

Careers statutory guidance: At a glance checklist and guide for school leaders

This document provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of schools outlined in the publication [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: Statutory guidance for schools and guidance for further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent training providers \(May 2025\)](#).

ELEMENT OF CAREERS LEADERSHIP	✓	REQUIREMENT	SUPPORT SIGNPOSTING
Careers leadership		Our school has a trained Careers Leader	Careers Leader training The Careers & Enterprise Company
Careers programme		<p>We have a written careers programme that is structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and underpinned by progressive learning outcomes</p> <p>Our careers programme is published on the school website</p> <p>Careers is featured in the staff CPD programme</p> <p>Our Careers Advisers are qualified to an appropriate level</p>	<p>Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Careers Learning Journeys)</p> <p>The Careers & Enterprise Academy The Careers & Enterprise Company</p> <p>Careers Guidance in Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Best Practice and Commissioning Independent Career Guidance Services</p>
Strategic planning		We have a current strategic careers plan that is aligned to wider school priorities and regularly monitored by the SLT and governing body	Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan
Governance		<p>Careers is a regular agenda item at governance meetings</p> <p>We have a careers link governor</p>	<p>Careers Education: A Guide for secondary school governors</p> <p>Governors: Introduction to careers module via The Careers & Enterprise Academy</p>

Quality assurance		<p>We have undertaken a Careers Impact internal leadership review</p> <p>The SLT considers results from the Future Skills Questionnaire</p> <p>The progress and impact of careers provision are regularly reported to the SLT or governing body</p>	<p>Careers Impact internal leadership review CEC Resource Directory</p> <p>Future Skills Questionnaire: The Careers & Enterprise Company</p> <p>Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision</p>
Learner records		<p>We keep records at an individual learner level of involvement in the careers programme</p>	<p>Compass+ Help Centre: The Careers & Enterprise Company</p>
Destinations data		<p>Learner destinations data (including learner aspirations, intended destinations, sustained and longer-term destinations) is regularly analysed by the SLT</p>	<p>Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision</p>
Meeting the needs of all learners/tackling disadvantage		<p>Careers is embedded in our work to tackle disadvantage</p>	<p>Driving equity and tackling disadvantage through your careers provision: Educator Guide</p>
Provider access legislation		<p>We have a current provider access policy in place to ensure that ALL learners have an opportunity to learn about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships</p> <p>The provider access policy statement is published on the website</p>	<p>Understanding how to embed progressive encounters with further and higher education resource and checklist</p> <p>Provider Directory tool</p>
Work experience		<p>We are aware of and planning for the planned work experience guarantee (September 2026)</p>	<p>Modern Work Experience</p> <p>Understanding how to embed progressive work experiences resource and checklist</p>
Parent and carer engagement		<p>Parent and carer engagement is embedded throughout our careers programme</p>	<p>Resources and support from the CEC, including Parental Engagement in Careers CPD</p> <p>Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision (Careers Learning Journeys)</p>

Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: Statutory guidance for schools

Updated requirement: Careers Leader training and support

Every institution **should** appoint an appropriately trained Careers Leader to develop and direct the careers programme, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. The Careers Leader **should** have the skills and commitment and support from their Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including protected time and sufficient budget to carry out the role effectively.

The Department for Education (DfE) strongly recommends that schools engage with the [DfE's funded, flexible training offer](#), which is designed to support the growth of Careers Leaders at all levels. This includes training for new Careers Leaders, top-up training for experienced Careers Leaders, and senior leadership training focused on high-quality careers provision as a vehicle for wider school improvement.

All secondary schools **should** take the opportunity to join their local Careers Hub.

Reflection:

Does your school have a trained Careers Leader?

Does your school actively engage with the regional Careers Hub?

Signpost:

Access [fully funded flexible Careers Leader Training](#).

Find out more about Careers Hubs [here](#).

Updated requirement: Careers programme (Careers Learning Journeys)

Every school **should** have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance, structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, that is known and understood by learners, parents and carers, staff, those in governance roles, employers and other agencies.

