

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

Stakeholders in the games industry have united behind an initiative to support schools and young people in building digital talent, with SEGA and Warwickshire County Council joining PlayStation to back a non-profit initiative created to bridge the gap between industry and education, preparing the next generation for a digital age.

The Digital Schoolhouse programme, delivered by Ukie, the trade body for the UK's games and interactive entertainment industry and powered by PlayStation, uses play-based learning to engage the next generation of pupils and teachers with the new Computing curriculum. The announcement was made following an event that brought together key stakeholders from PlayStation®, SEGA, Warwickshire County Council, Kings College London and Townley Grammar School, 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 discussion during the event gave the secondary school pupils' view on the issue, 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.

Dr. Jo Twist, CEO of Ukie said: "The bridge between industry and education is vital, as revealed by the repeated requests by the student panellists for more industry presence in their schools. 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."

Warwick Light, UK Managing Director and Vice President of Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe, said: "PlayStation is happy to be partnering with Ukie to bring

Digital Schoolhouse to more schools, and even more children, across the UK than ever before.”

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. This latest 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. The video games industry has a diverse work force across a variety of different professional disciplines and it’s a fantastic opportunity to be able assist Ukie and Digital Schoolhouse in nurturing talent from a young age, not just in computing, but in all the other fields relevant to publishing and development.”

Monica Fogarty, joint managing director, Warwickshire County Council, said: “We are delighted to be sponsoring Ukie's Digital Schoolhouse programme to enable this innovative model to be rolled out into four Warwickshire schools. The county is home to a globally significant cluster of gaming companies in and around Leamington Spa (dubbed "Silicon Spa"), and a strong wider digital technology business community. Programming and computing skills are therefore vitally important to the continued growth of this sector, and it is essential that we are teaching our young people these key skills in an effective and engaging way. Ukie's Digital Schoolhouse programme is therefore a perfect fit for our area.”

Shahneila Saeed, Director, Digital Schoolhouse, said: “The games industry is an incredibly vibrant sector with a huge range of opportunities available – problem is most of the kids don’t know about them and neither do the teachers. Students can’t develop an interest in a sector or job type they don’t know about and neither can teachers provide the appropriate guidance for it. We need to be more visible, reach more children and more teachers. That’s why the backing of the industry and having SEGA and PlayStation on board are so important. They are household names; their names alone will get the students asking questions. And that’s where the power lies. Spark the curiosity within the child so that we can help them satisfy it.”



SEGA and Warwickshire County Council'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. To find out more about Digital Schoolhouse and to support the programme, visit www.digitalschoolhouse.org.uk.

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