<u>What should we teach six formers?</u>

The world of digital data and Artificial Intelligence poses interesting questions about what young people need to learn and how much they should be able to rely on their personal computers and phones.

Clearly everyone needs to be given a basic training in how computers work and how they are programmed, as so much of modern life requires use of these items. Using AI in teaching and preparing answers is going to happen, so pupils need to be trained to check sources, question what the AI answer says, and to develop an understanding independent of the computer. There will need to be more reliance on exams rather than coursework to check what young people know for themselves when the computer is turned off.

As an employer I have come to value enthusiasm for the job in hand, an interest in the issues and subject matter of the job, a sensibly critical approach to data and analysis and above all honesty about what the person is doing. A lack of knowledge or training can be remedied, but a lack of interest cannot. Ideally you find someone who has immersed themselves in what you are doing because it is their hobby as well as their future job. People who are really good at things do a lot of them. The more I practice the luckier I get.

Six formers do need to hone their language skills to communicate and to analyse problems . They need maths and statistics to handle data and resolve problems. Above that they can get started on more advanced study for whatever they wish to do as a degree or technical qualification.

I would not wish to stop young people studying a few subjects in greater depth as preparation for university, or specialising in technical qualifications to set them up for a good job at 18. The A and T levels have a role going forward. Equipping all better in maths and English can be achieved by doing more before 16 and changing the maths and English options for GCSE.