

World First: Skinners' Kent Academy and the International Baccalaureate Career – Related Program (IBCP)

16/05

Early last week the Skinners' Kent Academy was authorised as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School for the Career Related Program (IBCP). The Principal, Mr Matthew Tompkins said, "Following the completion of the authorisation process and inspection, we are very proud to have been recognised by the International Baccalaureate in such a way. In a world first, as a stand-alone IBCP school, the Academy will be able to continue offering students a unique, dynamic, flexible, forward thinking qualification that looks to prepare students for both the challenges of academia and the world of work."

In order to understand the benefit to the local community and our young people, this article will explore what the IBCP offers, compares it to the courses offered at two other local IB schools, its benefit to students and what the Academy has achieved for the students enrolled in this program.

What is the IBCP – who is it meant for?

The IBCP is an academic option open to students entering their final two years of secondary school. There are two main components to the IBCP: a rigorous academic course-load and a career-related program, which students complete concurrently. These two components are bridged by a set of specially-designed IBCP core requirements.

IBCP students take at least two IB courses, which they may select from any subject group, and also study a world language. At Skinners' Kent Academy, the courses offered seek to respond to the preferences of the majority of students who register an interest in Year 11.

While completing these classes, students also embark on a two-year professional program of study. Skinners' Kent Academy offers the IFS Diploma of Personal Finance (<http://www.ifslearning.ac.uk/>). This program offers the opportunity to gain hands-on professional experience while also staying on track to succeed academically and attend university.

The IBCP Core

The academic and career-related components of the program are tied together by the IBCP core, which comprises the foundational Personal and Professional Skills course, a 50 hour

Service Learning requirement, the Reflective Project, and Language Acquisition course. Personal and Professional Skills, a course specifically developed for the IBCP, focuses on building skills needed to operate successfully in society and in the workplace, an opportunity that makes this program unique in the UK educational context. The career-related portion of the program culminates in a reflective project through which students explore an ethical issue related to their career study. Finally, in keeping with the IB's commitment to creating globally-minded learners, the IBCP requires students to study a modern language over the two years of the program.

There are a few notable differences between the core requirements for the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP), which is offered locally at Tonbridge Grammar School and Sevenoaks School. One of them is the reflective project: unlike the IBDP's Extended Essay, the project can be presented in any format. Students explore an ethical dilemma and use the skills that they have cultivated through their career-related education to find answers. Personal and Professional Skills course helps students develop intercultural understanding, communication and leadership skills, and a personal code of ethics and aims to teach quantifiable and practical skills that students will need in the workplace and beyond.

Overall, the IBCP core is more customisable than the IBDP requirements are because it is meant to connect the student's academic course-load and career-related program.

What are the benefits of the IBCP for students?

One of the major advantages that the IBCP offers students is flexibility: it allows them to both pursue challenging academics and gain professional skills. Unlike any other program available at the secondary school level, the IBCP lets students design their own course of study and prioritises their interests while still providing a structured and rigorous environment.

IBCP graduates are prepared for a wide range of post-secondary options, including going on to university, working in the "real world", and pursuing further professional studies. Many students who may not have chosen the Diploma Programme because their interests lie in professional training choose the IBCP because it offers the best of both worlds. David Barrs, head of the Anglo-European School in the United Kingdom, agrees, telling the UK's Telegraph that the IBCP "opens the IB experience to a wider range of students." IBCP students also become part of their school's IB community and the wider IB family – after graduation, they are welcome to join the 45,000-strong IB global alumni network.

The program also better serves their students because it requires close collaboration between the student and the school. Developing an individualized course of study helps educators

understand what their students are interested in, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how to best reach them.

Skidders Kent Academy and the IBCP

The IBCP has been delivered at the Academy since 2013. Since its inception, students have achieved outstanding results. In the Information Technology in the Global Society course, students have achieved a grade average of 5.2, compared with the course world average of 4.3. The Business and Management course has also achieved outstanding grade average of 5.3 (compared to course world average of 4.5). Forty percent of students have also achieved A and B Grades in the IFS Certificate course. All students who have applied to University have been accepted onto tertiary courses. Further information about the Sixth form, tours and Open days can be found at <http://www.skidderskentacademy.org.uk> or by contacting the Academy on 01892 534377 or info@skidderskentacademy.org.uk.