



Young people, their futures
and access to relatable role
models.

Future First
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Introduction

The UK has a social mobility problem which has worsened in recent years. Today your chances of being successful in life are not only linked to family background but also to where you live. Those from better-off backgrounds are almost 80 per cent more likely to end up in a professional job than their working class peers,¹ and the top professions are dominated by the 7 per cent of the population that have been privately educated.²

Young people from poorer backgrounds undoubtedly face significant obstacles throughout their life, however research shows that providing students with access to the world of work can lead to more positive outcomes. According to the Careers and Enterprise Company, young people who have four or more employer encounters with the world of work while at school are five times less likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET), and on average will go on to earn 16% more than their peers who did not have such opportunities.³ In addition, having contact with a 'positive, relatable role model can have substantial impacts on young people's interest in applying to university, and is particularly effective at encouraging those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to aim high', according to the Behavioural Insights Team at the Cabinet Office.⁴

Bringing former students back into schools as speakers and careers support can provide students with access to employer encounters and relatable role models, broadening students' horizons, raising their aspirations and helping them to fulfil their potential. Since our inception ten years ago, Future First has supported 1,200 state schools to engage their former students. Last year alone we reached over 100,000 young people through alumni and employer supported activities. 81% of young people attending our workshops said that meeting former students showed them that 'people like me' can be successful, 73% said they felt more confident about being successful in the future and 75% said it made them want to work harder at school. In addition, in our end of year survey which was circulated to all our member schools, 74% of teachers said that introducing alumni to students had improved their students' knowledge of post-school/college pathways.

Using former students as relatable role models, trusted mentors and meaningful social capital is a simple yet effective idea that really works. Over the last decade significant progress has been made, with an increasing number of schools recognising the value alumni can bring to their current students and school community. We recognise, however, that there is still a long way to go. We commissioned two polls this year to find out more about the types of schools that are engaging former students and the ways in which they are doing so. We also wanted to gather feedback from young people themselves about their perceptions of their future and job prospects. In this report we bring this data together and share our key findings.

¹ The Social Mobility Commission (2019) *State of the Nation: Social Mobility in Great Britain 2018-2019*. Available from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798687/SMC_State_of_Nation_2018-19_Summary.pdf

² The Sutton Trust (2019) *Elitist Britain 2019*. Available from <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Elitist-Britain-2019.pdf>

³ Mann A. (2012) *It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults*. Available from <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/its-who-you-meet-why-employer-contacts-at-school-make-a-difference-to-the-employment-prospects-of-young-adults/>

⁴ Sanders M., Selley E. (2017) 'More Evidence on the Power of Role Models', *The Behavioural Insights Team*, 31 July. Available at <https://www.bi.team/blogs/more-evidence-on-the-power-of-role-models/>

Methodology

In 2019 Future First commissioned Teacher Tapp and YouGov to conduct two polls. One poll gathered data on the ways in which schools across the UK are currently engaging their former students; the other asked young people a series of questions about their perceptions of their future and job prospects. A total of 2,787 teachers and 1,136 British young people aged between 6 and 15 responded to the surveys. This report highlights the key findings as well as incorporating data from surveys circulated to our volunteer network and teachers participating in our core programme.

Key Findings:

- 53% of state school teachers do not engage their former students
- 16% of independent school teachers do not engage their former students
- 65% of state primary school teachers do not engage their former students
- 72% of teachers in state schools with the highest proportion of students in receipt of free school meals do not engage former students
- British young people (aged 6 to 15) from C2DE backgrounds are less likely to think they will be successful in life, more worried about the job they will get in the future and are less likely to know someone in a job they would like to do in the future than their more affluent peers:
 - 43% do not think, or are unsure if, 'people like you' will be successful in life
 - 40% are worried about the job they will get in future
 - 35% do not know someone in a job they would like to do in the future
- London schools engage former students more than any other part of the UK
- As children grow older they become increasingly worried about the job they will get and are less likely to think that people like them will be successful in life. At age 6 only 16% of young people said they were worried about what job they would get in the future, but by age 11 46% are worried and this increases to 65% by age 15
- 71% of young people said it would be helpful if they could meet students that went to their school and talk to them about what they did after education and in their jobs
- 72% of Future First volunteers said they would have liked to have met alumni whilst at school or college

Glossary

Social grade: Social grade is a classification system based on occupation and it enables a household and all its members to be classified according to the occupation of the Chief Income Earner (CIE).