- Every school **should** have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of those in governance roles, the headteacher/leadership and the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader responsible for it
- The careers programme **should** be tailored to the needs of learners, sequenced appropriately, underpinned by learning outcomes and linked to the whole-institution development plan. It **should** also set out how parents and carers will be engaged throughout
- The careers programme **should** be published on the institution's website and communicated in ways that enable learners, parents and carers, staff and employers to access and understand it
- The programme **should** be regularly evaluated using feedback from learners, parents and

carers, teachers/subject staff, and other staff who support learners, Careers Advisers and employers, to increase its impact

DfE expects headteachers, principals and governing boards to support their careers team, especially their Careers Leader, and to invest in personal guidance provided by a qualified Careers Adviser. This will allow the continued delivery of high-quality, progressive careers programmes that support all learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve and thrive.

Personal guidance is a critical element of a careers programme:

- Every learner **should** have at least one personal guidance meeting with a Careers Adviser by the age of 16, and a further meeting by the age of 18. Meetings **should** be scheduled in the careers programme to meet the needs of learners. Schools **should** make sure that Careers Advisers (internal and external) providing personal guidance to learners are trained to the appropriate level.

Reflection:

Do you have a written-down careers programme that is structured around the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and underpinned by progressive learning outcomes?

Is the personal guidance offer delivered by Careers Advisers 'trained to the appropriate level'?

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Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#).

Signpost all staff to the free training offer (including modules for Careers Leaders at all levels, special educational needs coordinators and teaching staff) via [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Access the [UK Register of Career Development Professionals](#), held by the Career Development Institute, to search for an appropriately trained Careers Adviser who can deliver a particular service or activity, such as personal guidance.

Requirement: Sharing your careers programme

Schools **must** publish online the following information about their careers programme:

- The name and contact details of the Careers Leader
- A summary of the careers programme, including details of how learners, parents, teaching staff and employers can access information about it
- How the institution measures and assesses the programme's impact on learners
- The date by which will review this information.

This information **should** relate to how the institution is meeting the requirements and expectations set out in current statutory guidance, in particular demonstrating how they are working towards meeting all eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Schools **should** also incorporate the policy statement on provider access that they **must** publish under section 42B of the Education Act 1997.

Reflection:

Is your careers programme published on the school website?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#).

New requirement: Strategic careers plan

Headteachers, principals and those in governance roles **should** all be actively engaged in setting the direction for a whole-institution approach to careers guidance, and give explicit backing to the institution's careers programme.

An effective Careers Leader **should** work with senior leaders to ensure the careers programme is informed by a strategic careers plan aligned to school priorities.

The careers programme **should** be aligned with the institution's vision, priorities and development plans. This helps to establish a whole-institution approach where the careers programme can play an important part in addressing wider improvement priorities, including attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, inclusion and attainment.

Reflection:

Is there a current strategic careers plan that is aligned to wider school priorities and regularly monitored by the SLT and governing body?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to create a strategic careers plan](#).

Updated requirement: Governance

Every school **should** have a member of its governing body who takes a strategic interest in careers education and guidance and encourages employer engagement.

The governing body **should** provide clear advice and guidance on which the school leader can base a strategic careers plan which meets the legal or contractual requirements of the school. The plan **should** be developed in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks and informed by the requirements and expectations set out in statutory guidance. This plan **should** show how the careers programme will be implemented and how its impact will be measured.

The governing body **must** make sure that independent careers guidance is provided to all learners throughout their secondary education (11 to 18-year-olds), and learners aged up to 25 with an education, health and care plan, and that it:

- is represented in an impartial manner, showing no bias or favouritism towards a particular institution, education or work option
- includes information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and technical education routes
- is guidance that the person giving it, considers will promote the best interests of the learners to whom it is given

The governing body **must** also make sure that arrangements are in place to provide six encounters with a provider of technical education or apprenticeships for years 8 to 13 learners.

