

The race is on to get young minds into design

adapted from an article by Susan Elkin



- 1 Had you visited the Design Museum shop in London earlier this year with £10 to spend, you might have bought an intriguing children's toy called Dazzle Racer. A self-propelled cylinder, it included a wind-up, elastic-band-powered mechanism, minimal parts (all 100 per cent recycled) and lots of stickers. It was good fun, simple, eye-catching, nostalgic and very original. Designed by a group of six Year-9 and Year-10 boys from Finchley Catholic High School, the toy was the winning entry in the museum's 2015 *Design Ventura* competition, which attracts hundreds of entries nationwide.
- 2 Catherine Ritman Smith, head of learning at the Design Museum, explains why schools participate in this competition: "Teachers like it because the skills are all transferable and it helps to validate the value of design as a subject."
- 3 A new edition of *Design Ventura* starts when a single-word theme is announced in the summer. This year it is "Change". Schools work with groups to produce imaginative design ideas for a product in simple materials that could sell for £10 in the Design Museum shop. Participating schools then register by November and eventually submit their design idea. Along the way there is training for teachers and mentoring for students from designers. The icing on the cake is when the winners see their design on sale in the spring of the following year.
- 4 "One of the really useful things about this competition," says teacher Liam Hourican, "is that there's 18 element because the product is going on sale for real and the boys had to learn about budgeting and marketing, as well as designing their game."

- 5 Profits go to charity. “The winning team chooses where it wants the profits to go,” says Ritman Smith. It costs the schools nothing to participate in *Design Ventura*; the professional designers who help out in the later stages of the project provide their services for free.
- 6 Ritman Smith adds: “Design technology has become a tricky subject to make a case for, and we’ve heard of departments closing in some schools. We find that if pupils take part in *Design Ventura* in Year 9 it can be the trigger which leads them to opt for it at GCSE¹), so we are helping to keep alive something which is crucial to industry and entrepreneurship.”

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