A	Higher managerial, administrative and professional
B	Intermediate managerial, administrative and professional
C1	Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative
C2	Skilled manual workers
D	Semi-skilled and un-skilled manual workers
E	State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only

Source: NRS <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

Free school meals: A Free School Meal (FSM) is a statutory benefit available to children from families who receive one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

FSM quintiles: Schools are assigned to a FSM quintile according to the percentage of students it has on free school meals:

School type	Quintile	% FSM children
Primary	1	0% - 4.5%
	2	4.5% - 8.2%
	3	8.2% - 13.4%
	4	13.4% - 22.1%
	5	22.1% - 80.2%
Secondary	1	0% - 5.9%
	2	5.9% - 9.5%
	3	9.5% - 14.2%
	4	14.2% - 21.3%
	5	21.3% - 74.4%

Executive Summary

Independent schools are engaging former students far more extensively than state schools. Over half of state school teachers told us they do not engage with former students at all, compared to only 16% of independent school teachers. In addition, over a third of independent schools regularly engage former students four or more times a year, largely for fundraising and marketing purposes as well as bringing alumni back as relatable role models. By comparison only 7% of state schools frequently engage former students, and these state schools are far less likely to involve alumni in fundraising or marketing.

In addition, primary schools are not engaging former students as much as secondary schools. Nearly two thirds of primary school teachers said they do not engage with former students at all, in comparison to only a third of secondary school teachers.

Moreover FSM quintile 5 schools serving the most deprived areas (with the highest proportion of students on free school meals) are far less likely to engage former students than quintile 1 schools (where less than 5% of students are on free school meals). However, what is evident from our poll with YouGov is that it is young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (C2DE backgrounds), largely based in these schools, that are most in need of the additional support they can get from having access to relatable role models.

Young people aged between 6 and 15 were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of future and potential job prospects. 43% of young people from C2DE backgrounds said they do not think, or are unsure if, people like them will be successful in life. 40% said they are worried about the job they will get in future and 35% said they do not know someone in a job they would like to do in the future. These young people were less likely to think they will be successful, more worried about the job they would get in the future and less likely to know someone in a job they want, compared to their more affluent peers. This was particularly evident amongst young people from single parent families, 5 out of 17 young people with a widowed parent and less than 1 in 2 (47%) young people with divorced parents said they felt 'people like me' would be successful in the future.

In addition, there were significant regional differences. London schools are engaging their alumni more than any other region of the UK and it is apparent that young people living in London tend to have a more positive perception of their future and more access to social capital than their peers in other regions.

Age also has an influence on young people's perceptions of their future. The YouGov poll highlighted as children grow older they become increasingly worried about the job they will get and are less likely to think that they will be successful in life. For example, nearly three quarters (74%) of young people aged 6 agreed that 'people like me will be successful' however, when looking at respondents aged 15 who agree this drops significantly to 47%. In addition, at age 6 only 16% of young people said they were worried about what job they would get in the future, but by age 11 46% are worried and this increases to 65% by age 15.

Being introduced to relatable role models can have a significant impact on young people. 74% of the schools we work with said alumni have improved their students' knowledge of post-school/college pathways and 81% of young people attending our alumni workshops said that meeting former students showed them that 'people like me' can be successful. We also know that students themselves understand there is value in meeting former students. Nearly three quarters (71%) of the young people surveyed as part of the YouGov poll said it would be helpful if they could meet students that went to their school and talk to them about what they did after education and in their jobs. Similarly, 72% of our volunteers who responded to our audit said they would have liked to have met alumni whilst at school or college and agreed that it would have benefited them.

Analysis:

1. Independent v state schools

Independent schools are engaging with their alumni far more than state schools. As part of the Teacher Tapp poll, 1 in 2 state school teachers (53%) reported that they do not engage with former students at all, compared to only 16% of independent school teachers.

In addition, the frequency of engagement varies significantly across state and independent schools with only 7% of state schools frequently engaging with former students four or more times. This is in sharp contrast to independent schools who are over five times more likely to frequently engage with their former students (38%).

