

GATSBY BENCHMARK 5

Encounters with employers and employees

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace.

- **Students should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer every year between years 7-13.**
- **Work with your regional LEP to make sure you are aligning to the strategic economic plan of the region.**

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Research from the Education and Employers Taskforce shows that a young person who has four or more meaningful encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training and can earn up to 22% more during their career.
- The 2016 Education and Skills Survey reported “a gap between education and the preparation people need for their future,” as well as “a gap between the skills needed and those people have”. Employer encounters help address these gaps in skills and knowledge.
- Social background has a profound effect on progression in learning and work. Expanding employer encounters broadens students’ horizons for action and fosters community cohesion. The King’s College London’s Aspires project found that students with low social capital stand to benefit most from improved careers education and links between education and employers.
- Structuring employer encounters within the school curriculum strengthens aspirations and attainment. It supports students to take action to achieve their full potential.
- New jobs are emerging, many in growing sectors like digital technology. First-hand encounters expand a student’s understanding of areas of growth.
- The Bank of England estimates up to 15 million jobs in the UK are under threat of automation over the next 2 decades. It is vital that students have first-hand contact with employers to help their understanding of the skills needed for their futures.
- There are significant ongoing weaknesses in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) talent-base, including under-representation of women and minority groups. Well-planned employer encounters can help address this imbalance.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- Employers and schools work together in creative ways to ensure students build a rich picture of the world of work and are well prepared to take up workplace opportunities. Schools provide first hand encounters with employers as part of careers and enterprise programmes for years 7 to 13 and celebrate these links in their prospectuses and on their websites. They build sustainable relationships with large and small employers and plan mentoring, careers talks, mock interviews, enterprise competitions and workplace visits. The encounters are well planned and help to increase student enthusiasm and confidence. The Gatsby Charitable Foundation has defined a meaningful encounter as ‘one in which a student has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace.’
- Students should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer every year between years 7-13. In years 7 and 8, the focus may be on exploring the student’s interests and motivations and developing a broad understanding of the world of work. In year 9, the focus may be on building aspirations and exploring career opportunities in more detail, including challenging stereotypes. Year 10 may be a time to address self-presentation and what employers want, while, in year 11, there is a practical focus on making plans and applications for post-16 learning. The post-16 study programme should include structured work experience, volunteering and personal development.
- Schools have strong and lasting links with local businesses, supported by the Enterprise Adviser. In some cases, links are sustained through the school’s governing body or fostered through programmes, such as Business Class from Business in the Community. Schools in rural areas or in regions where the local economy is under pressure rise to the challenge of developing a wide range of employer encounters. The contribution of Enterprise Advisers to the network is invaluable, building on the foundation of over 1,700 senior business leaders who have already volunteered to foster employer connections and offer strategic support to headteachers.
- Schools and employers draw on evidence of what works including The Careers & Enterprise Company’s ongoing study of the evidence base for each activity. They focus on:
 - the different effects for different kinds of activities
 - the sequencing of these activities to ensure they are age appropriate and progressive
 - the importance of effective implementation including proper briefing and debriefing.

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TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS

1. Conduct an audit of the existing range of employer contacts. Consider how well this meets the learning needs of students in every age group and addresses the individual needs of disadvantaged students.
2. Gather feedback from students about your employer contacts to drive ongoing improvement and respond to their range of interests.
3. Investigate practice in other schools and how careers programme providers and registered careers practitioners can support development.
4. Draw up a development plan linked to the careers and enterprise policy and your overall school development plan. This should be done in collaboration with an Enterprise Adviser and other key partners.
5. In collaboration with tutors and teaching staff, implement the plan for building the scale and range of employer contacts through the careers and enterprise programme.
6. Support the continuing professional development of staff through programmes such as the Career Leadership Certificate and attendance at events like The Skills Show, the Big Bang or the Careers Guidance Show.
7. Help students to record their learning and insights either as part of their student journals, or linked to overall school recording systems, such as PiXL Edge.
8. Make sure parents are aware of your employer contacts and support them to talk to their children about the learning and insights they gather.
9. Celebrate success by bringing in alumni and promoting details of events and activities to the wider school community, supported by organisations like [Future First](#).
10. Ensure there is proper preparation and debriefing from employer encounters.

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Promote encounters as an exciting new staff development opportunity and a way of aiding retention, increasing motivation and attracting new recruits.
2. Build links with local schools and be prepared to reach out to both special and mainstream schools. Being rooted in local communities helps enhance your business reputation and diversifies your talent pool.
3. Ensure the role models and staff you deploy are well briefed and encourage interest and achievement from the broadest range of students.
4. Ensure consideration is given to what the students want to learn and the teaching activities that will best meet these.
5. Develop a shared approach with the school to plan and judge the general effectiveness of the encounters.
6. Explore ways in which both the teachers and students can benefit from the encounters.
7. See this as a long-term investment. Building relationships with local schools will help deliver sustainable high-impact programmes.
8. Share approaches and celebrate success within your sector and business networks.
9. Accept that success will not look the same to everyone and different routes and technical and academic pathways may be valid.

