IT’S GOOD TO TALK

Why focusing on speech could kick-start children’s learning

Peak performance
Climbing the walls at school can sometimes be a good thing...

School’s in for summer
“Teens spurn sleep for study” shocker at Westminster College

‘I doubted whether SHINE could pull it off...’
Jon Snow spills the beans on last year’s Benefit Dinner
Welcome to the fourth edition of our annual supporters’ magazine, which I hope will provide you with an interesting insight into our projects, methods and fundraising activities over the past 12 months.

Making new arguments
SHINE’s 10th Anniversary last year provided a natural opportunity for reflection. Although pleased overall with progress so far, we remain only too aware of the work still remaining and the need to continually raise our game, particularly in the current economic climate.

I have already made the case against cutting school budgets. Nevertheless, it’s clear that even a best case scenario will see government funding become more elusive than ever before. This makes it essential to prove beyond any doubt the value and impact of our work. Consequently, we plan to build on earlier assessments by the LSE, Ofsted and New Philanthropy Capital with independent evaluations of some core programmes. Such work will not only reinforce the case we make to third parties, but also offer valuable pointers to help us further improve how we operate ourselves.

Finding new territories
Meanwhile we’re as busy as ever, funding some wonderful new initiatives while also launching new versions of our most successful projects. Serious Fun on Saturdays, in which independent schools lend their resources to local state school kids, has long been one of my favourite SHINE programmes. To me, it represents the essence of what SHINE is all about: a partnership approach, superb leverage and, most importantly, exceptional educational support.

It also offers great value for money, so we are aggressively rolling out these projects to new schools and locations, including Bolton, Eton and the American School in London. Further expansion is a priority in the coming years, so if anybody knows an independent school that may wish to be involved, please let us know.

Supporting new projects
One new focus this year is poor communication skills. Historically these have been neglected in our schools, despite a wealth of research that demonstrates their importance to a successful education. As ever, kids from poor families draw the shortest straws so we have begun funding two programmes – one for primary children, the second for teenagers – that should help to address this gaping hole in service provision.

And as usual, we have a plethora of new projects, ranging in scope from illiterate teenagers to young people living with HIV. But while their nature, approach and target market may differ, what these projects all share is a determination to improve the educational outcomes and opportunities for children and young people who would otherwise be left behind.

Earning new support
This same determination is shared by our supporters, whose commitment and generosity underpins everything we do. As we wave a very grateful farewell to the David Beckham Academy, which has left its Greenwich home, we welcome new backing from The Nomura Charitable Trust and 100 Women in Hedge Funds, whose fundraiser last October raised a remarkable £210,000 for SHINE. We are also exploring some exciting new venues for this November’s Benefit Dinner. Please do come; only with your support can we help even more children gain the skills and grades they need to break out of their circumstances and look ahead with enthusiasm, confidence and hope.

FROM JIM O’NEILL
Chairman

Jim O’Neill

Professor Alison Richard

A good education equips us to choose our own path, within our own ability, application and purpose limiting what we achieve. SHINE’s work matters because it provides the most disadvantaged in our society with the practical necessities of a proper education: dedicated time, individual attention and expert support. Only with these can a child discover the full extent of their abilities, set their goals and decide how best to fulfil them. Thanks to SHINE, for some students these goals may now include universities like Cambridge; for all its students, however, SHINE’s value lies in giving an opportunity to learn, discover, achieve and excel.

Professor Alison Richard, SHINE Patron
Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge

SHINE funds and develops educational programmes to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds make the most of their time at school. These support children of all abilities and include specialist after school clubs, complementary classes on Saturdays and intensive literacy and numeracy support sessions.
School’s in for summer

You’re 16, you’ve just done your GCSEs and the whole summer’s ahead of you. So it’s feet up, telly on and a quick shout-out to your mates to see what’s happening, right?

