



Leading the charge

In the midst of a new partnership, the Independent Schools Examination Board is reshaping the landscape of assessments with digital innovations to help future generations succeed

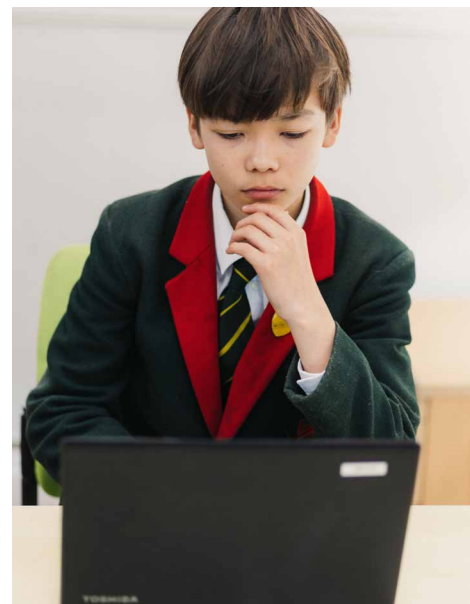
WHILE YOU MAY NOT JUMP AT THE idea of adding more screen time to your child's routine, one organisation believes that embracing aspects of digitalisation can improve the education landscape. A household name in the world of exams and assessments, the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) has been providing Britain's schools with entrance examinations for more than 120 years and is now looking to widen its impact on the sector as a whole.

Spearheaded by CEO Julia Martin, the heritage organisation recently entered into a partnership with fellow industry pioneer Century Tech, and through this collaborative

effort plans to lead the way in innovating products, qualifications and systems that help future generations succeed beyond the bounds of singular exams. It sounds ambitious: could this approach supercharge learning in schools? *Tatler* sat down with ISEB's inspiring CEO to find out more about the partnership with Century Tech and her vision for the future.

Coming from a background of product innovation and digital transformation, what was your vision for ISEB?

ISEB is known for the Common Entrance (CE) exam, an exam I had actually taken myself, so the opportunity to lead such a



renowned organisation was a huge privilege. I'm in a unique position of being a female CEO of a heritage organisation with a remit of innovation in every aspect, and I was aware of the access we have to wonderful resources and fabulous teachers and ideas, so my thinking process was: 'What else can we do to support education more widely?' Ultimately, we want to make other people feel as excited about education as we do. If we can become truly diverse and shift our assessments to reward achievement and progress instead of simply representing a child with a result or a number, we might be on track with leaving the world, and education, a better place than we found it.

ISEB and Century Tech have entered into an exciting partnership, and we've seen the fruits of this in the updated Common Pre-Test. How do you plan to further impact the education sector?

This partnership is about exploring the boundaries of what technology can do to make a real difference in assessments. We want to examine the ways digitalisation can advance how we cater to neurodiversity and special educational needs and disabilities. The Common Pre-Test seemed like a natural place to bring those innovations to the fore and begin to lead the research into assessment design and genuine equity. We're working with top academics to increase our knowledge and diversify the frameworks available to schools with assessments like the ISEB Project Qualification (iPQ). Pair this with Century Tech's world-changing computer- and AI-based systems, and



Julia Martin (right) with Century Tech's CEO, Priya Lakbani OBE

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it makes for a brilliant collaboration. We do what we do best, and they do what they do best, and the aim is that our candidates and our schools reap the benefits.

You mentioned the Common Pre-Test and iPQ as a shift away from traditional paper

assessments. Where do you and Century Tech hope to take the future of assessments?

At the moment, there are a few benchmarks that are used to give pupils admission. The iPQ makes those benchmarks broader by allowing pupils to tailor projects around their own interests. Through the project, we've seen pupils design websites and publish books from a single stimulus. We're now looking at how bite-sized qualifications, for example, can cumulatively build a picture of a child. Instead of examining traditional subject knowledge, let's build a really holistic picture, taking into account things like creativity and problem-solving skills. If we can use technology to help showcase all of those different things alongside different grades and competencies, how much more powerful would that be?

There are so many exciting things in the pipeline for ISEB and Century Tech, and it's clear that your shared values only strengthen

the innovations. What's coming up next?

At the moment we're looking at admissions – but really that's just one aspect of a child's journey – and thinking about how we as an assessment board can do more to support children. It's not about testing more, it's about transparency and thinking holistically. ISEB has an online store where we're publishing our past papers and creating even more resources for schools, teachers and pupils to engage with. We're going to keep doing Continued Professional Development (CPD) training for teachers and begin to create communities for them to connect and share. Our new website features a dedicated Families Hub, which champions wellbeing and provides a range of advice and guidance as well as practice materials for families to use at home. Parents and guardians can also visit the website to find out more about how to register their child for the CPT and stay up to date with our next moves. We have a lot of exciting things coming up.

Bound by a shared passion for education and innovation, it's clear that together ISEB and Century Tech will leave a lasting impact on the education industry. Ambitious, certainly – but this is a partnership that promises real change.



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To find out how to register your child for the new Common Pre-Test and to sign up for industry updates, please visit iseb.co.uk/cpt. Here you can also download resources, tests and guides to help with your child's journey