Gaming industry, teachers and students join forces to encourage the next generation of tech talent

Digital Schoolhouse, the non-profit programme delivered by Ukie, the trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry, hosted a debate developed to help address the digital skills gap, and discuss the role that the technology and gaming industry could play in helping schools addressing the current shortage.

The debate brought together panellists from PlayStation®, which powers the Digital Schoolhouse programme, along with key representatives from SEGA and Warwickshire County Council, recently announced as key sponsors for the initiative, which aims to empower schools to deliver an enriched computing curriculum. SEGA and Warwickshire CC's backing for Digital Schoolhouse underscores the commitment of the key names within the gaming industry to help inspire the next generation of tech talent in the UK and has further supported the rapid growth of the programme, which has expanded by more than 50 per cent over the past twelve months, now reaching around 15,000 pupils.

Kings College London and Townley Grammar School joined the debate, which centred around the current digital skills gap and the role that technology companies could play in helping schools to address it. A second panel with secondary school pupils gave the students' view on the issue, and examined their thoughts on how effective the current English computing curriculum is in encouraging more young people to explore digital careers.

The panel discussion demonstrated key elements that are needed to help motivate and engage teachers and pupils, including the need for more creativity in the curriculum. The student panel backed this up and revealed that whilst most of the panellists were interested in computing and were considering it as a GCSE option, none of them had any intention of continuing with the subject beyond that because they didn't feel that further study in the subject would support or help their future career plans.

Shahneila Saeed, director of Digital Schoolhouse said: "The UK's technology industry is currently growing at a far faster rate than its EU counterparts, but many UK tech companies need to recruit from overseas due to a shortage of UK graduates with the necessary digital skills. With Brexit looming, now is the time for us all to work together to solve the issue and ensure that the UK continues to lead other countries in advances in the fastest growing sector in the world."

Joseph Terry, Gildredge House School Year 9 student said: "Today has shown that the new generation will play a vital role in the future, helping to create new advances like driverless cars. The event has helped me meet so many people that will help me in my career. I feel that we're wasting a chance if we don't use events like this to help solve the problems that we're facing."

John Clark, Executive Vice President of Commercial Publishing for SEGA Europe Ltd, said: "SEGA Europe has a history in working with educational organisations in order to help bridge the skills gap in the UK with regards to the video games industry. The partnership with the Digital Schoolhouse Programme is particularly exciting as it aims to engage the next generation of school children, and their teachers, with the new computing curriculum."

Ukie's Digital Schoolhouse programme uses play-based learning to engage the next generation of pupils and teachers with the computing curriculum. The non-profit initiative brings together expertise from education and the gaming industry to help invigorate computing education, and is powered by PlayStation and sponsored by SEGA and Warwickshire County Council. To find out more about Digital Schoolhouse, visit digitalschoolhouse.org.uk.

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