

Paving the Way: Careers Guidance in Secondary Schools

Introduction and background

After years of neglect, careers guidance in schools has experienced a total overhaul in the past decade. In 2015, the government published statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England in 2015, built around the Gatsby Foundation's benchmarks for good careers guidance. The Gatsby benchmarks were designed to bring the different elements of guidance which cover education, training, and employment into a coherent whole. The Careers and Enterprise Company was also founded in 2015 to support schools in achieving the benchmarks, and to create better networks for schools and colleges to work with employers and share effective strategies. Furthermore, the government made it a statutory requirement in 2015 for education providers to offer a range of education and training providers the opportunity to inform students in years 8 to 13 about technical and further education routes – this requirement became known as the Baker Clause.

This report from the Sutton Trust gives a comprehensive picture of how well the changes are being implemented on the ground and of how things can be further improved. The data in the report was gathered from a wide range of sources including the Teacher Voice Omnibus Surveys, Teacher Tapp, and a survey of 1,083 pupils.

Key points

Existing evidence on careers education

- In a comprehensive, international literature review by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 67 per cent of the papers reviewed provided robust evidence that work-related learning positively impacted economic outcomes. Sixty-two per cent found a positive association with social outcomes such as career maturity (the level of preparedness for making career related decisions) and career identity (the ability to link interests and skills to particular careers).
- A recent OECD report on teenagers' career expectations, analysing data from 41 countries, has found that there is a misalignment between young people's aspirations and the qualifications they think are required to access them. It also finds that high attaining disadvantaged young people are less likely to hold ambitious aspirations compared to high attainers from privileged backgrounds. The report highlights the need for careers guidance to cover the qualifications required for particular pathways, as well as opportunities to experience encounters with employers.
- Research highlights the value of early careers guidance. A study by the charity Education and Employers identified that nearly 2 in 5 (36%) of primary school children under the age of 7 base their aspirations on people they know, with a significant proportion of the remaining children (45%) saying they were influenced by the media, such as TV and film. Early careers guidance has the potential to make connections between the classroom and careers and to break down stereotypes associated with gender, ethnicity, and class.
- Based on analysis of a survey of 18 to 20 year-olds in the UK, UCAS found that 1 in 3 students begin to think about higher education when in primary school, with

disadvantaged students 1.4 times less likely to do so compared to more affluent peers.

Existing careers provision

- A wide range of career related activities are available in schools. The most common activities reported by senior leaders in English state schools include sessions with a Careers Adviser (85%), careers fairs or events (84%), and links to possible careers within curriculum lessons (80%). Classroom teachers in English state schools are less likely than senior leaders to say links to possible careers are being made within curriculum lessons (59% vs 80%). This may suggest that some ambitions for careers guidance are not translating into classroom practice.
- Ninety-five per cent of state school senior leaders report that their school has a Careers Leader.
- Seventy-three per cent of state school headteachers said their school works with the Career and Enterprise Company (CEC). However, just 48 per cent of headteachers said their school was part of a CEC Careers Hub which is designed to bring together schools, colleges, employers, and apprenticeship providers in a local area.
- Whereas 94 per cent of state school senior leaders are aware of the Gatsby benchmarks for good career guidance, the figure for classroom teachers is just 40 per cent. This is another indication that guidance is not filtering down.
- Thirty-six per cent of students in the UK said they had not taken part in any careers related activities. State school pupils are more likely to report not having taken



part (38%) compared to pupils at private schools (23%).

- Self-reporting of career activities is higher for those in later year groups. For example, while only 7 per cent of those in years 8-9 report learning about apprenticeships, this rose to 26 per cent for year 13s. However, even for year 13s, figures for many activities remain low. For example, just 17 per cent have learned about opportunities in their local area, and just 30 per cent have done work experience.
- Whereas 46 per cent of year 13 pupils say they have received a large amount of information on university routes during their education, the figure for apprenticeships is just 10 per cent.
- Thirty-six per cent of secondary school students do not feel confident in their next steps in education and training and 56 per cent feel confident. Twenty-two per cent of year 13s do not feel confident. Overall, pupils in private schools are more likely than pupils in state schools to feel confident.

Barriers to quality provision

- Over three quarters of state school teachers felt that their teacher training did not prepare them to deliver careers information and guidance to students.
- Thirty-seven per cent of senior leaders think their school does not have adequate funding and resources to deliver careers advice and guidance. Thirty-two per cent of teachers in state schools report they don't have enough funding to deliver good quality careers education and guidance, compared to just 6 per cent in private schools. Fifty-one per cent of teachers in state schools think there is insufficient staff time to deliver good careers education and guidance, compared to 34 per cent saying the same in private schools.
- Schools in more deprived areas are less likely to have access to a specialist Careers Adviser, with 21 per cent of teachers in the most deprived areas reporting non-specialists delivered personal guidance, compared to 14 per cent in more affluent areas.
- Seventy-two per cent of teachers think that the pandemic has negatively impacted their school's ability to deliver careers education and guidance. This figure was 16 percentage points higher for teachers in state schools, at 75 per cent, vs 59 per cent in private schools.

Teachers' views on improving careers guidance

- Forty-seven per cent of state school teachers want to see additional funding for careers guidance, more than four times as many as in private schools (11%). State schools want to use additional funding to allow a member of staff to fully focus on careers guidance, with teachers also wanting to see better pay and recognition for the Careers Leader role in schools.
- Forty-seven per cent of senior leaders in English state schools also want to see more visits from employers and 39 per cent want to see more visits from apprenticeship providers.

Recommendations

- The government should develop a new national strategy on careers education. The strategy should sit primarily in the Department for Education, but with strong cross-departmental links, to join up what disparate elements in the system. At the centre of this

strategy there should be a core 'careers structure' outlining a minimum standard of careers provision in all schools. This would require all schools to be in a careers hub, and to provide a professional careers adviser, qualified to at least level 6, for their students.

- More time for careers guidance should be allocated within the overall curriculum, and within subject curricula. This should be accompanied by better training for teachers on careers education within initial teacher training.
- All pupils should have access to work experience between the ages of 14 and 16. This should also be accompanied by additional funding for schools, to allow them to pay for the staff time needed to support students to organise good quality placements.
- Better support and guidance should be made available for schools and colleges on apprenticeships, with better enforcement of statutory requirements such as the Baker clause. Better enforcement could include incentives such as limiting Ofsted grades in schools who do not comply with the clause.
- The Career and Enterprise Company should continue to roll out pilot programmes of promising interventions with a focus on the most deprived schools. The Sutton Trust welcomes recent pilot programmes, including partnerships with businesses.
- Additional support for employability and career education should be seen as a key part of catch-up plans for education post pandemic. School catch-up plans should include a strategy on how students will be supported to make up for the opportunities to learn about careers which they have missed.
- There should be clear responsibility for careers guidance within a school's senior leadership team. The member of SLT with responsibility for careers should work with the school's Pupil Premium Lead to ensure the school's career strategy considers the needs of this group of students.
- Every school should have at least one governor who oversees careers provision. This governor role should engage with a school's Careers Leader to give strategic oversight of a school's careers programme, as well as potentially helping to link their school up with local employers through any contacts on the governing board. It should also work together with a school's pupil premium governor.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Paving-the-Way-1.pdf>