

## **Robert Owens's progressive influence on education has benefitted Lipson Community College.**

Robert Owen took over the New Lanark Mill and revolutionised the living and working conditions of his workers. New Lanark Mill before Robert Owen instigated his education system had practically no education system, as by the time their education took place they were had already worked a 13 and a half hour day and so were falling asleep.

So when Robert Owen brought the New Lanark Mill he began to educate the children of the workers in the mill. He banned physical punishment (within his mill, but also campaigned against as a whole), stopped the working of children 10 years or under which for the time was revolutionary as working class children were expected to be working, as this removed any tendencies for developing bad habits. He also provided all children with a good education, improved housing conditions of all his employees. He encouraged social responsibility, and provided infant education (which was essentially a nursery for the younger children of the female workers) – he is now regarded as the founder of infant education in Britain. Robert Owen provided health care and a sickness fund which meant that if his workers were ill they could get better and get working again. He believed that people worked better when they work for each other- an ethos that is now reflected within our own school.

Lipson and the majority of the schools in the western world use the education system that he provided for his workers back in 1830's. For example, physical punishment (caning etc.) has been banned officially in all schools since 1998 due to his work and the work of others to ban it (according to a BBC news report from the time.) Robert Owen required his teachers to be friendly and polite to pupils which creates a mutual relationship between the taught and the teacher. This is much like the Lipson family; which also enhances one of the co-operative values within the school encouraging solidarity, working together to reach a common goal. If pupils and teachers work together they can reach their expected grades, which also boosts the teacher and the school; in terms of how many pupils are reaching their FFT grade for example. He encouraged 'having a consult between the teachers and the taught this opens the floor to any queries or question that the pupils may have' which similar to our current use of Circle time.

Robert Owen asked his staff to ensure that 'Questions to be always answered in a kind rational manner', which Lipson now recreates by allowing as many resources to be available as possible. 'No regular in-door hours for school...' Owen wanted the children to have an understanding about the outdoors and nature and not to be stuck in a classroom. Just as all schools now have PE lessons however he also believed in the outdoor lessons being run to a military standing to teach the children obedience and for the boys to bring them up and know how to fight for their country. He also had dancing lessons again to improve obedience, manner and their appearance. He felt by having military discipline and be able to dance and appreciate music that the children had an all round better character. This essentially meant that he felt, creativity helped to develop the mind. He also wanted learning to be enjoyable so the children did not dread coming to lessons. However, now being in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century where learning is, to some, more of a hindrance than a help, inventions such as the X-Box and Facebook can deter from learning goals. Lipson tries to amend this through giving pupils a range of options of what they want to learn and help them achieve what they want to be. Which again is also an example of solidarity and also self- help, helping others to help yourself.

Robert Owen felt as shown by his principles in his school that all children are important no matter what class they are as they make society more sustainable. This statement is practically Lipson's ethos that they try to promote to people and potential students wanting to enter this school. Under the current Government this is being lost, so the current generations and the future generations must work together to keep the memory and work of Robert Owen alive – it is Co-operative Trust Schools and Co-operative Academies that can achieve this.