Wrong – at least for 80 London teenagers, because last year Serious Fun arrived at Westminster School with a week-long course for very bright students. "We wanted them to see the brilliant things they could do if they stayed at school,” said Gill Cumberland of Westminster Council, which part-funded the project.

After uncompromisingly academic classes every morning, the afternoons involved activities, games and personal development workshops. “The week fulfilled its aim superbly,” said Gill. “For some, this was life-changing because they met other people with similar interests and plans for the future.”

Westminster’s Jeremy Kendall agreed, noting “a discernible improvement” in the students’ confidence. In particular, he hoped that the week reinforced their belief in a future involving “a rigorous academic degree at a well-respected university.”

Many students have since returned to Westminster for some extra-curricular science lectures. Jeremy also intends to invite them back this summer for a “higher educational clinic” covering UCAS forms, interview technique and degree choices. “I don’t know how much one week can achieve,” he said, “but if this prompted just a few to set themselves tougher targets, get higher grades and go to a better university then, for me, it will have been successful.”

A dead rat bounce

“The food was terrible but the other students were amazing, and the things I learned...” said Amina Ahmed, who attended Serious Fun @ Westminster last year. “In biology when we dissected a rat – that’s the highlight of my entire life. Going to a private school to do something you’re interested in, you don’t often get chances like that – it’s a lifetime opportunity.”

“arly learning is central to everything,” agrees Cyrillic alphabet but they also learned about its geography and food.”

Although Bolton School’s project only began last October, “a lot of their teachers are already telling us that the kids are much more focused or that their literacy has improved,” said James. “Their national tests next year will really show us the difference we’ve made to their academic attainment.”

The sessions are taught by Bolton School’s own teachers, supported by sixth form volunteers. “Even the headmaster was in giving a physics lesson,” James continued. “As teachers, that moment when the kids grasp the issue – we get a buzz out of that.”

SPREADING SERIOUS FUN

It’s not just kids who love Serious Fun – we’re quite a fan as well. So we’re expanding these projects, teaming up with some famous names and moving into brand new territory...
Everybody understands the importance of reading and writing, but speech? Perhaps that’s why communication has historically been so neglected at school – until now.

Surprising as it seems, around 50% of all children start school with poor or delayed language skills. For some, it just takes time: for many, however, this undermines both their confidence and ability to learn – 75% of them leave primary school with substandard literacy skills.

Speech is already an important part of certain SHINE projects, such as DigiSmart and Brunel Urban Scholars. But now we are taking this further with two new projects that focus explicitly on communication.

Debate Mate uses oratory and competition, while ‘A Chance to Talk’ is piloting new models for teaching communication skills to 4-7 year olds. Over the next three years, more than 4,000 children will benefit from language specialists hired to help teachers support individuals, small groups and even whole classes.

An early evaluation bodes well. Teachers said that their students became more confident in class and progressed faster at school. What’s more, ‘A Chance to Talk’ is backed by the same people behind the massively successful Every Child a Reader programme so naturally we hope that, before long, every child will learn that, while reading is important, it’s also good to talk.

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The Great Debate

Another new initiative for SHINE is Debate Mate. This uses formal, structured argument to help secondary students develop their reasoning skills, communication and confidence in a fun, yet challenging, way.

Debate Mate trains Oxford and London undergraduates to run weekly after-school debating clubs in secondary schools. During the year, students debate curriculum-related topics in a series of competitions before ending the season with the Richard Koch Cup, a contest for all participating schools.

I want to go to university more now – my future seems more exciting!

Debate Mate student

Initial signs are promising: an independent evaluation of last year’s pilot showed that two-thirds of participants enjoyed classroom discussions more than before; 85% said they had become more confident and articulate. More anecdotally, half of the teachers in one school had seen a noticeable improvement in academic performance.

So far, so good and, with SHINE’s help, Debate Mate is expanding into 80 schools, to help around 1,200 young people. We’ll also be watching the grades of those involved because, as these students now know, any good argument is backed up by hard evidence, not a lot of hot air.