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EXAMPLE RESOURCES

- The Careers & Enterprise Company funds a range of providers who deliver high-quality employer engagement in schools. Our pilot '[Find an activity provider](#)' directory can help schools find programmes we fund, generally focused on employer engagements in schools.
- Review our [What Works series](#) for further guidance on encouraging encounters with employers.
- Audit what type of employer encounters are available for each year group using the [Compass evaluation tool](#) and identify gaps and objectives for improvement.
- [Explore one of 39 funded mentoring programmes](#) linking employers with schools to introduce the world of work to students.
- Access links to employers through your Enterprise Coordinator, who can connect you with the local National Careers Service Inspiration Agenda providers.
- Investigate how to embed career learning and STEM awareness in the KS3 curriculum with [STEM Education Reports](#).
- Investigate how employer contacts make a difference with the [Education and Employers Taskforce research, It's who you meet: Why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults](#).
- Explore practical ways to address youth unemployment through increased employer engagement via the [CIPD's Learning to Work campaign](#).
- [Barclays Lifeskills](#) offers comprehensive teaching resources on employability and digital skills to support effective employer engagement.
- Explore the [Career Development Institute's templates](#), including employer engagement requests, checklists on managing partnerships and sample employer evaluation feedback forms.
- [The STEM Ambassador Programme](#) provides inspiring role models to engage students with science and maths careers.
- Volunteers from the world of work including Inspiring Women can be sourced through [Inspiring the Future](#).
- Help level the playing field for state schools by providing access to eminent and influential figures across all industries and backgrounds from [Speakers4Schools](#) and [Founders4Schools](#).
- Create effective and mutually beneficial school-business partnerships through [Business Class](#) and draw on the [good practice case studies](#).
- [WorldSkills UK Champions](#) act as inspirational role models for future generations of apprentices in a range of technical skills as diverse as mechatronics and floristry.

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EXAMPLES OF ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Example 1

St Peter's Catholic School in Surrey, an award-winning school for best practice in engaging employers in career development, offers a progressive programme of employer encounters to students in each year group.

The Careers Leader works closely with the senior leadership team to promote the importance of good careers work. Students hear from a range of visiting speakers and visit key careers events, such as the Big Bang Science Fair.

At the heart of the school's work is a careers and employability week for students in year 10. The week helps them plan their futures and inspire them to think big. The week includes:

- a Future Options Day
- a Business Day with a series of visits
- enterprise and team working activities
- workshops on topics like personal finance and Future Pathways
- how to stand out at interview
- setting up a professional profile on LinkedIn
- job sites
- volunteering.

The week relies on the contribution of over 120 external contributors.

Parents are actively encouraged to support students in reflecting on their own experiences and a parents' guide encourages further research on the year 10 careers information section of the school's virtual learning environment.

Each of the strands of the week are supported by engaging and up-to-date student briefing sheets.

Example 2

Lloyds TSB had a recruitment drive in the Merseyside area. The recruitment campaign included a range of assessment exercises:

- psychometric measure
- team work and observation
- desktop exercise
- verbal communication and presentations
- panel interview.

An Enterprise Adviser took heads of year in his link school, Notre Dame Catholic School in Liverpool, through the recruitment and selection process to develop a stronger understanding of real life recruitment.

They communicated this to students so that they would understand more fully the demands of employers and the labour market. Teaching staff came back from the selection day with an up-to-date experience of employer recruitment that they could share with students and refer to within the curriculum.



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EXAMPLES OF ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Example 3

Career Connect in the north west has been funded by The Careers & Enterprise Company to develop a range of STEM-related careers and local labour market information resources. These resources will support student understanding of emerging opportunities, career and qualification choices and the jobs of tomorrow. The programme is called, “Jobs for Tomorrow: Preparing and Inspiring Students for the World of Work,” and involves employers, Enterprise Advisers and apprentices across the region working collaboratively to develop high-quality resources, including:

- overviews of the STEM-related sectors
- case studies
- filmed interviews with apprentice employees and employers
- information on progression routes and lesson plans
- links to further sources of support and information.

The resources have been well received and shared widely with teaching staff, students, Enterprise Coordinators, Enterprise Advisers, careers professionals and partners. This provides an insight into the current and future labour market opportunities available in the region. The resources are also a helpful and cost-effective way of preparing students for workplace experiences. You can find these resources at: [Jobs for Tomorrow](#)

Example 4

Year 10 and 12 students at University Technical College (UTC) in South Durham had the opportunity to attend an interactive talk by Ferrari F1 engineer, Phil Houghton. The event was designed to give the students insight into the variety of career paths available to them. You can read a full description of the event at: [North East LEP](#)

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As a Chartered Mechanical Engineer myself, together with the team at the UTC, we wanted to spark the imaginations and allow the students to ask first-hand questions about Phil’s career to date and open their eyes at the many options available to them.

An education at UTC South Durham is the perfect place to develop a career in engineering, and in my role as an Enterprise Adviser I hope we can set up many more similar talks over the next year.

Steve Pugh

Managing Director, The Bignall Group and Enterprise Adviser at UTC South Durham

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