideas against curriculum requirements and decided the amount of time and delivery dates for the projects. They also briefed volunteers on how to engage and support students.
- Volunteers created the resources. These are reviewed regularly in light of curriculum changes and with feedback from students, teachers, and volunteers.
- Additional volunteers are trained by lead volunteers and UBS's Community Affairs team.
- Practical matters such as logistics, costs (e.g., travel and lunch), and safeguarding are managed by the UBS Community Affairs team.

Meeting Gatsby Benchmarks

The curriculum initiatives help Bridge to meet some Gatsby Benchmarks. In addition to Benchmark 3, the subject-focused projects support:

- **GB4: Linking curriculum learning to careers** – understanding the relevance of

subjects to future careers, including the importance of succeeding in English and mathematics and the focus on how STEM subjects help people to gain entry to, and be more effective workers within a wide range of careers.

- **GB5: Encounters with employers and employees** – every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace.

The Benchmarks are recommended by the Department for Education as a framework for assessing careers provision in schools.

The role of teachers

Training and coordinating volunteers

Teachers help to identify and develop the initiatives with UBS volunteers, and train the volunteers to provide effective support for students.

Teachers attend the projects to support participants and for safeguarding reasons. They also help to manage any last-minute changes in attendance by students and volunteers. In the case of the A-level mathematics workshops, it also allows for reflection on learnings in lessons.

Providing material

Teachers guide the volunteers to ensure that students' learning needs are met, and that content aligns with curriculum requirements and reflects the school's approach to teaching.

Empowering volunteers

The Breakfast Clubs and Maths Mentoring programme have lead volunteer co-ordinators who now train new volunteers.

By creating a team of volunteers, UBS has been able to spread responsibility, share experiences, and minimise disruption by providing cover when a volunteer can't make a session.

Benefits to UBS volunteers

Having a variety of volunteering opportunities enables UBS volunteers to use their skills and knowledge to support Bridge in different ways.

Feedback shows benefits to volunteers and to UBS in terms of recruiting, engaging, motivating, upskilling, and retaining employees.

- 91% of UBS volunteers feel increased pride in UBS because of their volunteering.
- 98% of volunteers would recommend volunteering to their colleagues.

Volunteers like the way it facilitates networking with colleagues they wouldn't usually meet.

Volunteering also enables employees to use and enhance a range of soft and professional skills. On average, 80% of volunteers used at least one business-relevant skill during volunteering.

Recent research undertaken by UBS HR reinforces these findings: employees who volunteer have higher performance management ratings, progress faster in their careers, and generally stay longer in the firm.

All permanent UBS employees have two days a year of volunteer time.

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