

NEWS

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Lord Grade inspires a new generation

One of the biggest names in British film and television took time out from his busy schedule on Wednesday to meet with students at a local college. Our Community Editor **MORT SMITH**, tagged along

LORD Grade, who is chairman of Pinewood Studios, spent nearly three hours at Chalfonts Community College in Chalfont St Peter talking to students and looking at what they have been creating as part of a programme called 'Inspiring the Future'.

The scheme, which is the brainchild of entrepreneur Nick Chambers, is designed to give state school pupils the chance to talk to industry leaders to help them decide on a future career.

Mr Chambers said: "We wanted to level the playing field for state school pupils – so it's fantastic that we've managed to persuade people of the calibre of Lord Grade to take part."

Lord Michael Grade has held many of the top jobs in British film and broadcasting including chairman of the BBC, chief executive of Channel 4 and chief executive of ITV before taking up his current post with the Pinewood Shepperton Studios group.



He was introduced to students in the college's main hall by headteacher Sue Tanner who described Lord Grade as one of the leading figures in film and television.

She said: "We're really privileged today to welcome Lord Grade and his colleagues and to hear their thoughts and advice on careers in this industry."

"It's so important that somebody of his reputation has come here. Sometimes the creative arts are overlooked by government and Lord Grade can inspire our students in this area and give them confidence."

Lord Grade explained how the entertainment business was basically his family business – his father Leslie

Grade and his uncles, Lord Lew Grade and Lord Bernard Delfont – were all major players in film, theatre and television.

Asked by one student what his first job was in the business, he said that he was a partner in a theatrical agency representing some of Britain's top actors.

He said: "I wasn't terribly good at that – one of my colleagues was working with Alec Guinness came to me for advice when he discovered that the actor had been chosen to play a role in a new film in the 1970s but the production company had wanted to put him on a percentage of the film's takings rather than pay him up front."

"I told him categorically not to accept the deal – get the money up front, I said. Two weeks later, the



■ **AND ACTION:** Lord Grade tells students at Chalfonts Community College about his career in film and broadcasting; (left) students from the performing arts course put on a show for Lord Grade; (inset) with Chalfonts Community College head Sue Tanner

Photos by Mort Smith

chap came back to say that Guinness had read the script, loved it and had agreed to the percentage deal.

"As it turned out, it's just as well he ignored my advice – the film was *Star Wars* and Guinness's first royalty cheque was about \$6million!"

Lord Grade went on to say that the best advice he could give to anyone looking for a career in the media was to hone their critical faculties.

"Every film, every TV programme, is made up of thousands of decisions – and it's important to understand why those decisions are made and how they work. You need to try and get inside the head of the film-maker."

He added that those who were successful in the media were the ones who learned how to handle rejection and not be put off by failures.

He said: "Go after your dream and don't give up – you get lots of rejections in this business but it only

takes one 'yes' for you to get a foot on the ladder."

After this talk, Lord Grade and other senior members of Pinewood staff chatted informally to students before touring the college to watch a show put on by performing arts students, to see short films made by media students and to look at an exhibition of work by arts students.

As he headed back to Pinewood Lord Grade said: "I've been really impressed by the quality and creativity of the young people here. They've been really intelligent in the way they've gone about their work. It's very encouraging."

■ If you would like to know more about Inspiring the Future, visit the website at www.inspiringthefuture.org.

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