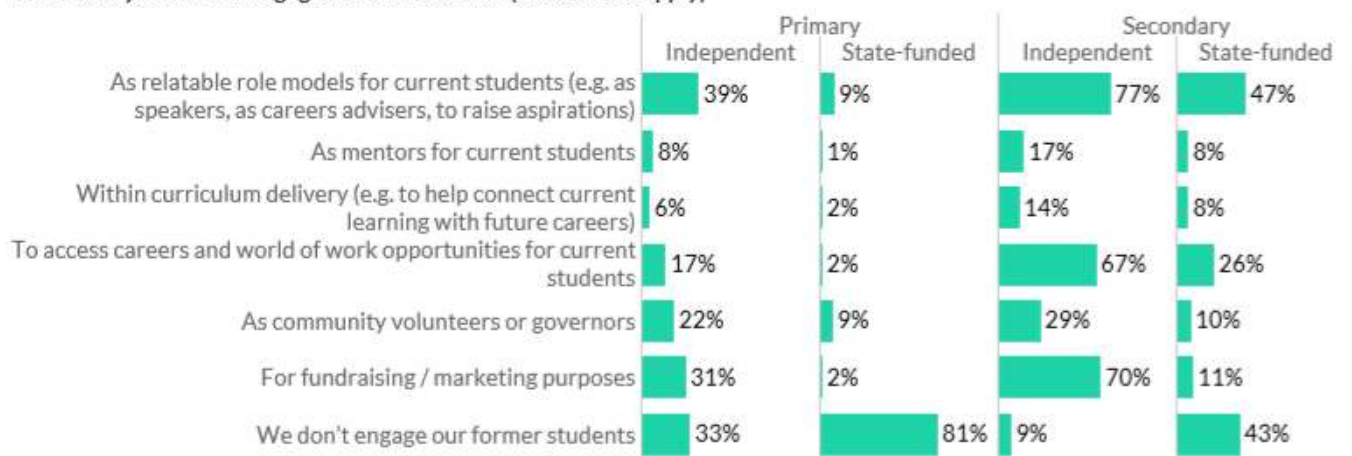
Teachers were asked about the ways in which they engage their former students. 52% of independent schools said they contact former students for fundraising and marketing purposes, with 59% bringing alumni back as relatable role models for current students. By contrast only 5% of teachers from state schools said they engage with former students for fundraising purposes: they are most likely to bring back former students as relatable role models (23%).

The findings show that secondary schools engage former students significantly more than primary schools. Two thirds of primary school teachers (65%) say they do not engage with former students at all, in comparison to only a third of secondary school teachers (34%).

When this data is broken down by independent and state schools the findings are even more stark. Only 1 in 5 state primary school teachers (19%) said they engage former students in comparison to two thirds of teachers working in independent primary schools.

The graph below shows how schools engage former students:

How does your school engage former students? (Tick all that apply)