A SHINE-funded Urban Scholar at Brunel University, Ashlee Moyo, 16, is now a seasoned public speaker – so we asked her for some advice.

“Besides presenting in class, every year we give a presentation to the Urban Scholars and their parents. This was the first time I’d presented in front of people I didn’t know – it was a bit nerve-wracking when I saw the crowd but then once you get into it, you just relax and it’s fun.”

The following year, Ashlee and some friends spoke about their favourite music video. “The slides just had pictures on them and we spoke not from notes, but bullet points. If you freeze, you just remember, ‘relax, carry on and be yourself’.”

“Doing presentations has made me more confident in my opinions, as long as I know what I’m saying. Beforehand, I wouldn’t be too keen to share with other people but I’m now happy to say what I think and then listen to the others. And presenting has made me more willing at school – I think, ‘yes, I know that, I want to do that’. But I still need to learn not to talk so fast!”

Full information on these and other SHINE-funded projects can be found at www.shinetrust.org.uk.

ASHLEE SAYS RELAX AND CARRY ON

“IT’S GOOD TO TALK” ASHLEE SAYS “RELAX” AND “CARRY ON”

“The key was getting them to work together and organise their arguments properly.”

“Originally it was mainly the gifted students but now kids of all abilities are coming along. Debating helps you structure your thoughts and speak logically and confidently, so it’s important to look beyond just the smartest kids: those needing the most help can benefit even more. And now their history teacher is using it, telling them; ‘Do it like you do your debating – a proposition and then an opposition’.”

“They’ve made great progress and some of them see me now as a sort of role model. They think, ‘well he’s at university, maybe I can go too’, and they’re asking me about degree choices. So although Debate Mate has created some great new speakers, more than that, it’s given them the skills to exceed their own expectations.”

Cerith Evans represented Wales in the 2008 World Schools Debating Championships; he now studies history at UCL and teaches debating at The Lammas School in Leyton.

“Poor communication particularly affects poor families: children in low income households hear just 500 different words a day, compared with 1,500 different words daily in affluent households.

Just 15% of students with poor speech and language skills achieve five good GCSEs, compared with 69% of all teenagers.”

“AT first the kids didn’t even know what a debate was. They would either talk forever, making no sense, or go bright red and sit down after 10 seconds. The key was getting them to work together and organise their arguments properly.”

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Mind, body and soul

We’re always keen to support interesting new initiatives, such as That Reading Thing, a highly regarded literacy support project for teenagers in Tower Hamlets. Many of the young people it helps have a reading age less than half their chronological age which, alongside their often challenging behaviour, is wrecking their future prospects.

Students spend up to a year attending regular one-to-one sessions, working through a series of structured lessons that invariably achieve marked improvements in their reading age. With demand for this unglamorous but essential service doubling in the past three years, SHINE’s grant will enable it to continue its work helping more young people to re-engage and start afresh.

Then there’s Body & Soul, which supports families and children living with HIV. Its weekly Teen Spirit programme includes study support staffed by qualified teachers (including Teach First volunteers) at its north London base.

With SHINE funding, Body & Soul can now put this programme online and evaluate it to show them the impact they are already having and what else they need to do. Research regularly suggests that a special place to study can produce real improvements in young people’s engagement and academic achievement so we hope that this award-winning charity will now become better able to nurture not just body and soul, but the mind as well.

That Reading Thing helped me to get better at sounding out words. The best thing was reading a book.

Student

Besides expanding our own, home-grown Saturday programmes, we’re always looking for other ways to use the weekend to raise attainment and address real need.

Take teenage underachievement, for example. In some London boroughs last year, around 45% of 15 year olds left school without five good GCSEs. Windsor Fellowship tackles this troubling statistic head on by working with 14-16 year olds in east London who, although bright, risk falling short. Regular Saturday seminars over two years will improve participants’ revision techniques and learning skills. It expects them all to achieve five good GCSEs – a target it set itself last year – and to start making informed choices about their futures.

