



## **Nikki King, Chair of the Skills For Life Trust, Is Honoured For Services To Education**

Nikki King, the Chair of the Skills For Life Trust, comprising five academies in Kent and who was formerly awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) for Services to the Road Transport Industry, has been honoured for the second time with further recognition by receiving a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) for her Services to Education.

Nikki's successful career in the motor industry soared in 1996 when she started Isuzu Truck (UK), the UK arm of Isuzu Motors Japan, one of the world's largest truck manufacturers. Under her leadership, ITUK achieved a £35million turnover and Nikki pioneered flexible working, especially for female staff who represented 50% of her management team.

In 2013, on completing a sale of the company to IMJ, which had previously owned just 15% of the UK company, Nikki retired from the motor industry, determined to find a way to make businesses and the education sector work together to ensure a skillful, employable and successful future generation.

"In many ways, the current curriculum mandated by Government is just not fit for purpose to equip young people with the skills, both soft and academic, that employers require in the world of work. For example, IT is not considered a core subject which is quite unthinkable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" says Nikki.

In 2013 Nikki was approached to become the Chair of the Skills for Life (formerly Greenacre) Trust and she saw this as an opportunity to show what could be done in our schools. "We educate our young people in our five academies from the day they step into reception classes to work towards the adults they will become, as contributing successful people, whatever path in life they will choose."

Its unique programme includes regular careers assemblies where companies discuss all the jobs available in their own field of commerce. Business mentors are provided from Year 9 to assist young people to make career decisions and help them with CV writing, interview techniques and how to behave in the world of work. Additional lessons on Life Skills, Sales Techniques, and Customer Service are provided with all the necessary soft skills woven into the entire curriculum. Good mental health as well as physical health is a priority in all of the schools.

Since 2013, Nikki has worked tirelessly in her new field of education. She was the first non-teacher to be appointed to the Head Teacher Board for the London and the South East Region and she has become a trouble shooter for the Department of Education working with a number of Academy Trusts that are not performing well.

Andrew Reese, CEO of the Skills for Life Trust says “It is clear that Nikki has been instrumental in helping us create a Trust of five successful schools, all of whom have improved, most beyond recognition. I am convinced that this would not have been possible without her drive and determination.

“For those who are able to share her passion and vision, the outlook appears extremely rosy. The support which our schools are getting from the central service teams with everyone signed up to the Skills for Life vision would not have been possible without Nikki's creativity and vast knowledge. She is a leading light and hopefully the recognition she is about to be honoured with will enable her to more widely influence the education sector.”

Nikki continues to be a personal mentor to a number of students as she was when CEO of Isuzu Truck UK and is fully committed to transforming the education – and lives - of the Skills For Life Trust pupils.

She concludes “I consider myself so blessed that in my lifetime I have been able to work in a paid role in an industry I was passionate about – the commercial vehicle industry - and was awarded recognition in the form of an OBE, a great honour.

“Then, when I thought I was retired and ready for my slippers and a comfortable chair, I was doubly blessed to start again in an unpaid role that I am now equally passionate about and have been similarly honoured. I accept this honour on behalf of all the wonderful, committed staff at the Skills for Life Trust and thank them for putting up with me and eagerly adopting my “out of the “box” vision.

“I really hope that central government will begin to take notice of what we have achieved as I am convinced that we are already at the forefront of their reported new direction on education.”

Ends October 10<sup>th</sup> 2020

Notes for Editors:

- The SFL Trust , originally the Greenacre Trust named after its first academy, came into being in January 2014 with the aim of improving governance and results. Greenacre Academy had always been a GOOD school but in order to take it to the next level change was needed. Nikki was introduced to Andrew Reese and took on her current role.
- Nikki was adamant about incorporating Skills for Life and was also passionate about establishing central service teams so that Head teachers could concentrate on raising standards. Today, just under seven years later, the Trust has five GOOD schools, four of which are very challenging.

- There are six central service teams - Finance, HR, Admin, Skills for Life, IT and Data - who have fully played their part in supporting the five schools. Although many trusts and schools are struggling financially, the SFL Trust is financially very sound.
- Using her immense powers of persuasion, Nikki ensured the Trust was re-named the Skills for Life Trust, representing the values, mission and ethos of the SFL Trust.
- The Skills for Life agenda has improved relations between pupils, pupils and staff and also between staff. People have become more respectful and supportive of each other. The regular careers assemblies in both the SFL Trust primary and secondary schools, many of which were organised by Nikki, opened the pupils' eyes to the possibilities in the world of work.
- Nikki initiated the mentoring strategy, whereby professionals from the business world mentor the SFL Trust's secondary students. With the awful events currently affecting the world and its economies, this strategy has the possibility to influence the careers of the pupils significantly more than anticipated or hoped for.