

GATSBY BENCHMARK 4

Linking curriculum learning to careers

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

- All teachers link curriculum learning with careers.
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subject teachers highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
- By the age of 14, every pupil has had the opportunity to learn how the different STEM subjects help people to gain entry to a wide range of careers.
- All subject teachers emphasise the importance of succeeding in English and Maths.

This benchmark – linking the planned learning in subjects to careers – is a challenging one. By promoting encounters with employers and experience of workplaces, Enterprise Advisers and Enterprise Coordinators are already helping schools and colleges to develop their practice. However, more needs to be done to support them.

The original Gatsby report notes that this is not being done consistently or effectively anywhere. However, significant progress has been made in the national pilot of the benchmarks in the north east.

STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and maths – have received the most support in this area. We can learn a lot from the initiatives to promote careers in STEM through career-relevant subject teaching. The demand for individuals with STEM qualifications is well-known but the future health of the UK economy also depends on a supply of workers who are well-qualified in:

- the creative and performing arts
- computing
- business and enterprise
- humanities
- languages.

All subject teachers should emphasize the importance of succeeding in English and Maths. Science subject teachers should highlight the relevance of science for a wide range of future career paths. For this reason, linking curriculum learning to careers is relevant to the work of all teachers.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- The school adopts a strategic approach to linking curriculum learning to careers and develops a coherent rationale for embedding careers in subject learning. This is not about making a subject more popular. It is about making subjects more relatable and relevant to everyday and working life. Real-life contexts and examples can make subjects easier to understand and help students feel more engaged in their learning. Above all, linking curriculum learning to careers can boost achievement and help students to progress. Students are less likely to drop out if they know about opportunities for further study and how the subject can be combined with others to give access to different pathways.
- Each department or faculty produces schemes of work and lesson plans which show how career-relevant learning will be embedded in their teaching. They use a variety of approaches, with some schemes of work setting up dedicated careers-related units or modules at the beginning or end of courses. They devise lessons that include career-related learning, inserts, activities and a plenary. Their planning also makes clear how career-related subject learning will be assessed and, where appropriate, accredited.
- Options booklets for years 8, 9 and 11 explain the skills developed by the subject and how those skills can be applied in a range of contexts, including further study, paid work and volunteering.
- Each department or faculty identifies a member of staff to lead on career-relevant teaching. STEM coordinators, for example, organise encounters and events for students, develop their knowledge of STEM resources and support their colleagues. They also link with the careers lead so that the careers specialists can promote opportunities for students and staff.
- The school maintains a record of employer contacts, parents and alumni who have helped to run activities for students. Every teacher is confident and enthusiastic about their role in embedding careers in their subject teaching and can explain the application of the content, processes and the skills involved.
- The school or college recognises that the reach of subject teaching is far greater than what can be achieved through a few careers education sessions. It uses these sessions to pull together and complement everything learned in subjects, encounters with employers and experiences of workplaces to help students make the most of them.

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WHY THIS MATTERS

- Subject teachers are highly influential – students are [18 times more likely to be motivated to learn](#) if their teachers know their hopes and dreams.
- Students feel more engaged in their learning when they perceive the relevance of what they are studying to their own and other people's lives.
- Students are given the opportunity to develop their career thinking and to acquire important career management and employability skills.

TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS

1. The Gatsby report acknowledges that this benchmark is aspirational. Identify the subjects you can complete quickly and use their success to bring other subjects on board.
2. Schools often report initial inertia from teachers in linking curriculum learning to careers because of their existing priorities and workloads. However, once they get going, they quickly become creative, resourceful and energetic.
3. Take up the offer of Enterprise Advisers and Enterprise Coordinators who are keen to work with you in linking curriculum learning to careers.
4. Encourage teachers who have moved into teaching from other jobs to make their previous experience and expertise available to students, try to build a positive culture of applied learning.
5. Identify curriculum hotspots by scanning national curriculum subject specifications and spotting opportunities to develop careers-related content.
6. Avoid overloading career-relevant lessons with too many learning objectives and be aware of the danger of choosing contexts that over-complicate subject learning.
7. Take advantage of any collaborative arrangements, such as the school's membership with a consortium or multi-academy trust, to develop careers in the curriculum approaches jointly.

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Visit the education, training and skills section of [GOV.UK](#) to find out what you need to know about the curriculum. Sign up for email alerts to stay well-informed.
2. Read occasional reports from bodies such as the British Chambers of Commerce, the CBI and Education and Employers to develop your understanding of how employer inputs can help link the curriculum to careers.
3. Take up invitations to participate in activities and events at options time. Students and their parents are particularly receptive to messages about careers around this time. Students choose subjects they will study up to age 16 in year 8 or 9 early in the spring term. Post-16 options are chosen towards the end of the summer term in year 10 and the first part of the autumn term in year 11. The key period for post-18 options is the second half of the summer term in year 12 and the autumn term in year 13.
4. Work with subject teachers to develop problem-based challenges. These will show how the perspectives, methods and skills developed through subjects are used in working life to solve real problems.
5. Volunteer as a presenter, adviser or judge to help the school or college run curriculum enrichment activities, such as STEM clubs, Young Enterprise, Dragons Den and Apprentice of the Year competitions.
6. Bring examples of the equipment you use and the products you make to illustrate your presentations and give opportunities for hands-on experience.
7. Support the initiatives the school is taking to help students recognise and counter stereotyped thinking about careers. This can include highlighting what your own organisation is doing to promote equal opportunities.
8. Take advice from the school or college on how to pitch your presentation to students at the right level to maintain their interest and enable learning.
9. Get in touch with your professional body to find out what resources they have developed to support careers in the curriculum.

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EXAMPLES OF SCHOOLS LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS

Example 1

Tomorrow's Engineers is a programme that promotes the vital role of engineers and engineering to society through coordinated schools outreach and careers inspiration activities. Led by EngineeringUK and the engineering community, their aims are:

- everyone between 11 and 14 to have at least one engineering experience with an employer
- equal numbers of girls and boys to aspire to become engineers.

Tomorrow's Engineers have designed careers resources for students between 11 and 14 that support the national curriculum, cover regional variations and promote the range of routes into engineering. A school in Suffolk is working on a STEM-related project, which gives students hands-on experience in the real world as part of the curriculum. The impact on girls is especially notable, with 45% reporting they know a lot about engineering, compared to 16% in the UK overall.

Example 2

Year 11 students at an 11-16 school in the east of England take part in 'mock job interviews' for their GCSE English speaking and listening assessment. Students choose a job from a booklet put together by every subject department and submit their applications. They write a targeted CV and think about possible interview questions before their mock interview.

Students perform better in their speaking and listening assessment because they recognise the real-life purpose of the activity.