But to attract seriously disengaged teenagers into school on Saturdays you sometimes need something a little special. Watford Grammar has a huge climbing wall, while Entrepreneurs in Action uses business challenges to attract underachieving 12-14 year olds. Frequent Saturday sessions help them improve their communication and presentation techniques, teach them key (and transferable) skills – such as planning and pricing – and increase their overall enthusiasm and commitment in class. A similar scheme transformed some senescent underachievers so, naturally, we’re hoping that this new Saturday initiative will also... do the business.

Why SHINE? Because...

• more than 1 in 3 disadvantaged children left primary school last year with inadequate maths or English skills – around twice the national average.
• in 2008, fewer than 1 in 4 children on free school meals achieved 5 good GCSEs (including English and maths) – less than half the national average.
• more than 28% of 15-19 year olds in the UK are not in education. This is the third highest rate in the OECD – only Turkey and Mexico do worse.

At more than £1,000 per head, why is it so expensive? Taken across the whole programme, and given the level of disadvantage we’re addressing, it’s actually very good value – just £75 per week. This includes transport and creche facilities so that parents can attend their sessions, which is really important.

But why pay qualified teachers when other organisations use volunteers? Only proper teachers can identify what these students need to progress further; they add value by knowing where these kids are now and how they can improve. You wouldn’t want your car serviced by a happy, enthusiastic amateur, would you?

How will you assess your impact? Given the students are preparing for GCSEs and we know, based on prior attainment, what they should be achieving, we’ll end up with some pretty hard stats. There’s also qualitative data around attitude and aspirations. If this project doesn’t offer a cost-effective way for improving their attainment then it won’t have been successful. But it will be.
Bigger, better, further, more

As you know, we think that the smartest, most cost-effective way to help more children is to take proven success and reproduce it elsewhere. So naturally we’re always pleased when a SHINE-funded programme takes active steps to spread its wings.

IntoUniversity provides academic support to 7-18 year olds from low-income families with no previous history of higher education. Endorsed by The National Foundation for Educational Research, it offers weekly academic support sessions for younger children, for teenagers, this work expands to include undergraduate mentors, personal development coaching and career information sessions. It also runs subject-based challenges, some a week long, to promote a love for learning and interest in university.

After years of success in north Kensington, IntoUniversity launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to expand into new boroughs. Last year it opened in Lambeth, Brent and Bow, enabling it to support 2,800 kids – a threefold increase. Two new centres, in Harrow and Hackney, will increase capacity to more than 9,000 students each year.

It is also developing a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation process, ultimately to be reinforced by an independent assessment of its work. With very strong anecdotal evidence already underpinning this programme, we welcome such energy and ambition and will be watching it closely, willing it on.

The Big Picture – What We Spend

We’ve been offering lots of support to schools and other organisations. We’ve also made huge efforts to find new partners and attract more money. We think the numbers here are a good indication of how well things are going.

The Small Print – How We Spend It

Our education experts – both trustees and staff – also sit on boards, – common sense, perhaps, but surprisingly uncommon in practice. Established siblings to see for themselves what works on the ground – common sense, perhaps, but surprisingly uncommon in practice. Our education experts – both trustees and staff – also sit on boards, help recruit staff or select schools, while the rest of us do what we can to champion our best programmes. On some days, this means connecting them with decision makers in government; on others, introducing them to new sources of funding or persuading other trusts to provide financial support.

As they say on TV, every little helps and, over time, this extra input increases the long-term value of our work (and your generosity) by enabling our projects to continually improve and expand and, ultimately, build for themselves a sustainable future, independent of SHINE. Besides, it’s nice to feel wanted.

IntoUniversity is the best, so fun, the best way to learn. The lessons were really exciting, far more than words can say.
The right kind of Snow

Last year, Jon Snow hosted SHINE’s 10th Anniversary Benefit Dinner, helping us raise almost £1 million. We recently caught up with him to find out what he thought.