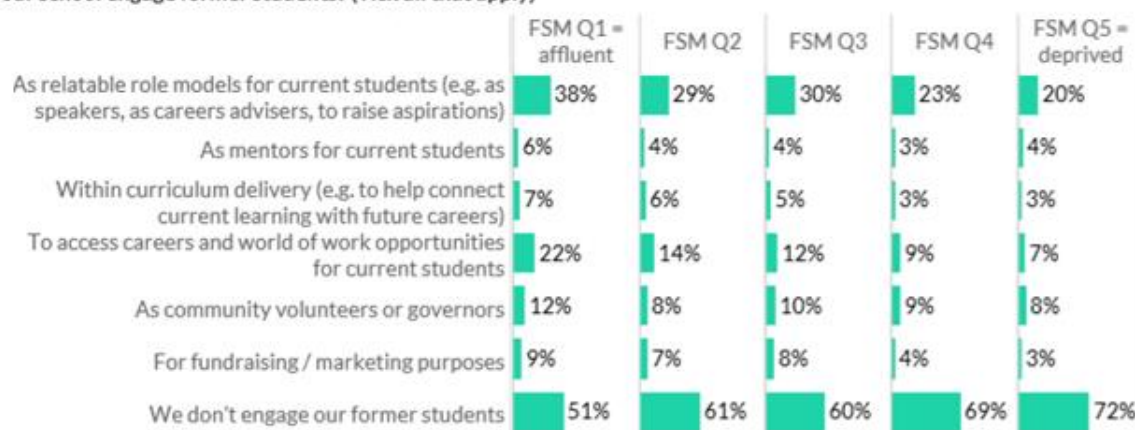


2. Affluence amongst state schools

There is a clear disparity between the ways in which independent and state school teachers engage their alumni and this is most prominent amongst primary schools. However there are also clear disparities between state schools when FSM Quintiles are considered.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of teachers working in schools serving the most deprived areas (FSM Quintile 5) do not engage with their alumni in comparison to 51% of teachers based in FSM quintile 1 schools where less than 6% of students are on free school meals.

How does your school engage former students? (Tick all that apply)



The most affluent students, based in independent and low-FSM quintile state schools are therefore more likely to have access to relatable role models, mentors, careers guidance and work experience opportunities via engagement with former students.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that these young people are more likely to feel confident about their future, know someone in a job they would like and worry less about their job prospects than their less affluent peers according to the YouGov findings. This is particularly prominent when you take parent or guardian social grade and employment status into account.

Young people aged 6 to 15 from C2DE backgrounds are less likely to think they will be successful in life (57% vs. 67%), less likely to know of anyone in a job that they would like to do in future (49% vs. 55%) and more worried about the job they would get in future (40% vs. 35%), than their peers with parents/guardians identified as social grade ABC1.

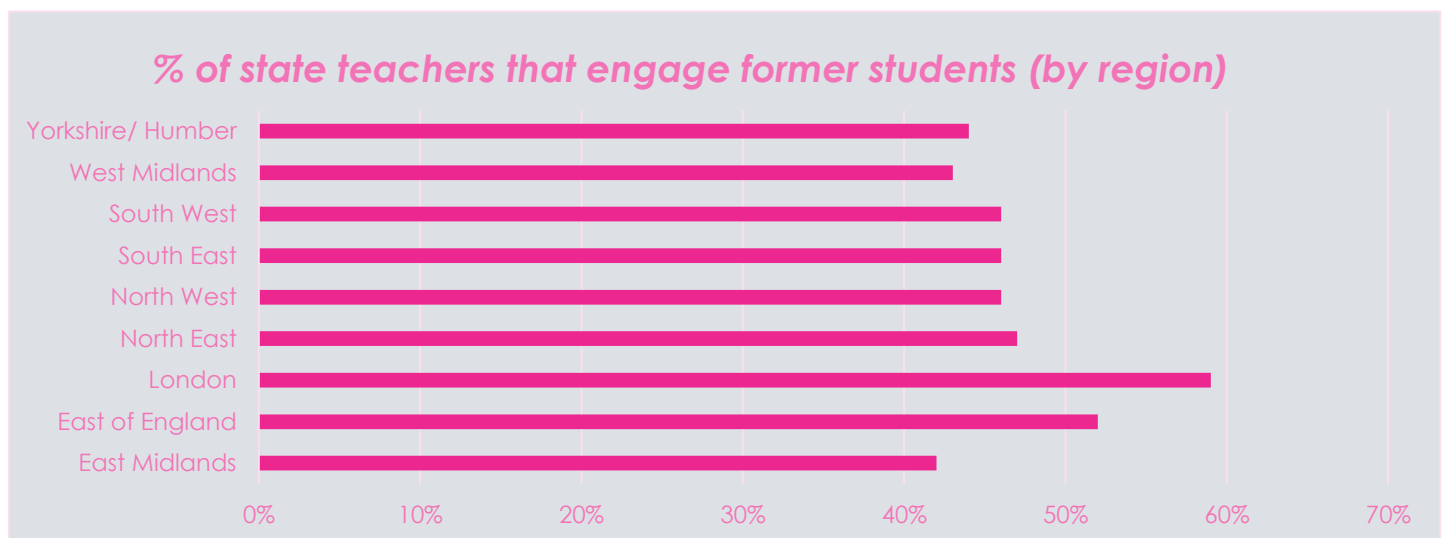
- 43% said they do not think, or are unsure if, people like them will be successful in life
- 40% said they are worried about the job they will get in future
- 35% said they do not know someone in a job they would like to do in the future

The gap is even larger amongst young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds living in workless households. Over half (53%) said they do not think, or are unsure if people like them will be successful in future. Additionally, only a quarter of young people who have at least one parent who isn't working said they know someone in a job they would like to do.

