

10 questions for Ian Fitzpatrick of Daisy Education

For more than a decade Daisy Education, formerly Reading Solutions until a recent rebranding, has partnered with schools to provide award-winning reading development programme DreamBox Reading Plus. Now the team is expanding its offering to include maths alongside literacy, with more than six million pupils using DreamBox Maths across North America.

What was your first job, and how much did it pay? I was a paper boy and it was something like £4.73 per week (that was back in 1991, working seven mornings a week before school!).

What is the best advice or support you've been given in business? Good people deserve to work with good people. That's stuck with me in business and our recruitment and when we choose suppliers, consultants and external agencies we are guided by that. A friend of mine introduced me to the company accountant 10 years ago, they are still our accountant today, and we have a great relationship. I make a lot of introductions based on that ethos.

What are the main changes you've seen in your business/sector, and what are the challenges you're facing? The increased pressures on teaching and reduced funding is a challenge across the education sector. It's a tough time for teachers and schools so we do all we can to help them.

What would your dream job be? I always wanted to be professional footballer, and still like to think there is a season in me. Genuinely though, my job now is amazing. I never thought that when I moved to Newcastle 16-ish years ago, I'd be running a company that has such a positive impact on so many people. From the amazing team I work with at Daisy

Education to the students and teachers we support and the great companies and individuals I have the privilege to work alongside. It is an amazing sector to be in and a true privilege that I don't take for granted.

What advice would you give to someone starting out a career in your sector? Make sure you have an exceptional offer that has a true impact on student outcomes and that you care about the end user. The education sector is a wonderful place to work, but you need to make sure you do the best possible job as you are supporting the education of our future generations.

What makes the North East a good place to do business? I'm not a native Geordie but the people are fantastic and have welcomed me with open arms. The team at Daisy Education are testament to that and you get well supported by the wider business community too.

How important is it for business to play a role in society? I think it is incredibly important, particularly when I think about my business specifically. We work in education, specifically helping children to read. The world is a more challenging place than ever, but I believe that good education and understanding of others is the key to making the world a better place. Reading underpins this so we have a mission to help all children become better readers. We expose children to a wide range of texts to help them see and understand the wider world. We help reduce teacher workload to allow them to do what they do best, teach children and improve outcomes.

I try to give the team at Daisy Education a great place to work that hopefully gives them a satisfying role that then impact we have on education and gives a good work/life balance. You spend most of your week in work, I want that to be as good as an environment as possible.

Outside of work, what are you really good at? Football. Really and good are strong words for that. I'd like to think I'm a

really good husband and father.

Who would play you in a film about your life? Someone like Jack Black as he doesn't take himself too seriously.

Which three people would you invite to a dinner party, and why? Harrison Ford, Ian Wright and Dawn French. Harrison Ford because he was Han Solo and Indiana Jones, the two coolest film characters when I was growing up. Ian Wright because he was a brilliant footballer and is a great pundit who champions women's football (I coached my daughter's team when she was younger and I'm a big advocate of the women's game). Dawn French because she is hilarious. I grew up watching her shows and I imagine she would be great fun at a dinner party.