Reflection:

Is careers a regular agenda item at governance meetings?

Is there a careers link governor?

Signpost:

Share the resource [Careers Education: A Guide for secondary school governors](#).

Signpost all governors to the free online module [Governors: Introduction to careers via The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#).

Updated requirement: Quality assurance, continuous improvement and impact evaluation

From September 2025, DfE expects all institutions to use the [updated Gatsby Benchmarks](#).

DfE strongly recommends that schools use the [Future Skills Questionnaire \(FSQ\)](#) as an evaluation tool for their careers programmes.

Institutions **should** ensure the quality assurance and continuous improvement of their careers programmes. **DfE strongly recommends the use of the [Careers Impact System](#), which supports a quality assured, sustainable and strategic approach to careers leadership and establishes a shared and standardised language of quality improvement for careers aligned to school improvement. Schools can undertake a free Careers Impact internal leadership review via [Compass](#) or [Compass+](#).**

DfE also strongly recommends that all schools work towards the national [Quality in Careers Standard](#) to support the development of their

careers programme. This external assessment allows independent judgement of the quality of careers provision, including its impact on learners' career-related learning. Schools can gain formal accreditation of their careers programme through the Quality in Careers Standard, which is the national quality award for all aspects of careers education and guidance.

Ofsted is proposing to introduce a renewed education inspection framework and changes to inspection methodology, alongside a report card, from autumn 2025 to deliver more information for parents on the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and proportionate accountability for staff.

In the meantime, institutions **should** continue to refer to Ofsted's [Education inspection framework](#) and the individual handbooks for [maintained schools and academies](#) and [further education and skills providers](#). The education inspection framework includes careers guidance as part of a personal development judgement.

Reflection:

Have you undertaken a Careers Impact internal leadership review?

Do you make effective use of FSQ insights and data within quality assurance, continuous improvement and impact evaluation?

Have the progress and impact of your careers provision been recently reported to the SLT or governing body?

Signpost:

Get started with your [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) via [Compass](#) or [Compass+](#).

Access the resource [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#).

New requirement: Systematic record-keeping

Schools **should** keep systematic records of the participation of learners in all aspects of their careers programme, including the individual advice given to each learner and any subsequent agreed decisions.

For learners who change schools during the secondary phase, information about participation and the advice given previously **should** be integrated into a learner's records, where this information is available. Records **should** begin to be kept from the first point of contact or from the point of transition.

Reflection:

Are you keeping records at an individual learner level of involvement in the careers programme?

Signpost:

[Compass+](#) users can keep systematic records of learners' participation in career activities, and advice given.

Updated requirement: Destinations data

In the updated statutory guidance (May 2025) DfE has removed the expectation to track the destinations of young people who left up to three years before, to allow resources to be focused on helping current learners to secure and sustain a destination. Sustained and longer-term destinations data continues to be valuable and **should** inform the evaluation of careers programmes and help schools to build and maintain alumni networks.

Schools **should** collect, maintain and use accurate data for each learner on their aspirations, intended and immediate education, and training or employment destinations, to inform personalised support.

Schools **should** use sustained and longer-term destinations data as part of their evaluation process, and use alumni to support their careers programme.

DfE recommends that schools support local authorities with Risk of NEET Indicators (RONI) work to drive improvements to prevent students from becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) and support effective post-16 transitions. This can support better join-up to share destinations data for reporting on the Gatsby Benchmarks, via Compass+, and RONI processes.

Reflection:

Has learner destinations data (including learner aspirations, intended destinations, sustained and longer-term destinations) been recently analysed by the SLT?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision](#).

Access aggregated sustained and longer-term destinations data at the following web pages: [Longer term destinations](#) and [16-18 destination measures](#).

Compass+ users can access [this Help Centre article](#) for support with making effective use of the 'Interests and Destinations' section of Compass+.

Updated Requirement: Meeting the needs of all learners

Institutions **should** tailor careers activities and educational goals to the needs of each learner, including any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and those who are absent.