3. Regional differences

Alumni engagement also varies according to region. State schools based in London are far more likely to engage with former students than schools based in other parts of the country. 59% of teachers based in London schools said they engage former students. In comparison, under half of staff based in schools in all other regions said they engage with former students, with the exception of the East of England.

Young people based in London were also more likely think that people like them will be successful in life (73%) and more likely to know someone in a job they would like to do in the future (63%) than young people from any other part of the country.



Do you think people like you will be successful in life? 'Yes' responses:

73% London

68% Midlands/ Wales

66% East

57% South

61% North/Scotland

Do you know anyone who has a job that you would like to do in the future?

63% London

48% Midlands / Wales

56% East

52% South

53% North/Scotland

4. Age

YouGov findings suggest that as children grow older they become increasingly worried about the job they will get and are less likely to think that they will be successful in life. At age 6, for example, nearly three quarters of young people (74%) agreed that 'people like me will be successful' and by age 11 this has reduced to 71%. At 15, however, this number drops significantly to nearly 1 in 2 (47%). Similarly, at age 6 only 16% of young people said they were worried about what job they would get in the future, but by age 11 46% are worried and this massively increases to 65% by age 15.

This is even more prominent amongst young people from C2DE backgrounds:

- 43% do not think, or are unsure if, people like them will be successful in life
- 40% are worried about the job they will get when they are an adult.

5. Parent/guardian marital status

Young people with divorced parents or a widowed parent were the least likely to think 'people like me' will be successful in life, 5 out of 17 young people with a widowed parent and nearly 1 in 2 with divorced parents (47%) responded positively to this statement. By contrast over two thirds of young people with parents living as married (68%) or married (66%) responded in this way, 11 out of 17 children who has a parent in a civil partnership answered yes when asked if they thought people like them would be successful in life.

6. Young people want access to relatable role models

The data suggests that there is not only a need to provide students with access to employer encounters and relatable role models, to raise their aspirations and confidence about the future, but there is also a demand amongst young people themselves for these kinds of encounters.

71% of the young people surveyed as part of the YouGov poll said it would be helpful if they could meet students that went to their school and talk to them about what they did after education and in their jobs. Similarly, as part of Future First's alumni audit which was circulated to our network of 240,000 volunteers, 72% of respondents said they would have liked to have met alumni whilst at school or college and agreed that it would have benefited them. When asked how they may have benefitted alumni provided a range of responses:

"(To)explore options outside of my town, where I'm from it was pretty much retail, public services or the power plant with career options. I had no idea the world was so big."

"This would have been a good opportunity to ask questions regarding the course I was studying and also potential education and career pathways that could have been available to me."

"Given me encouragement, seeing those who were previously in my position and how far they have come."

7. Conclusion

Using former students as relatable role models, trusted mentors and meaningful social capital is proven to be a successful way to broaden young people's knowledge of the opportunities available to them, as well as boosting their confidence to pursuing them. 81% of young people attending our alumni events last year told us that meeting former students showed them that 'people like me' can be successful with 73% reporting they felt more confident about being successful in the future.

Significant progress has been made over the past ten years, with 1 in 2 state school teachers recognising the value alumni can bring to their school community, however there is still more progress to be made.

Independent schools are still miles ahead in terms of engaging former students and schools serving the most deprived areas are engaging former students far less than some of the most affluent schools. This is despite the fact disadvantaged young people are most in need of the additional support and social capital that interactions with former students can provide.

We must continue to focus our attention on empowering schools serving the most deprived areas to engage their former students, particularly schools outside of London where young people are less likely to have access to social capital. 95% of our member schools tell us that time constraints limit their ability to engage alumni as much as they would like, highlighting the need for additional resource to be allocated to support schools. We must also ensure that the most vulnerable young people in society and those who are approaching an age where important decisions about their next steps need to be made are able to access the support they need.



Contact us to find out
more about the power of
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