

MD Catherine Amongst Royalty

MD Catherine Franks was graced in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew, Duke of York during his visit for the opening of the £3 million Goldmine Building in Walsall, home to Walsall Studio School which opened its doors to students on 4th September 2013.

Catherine was amongst the few selected business leaders from Walsall to attend a luncheon with the Prince, Patron of the Studio Schools Trust, alongside staff from Walsall Studio School and the Vine Trust who built the Goldmine building and are responsible for the setting-up of the Studio School.

'Meeting the Prince was very exciting, and was my second royal encounter – the first time I was a waitress at a luncheon for HRH the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh this time I was a guest! Prince Andrew is passionate about ensuring that young people leave school employment ready which is something that seriously needs addressing and I firmly believe that the Studio School model is the answer.'

Catherine has been a supporter of Walsall's new Studio School since the Vine Trust's CEO Kevin Davis first told her of his idea. She has recently been appointed governor and agrees wholeheartedly with the concept of Studio Schools; to prepare students for the world of work with an innovative strategy differing from mainstream schools. Walsall Studio School provide students with a 9am-5pm working environment with a combination of academic study and the chance to develop the crucial employability skills that today's dynamic workplaces demand. One of the ways this will be achieved is through working closely with surrounding businesses to create opportunities through projects and placements for students.

One of the first projects that the new students will undertake is working with Strand Hardware to review the sustainability of packaging; focusing on reducing packaging as well as shifting towards environmentally friendly packaging solutions.

'I am very excited to be part of what is an innovative approach to preparing students for what is expected when entering working life. What the school is doing will provide the vital skills and knowledge in a realistic way to create entrepreneurs of the future.'

Catherine Franks, MD



Prince Andrew with Kevin Davis the
Vine Trust CEO



A laugh or two with the Prince



Catherine Franks and other business
leaders at the luncheon