Institutions **should** provide any additional support that may be needed to help young people navigate these barriers to career progress.

Where learners have EHCPs, their annual reviews from Year 9 onwards **must** include a focus on preparing for adulthood, including employment.

Reflection:

Is careers embedded in your work to tackle disadvantage?

Signpost:

Access the resource [Driving equity and tackling disadvantage through your careers provision: Educator Guide](#).

Updated requirement: Provider access legislation

Institutions **must** explain technical and academic pathways without any bias towards a particular route. Schools with sixth forms **should** take care that their own sixth form is not promoted disproportionately compared to alternative academic and technical study options. The focus **should** be on the individual learner and what is best for them. All young people **must** be able to explore all future pathways equitably. The focus is now on using information to inform decision-making.

Schools **must** comply with the provider access legislation and ensure that every learner, whatever their ambitions, has at least six opportunities to meet providers of technical education or apprenticeships during Years 8 to 13.

Every school **must** publish a policy statement setting out their arrangements for provider access and ensure that it is followed.

- Two encounters for learners during the 'first key phase' (Year 8 or 9) that are mandatory for all learners to attend, to take place any time during Year 8 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 9
- Two encounters for learners during the 'second key phase' (Year 10 or 11) that are mandatory for all learners to attend, to take place any time during Year 10 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 11
- Two encounters for learners during the 'third key phase' (Year 12 or 13) that are mandatory for the school to put on but optional for

learners to attend, to take place any time during Year 12 or between 1 September and 28 February during Year 13

These six encounters are to be timed to inform consideration of post-14, post-16 and post-18 options and progression to the next stage of education or training.

Reflection:

Is there a current provider access policy in place to ensure that ALL learners have an opportunity to learn about approved technical qualifications or apprenticeships?

Do all encounters with further and higher education providers meet the updated Gatsby definition of 'meaningful' for Benchmark 7?

Signpost:

Access the resource and checklist [Understanding how to embed progressive encounters with further and higher education](#).

Access the [Provider Directory](#) tool to find organisations in your area that can deliver encounters with further and higher education.

Read more about the [Provider Access Legislation here](#).

Updated requirement: Work experience

From September 2025, all institutions **should** adopt the strengthened benchmark (Benchmark 6).

The government's long-term commitment is to introduce a guarantee of two weeks' worth of modern work experience for every young person.

From September 2025 schools **should** be planning and, where able, reforming their work experience programmes so that all learners can benefit from the opportunities, development and learning that work experience provides. DfE will set out more details of the work experience guarantee in due course, including who is responsible and accountable for delivery, the support available nationally and locally, and associated delivery plans and implementation timelines.

This **should** include consideration of how to build the meaningful experiences of workplaces, delivered under Benchmark 6, into a structured work experience programme.

Every learner **should** have first-hand experiences of workplaces to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.

- By the age of 16, every learner **should** have had meaningful experiences of workplaces.
- By the age of 18, every learner **should** have had at least one further meaningful experience.

Reflection:

Are you aware of the planned work experience guarantee (September 2026)?

Are work experiences underpinned by relevant learning outcomes that build on prior learning and experiences?

Signpost:

Read the [Modern Work Experience](#) section of the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) website to find out more about modern work experience.

Access the resource and checklist [Understanding how to embed progressive employer encounters and work experiences](#).

Undertake a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) with a particular focus on Theme 5.

Updated requirement: Parent and carer engagement

Every institution **should** have a clear approach to engaging parents and carers embedded throughout the careers programme. There **should** be a focus not only on sharing information, but on supporting parents and carers to make the best use of it and to get involved in any opportunities offered.

Reflection:

Is parent and carer engagement embedded throughout your careers programme?

Signpost:

Access [resources](#) and support from the CEC, including [Parental Engagement in Careers CPD \[continuing professional development\]](#).

Access the resource [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision \(Careers Learning Journeys\)](#).