“At first, I admit I doubted whether SHINE could pull the evening off and raise all that money. The Roundhouse is a brilliant venue but it’s so big; I’d never before been to that kind of event there and I wondered how on earth they’d fill it. However, fill it they did and on the night there was a terrific spirit in the room – people were fantastically generous.”

“Then of course there was the band and the Alex Ferguson dinner. I last saw Status Quo on the night there was a terrific spirit in the room – people were fantastically generous.”

“So ultimately, I felt this was community responsibility really very well expressed and, of course, an absolutely terrific night.”

SO LONG, FAREWELL, AUF WEIDERSEHEN, GOODBYE

We’ve not been shy about our link with the David Beckham Academy (would you?). So it’s with some sorrow that we have to announce the Academy’s closure in Greenwich and the end of this special relationship.

It’s not all bad news, though – David will continue as a Patron of SHINE, while also developing a mobile version of the Academy’s educational and coaching work. As the hundreds of SHINE students invited to the Academy will attest, this uses football-related assignments to test key skills – such as literacy, numeracy and science – to tremendous effect.

Overall, the Academy has donated almost £450,000 to SHINE through the proceeds of its annual Corporate Cup. Naturally we field a team but, in truth, our performance never quite matched our aspirations. Until last year, when the chicks exceeded our (now muted) expectations by reaching the final of the Plate (the competition for the also-rans). No, it’s not the Premiership but still, we can at least now part with our collective heads held high(ish). So farewell and thanks to everybody at the Academy. You were fantastically generous and we were very, very lucky.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

• SHINE on Saturday @ Archbishop Sumner School, which almost doubled the number of students achieving or exceeding the national standard in literacy. And a special high five to …
• ...Asad, who on arrival from Somalia two years ago had only very basic English skills. Now he’s exceeding the national standard in maths, literacy and science. We’re impressed!
• SHINE on Saturday @ Sobraight School, which halved the number of pupils with substandard maths and English – not bad when you consider that 1/3 have special educational needs and many had made no progress at all in the previous two years.
• SHINE on Saturday @ Axis, where not one student is a native English speaker. It still managed to halve the number falling behind at school – some kids even made two years’ progress in maths and English.
• Finally, SHINE on Saturday @ Clapham & Lark Hall School, where 2/3 of students started the project falling way behind in their literacy; by year end, they were outperforming the rest of the school.
Big cloud, shiny lining

Innocent enough, even if the friend was not.

Once upon a time, a small charity asked a big organisation to contribute.

As a result, the trust recently awarded £120,000 towards a new SHINE project – although, arguably, programme over-runner.

The collapse of Lehman Brothers spelled disaster for many, not least the small organisations it helped.

“We also like its focus on education and reading difficulties.”

The new project will start in September, so watch this space.

Thank you to our supporters in 2009

from small seeds...
With those New Year’s Resolutions now gone and long forgotten, perhaps you need some fresh inspiration. Here’s some ways to help SHINE this year, somewhat shoehorned into a convenient acronym.

• Sponsor at table at SHINE’s 2010 Benefit Dinner this November (date tbc).
• Host a fundraising event for SHINE: it could be golf, the theatre or just a few cheeky drinks with the neighbours.
• Introduce SHINE to new independent schools who could host a Serious Fun on Saturday programme.
• Nominate SHINE as your company’s charity partner or its 2010 charity of the year.
• Most time you think about giving to charity, act on that impulse and give to SHINE (because we’re worth it...)
• If you do any or all of the above, consider yourself a bona-fide SHINE star!

S.H.I.N.E.* for SHINE*

SHINE gives our most disadvantaged children and young people a window onto a better future; it gives them a leg up; it gives them a chance. In years to come, hundreds of young people will look back at their time on one of SHINE’s initiatives and say ‘that was the moment when my life changed’.

Sarah Brown, SHINE Patron

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