

What is xl?

xl is a network of clubs running in schools all over the UK and helps to re-engage young people with education. It supports 14-16 year-olds through their last two years of compulsory schooling and young people can choose to take part as an alternative to a GCSE subject or Standard Grade course. The clubs run for about 3 hours per week during school time, and have 12-15 members.

xl is currently helping over 15,000 young people work towards a better future.



“The xl programme has made a world of difference to these young people. It has shown them, and everyone else, just what they can achieve.”

Mike Blakey, Sheringham High School,
xl club Adviser

Sheringham High School xl club hosted a ‘Historic Railway Experience’ for 60 pupils from the local primary school. After nearly 12 months of preparation, including working closely with North Norfolk Railway, the club staged a day highlighted by a steam train journey from Sheringham to Holt on the heritage railway. They also held themed workshops and a treasure hunt quiz for their young guests.

To deliver the large event, the club members took on administrative and marketing tasks and were involved in the essential work of track and signal maintenance on the historic railway.

xl with The Prince's Trust Information for parents and guardians



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How is xl different from ordinary school lessons?

xl isn't like school lessons. It helps to make learning fun and is voluntary – students join xl only if they want to. It offers a practical way to learn new skills, plan for the future and provides a positive experience of school.

Students take responsibility for running and planning the activities that will make up the xl club programme and are guided and supported by an xl club Adviser¹. Participants are encouraged to review everything that they do on the programme and gain a real sense of achievement about the skills they have gained.

xl is informal, but behind this informality lies a rigorous curriculum which focuses on personal, social and team skills as well as developing competencies and enthusiasm for enterprise, citizenship and employment.

As part of an xl club, participants will get the chance to see their work featured in the xl newsletter published each term. They will also be invited to xl network events, where they will be given the opportunity to meet young people from other clubs in an informal, fun environment.

What kinds of activities do xl club members take part in?

The activities xl club members take part in will depend on the young people in the club. It is their club - they choose the activities and have a say in what interests them and what doesn't. They simply receive guidance and supervision from an xl club Adviser. The most common activities include organising fundraising events, running a small business, getting involved in the local community, visiting companies in the area and attending college courses.

¹ In Scotland, xl clubs have a teacher present as well as an xl Adviser

What do young people learn in an xl club?

xl encourages young people to work with others on a variety of interesting projects and helps them to build confidence, improve problem-solving skills, and find their own style of learning.

During the 2-year programme, students work towards an xl Award which counts towards their Record of Achievement. It focuses on:

- Personal skills and working with others in a team
- Business skills
- Citizenship and community awareness
- Preparation for the world of work and training

Schools in Scotland have the option of accrediting xl via national units in Personal and Social Education. Young people will work towards Higher Still qualifications in Social Awareness and Development, Personal Awareness and Development and Vocational Awareness and Development at Access 3 or Intermediate 1 level.

xl teaches young people to make the most of their strengths and build a future that they can look forward to.

What are the real benefits of xl?

xl has a proven track record. It provides young people with the desire to learn and enables them to make a successful transition into employment, training or further education.

Evaluation of xl has shown that:

- 81% of Advisers think xl has a great deal of impact on school attendance²
- 94% of club members would recommend xl to other young people³
- 80% of club members felt that xl had helped improve their job prospects⁴
- 92% improved their ability to work with others and 87.2% their motivation⁴

At the start of 2003, Ofsted undertook extensive monitoring of xl and the findings were extremely positive. Ofsted concluded that young people showed 'good standards of achievements' and were 'motivated and enthusiastic participants'. Ofsted also found that 'xl represents a very effective alternative curriculum' and 'helps to form positive relationships and effective interaction between staff and young people'.⁵

xl helps to improve attendance and punctuality, behaviour at school as well as confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Students feel encouraged to reach their potential and plan for the future.

² Questions Answered Ltd, xl Network Evaluation, 2001

⁴ The Prince's Trust Evaluation, 2004

³ xl End of Year One Evaluation, The Prince's Trust, 2003

⁵ Extended Monitoring Notebook, Ofsted, 2003

