# Good careers guidance

A monitoring toolkit for governing boards in schools and academy trusts

Supporting young people to make informed choices about their future is an important responsibility for schools/trusts and their governing boards.

### Statutory responsibilities

Department for Education (DfE) [statutory careers guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools) sets out requirements for secondary schools. Schools must:

* Develop a careers programme which meets the Gatsby Benchmarks (the recognised framework for high-quality careers guidance) and appoint a Careers Leader to lead the programme.
* Publish details of their careers programme on the school website (available for teachers, employer audiences, students, parents and carers).
* Provide at least six encounters with approved apprenticeships or technical education providers for all students, complying with the duration, frequency and content set out in guidance.
* Publish a policy statement on the school website setting out [arrangements for provider access](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/fe-skills/provider-access-legislation/) and make sure that the policy is followed.

‘Careers guidance’ describes the full range of interventions that support young people to make choices and develop their careers. This toolkit is designed to help governing boards ensure that students are equipped for life beyond school and enter the workplace with the skills they need to thrive.

This toolkit covers:

1. [Key roles and responsibilities](#_Key_roles_and)
2. [How to monitor the careers programme](#_How_to_monitor)
3. [Questions to ask](#_Questions_to_ask)

### Monitoring within a multi academy trust (MAT)

Academy committees (local governing bodies) in a MAT should refer to their [scheme of delegation](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Governance-structure-roles-and-responsibilities/Academy-trusts/Scheme-of-delegation.aspx) and terms of reference to determine their responsibility for careers guidance monitoring. Ask your governance professional for further advice if needed.

## Key roles and responsibilities

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| Governing boards Governing boards are required to ensure that:   * The school/trust has a plan for careers programme delivery which is developed in line with the \*Gatsby Benchmarks, informed by statutory guidance, and explains how impact will be measured. * The Careers guidance offered includes information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and technical education routes with equity. * Guidance is presented impartially, showing no bias or favouritism towards a particular institution, education or work option.   To fulfil their role and meet the expectations, boards will need to:   * Review the careers programme regularly, discussing delivery and impact with the senior executive and Careers Leader. * Monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme using reports and information gained from a number of sources – see [section 2](#_bookmark5).  Careers link governor/trustee  * Every school/trust should have a member of their governing board who takes a strategic interest in careers education and guidance. * Use our [role description for careers link governors and trustees](https://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre/careers-education-and-guidance/) to learn how this role contributes to the work of the board.   \*The DfE expects schools to follow the recently [updated Gatsby Benchmarks](https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/understanding-the-gatsby-benchmarks/) from September 2025. | Careers Leaders Careers Leaders are responsible for:   * the delivery of their school/trust careers programme * having a clear overview of the programme * ensuring that the programme meets the Gatsby Benchmarks * reporting regularly to the governing board (often fulfilled by working closely with the careers governor/trustee)   Ideally, each school-based Careers Leader should be a senior leader or have a direct reporting line to the senior leadership team.  In a MAT, there may be a Central Strategic Careers Leader (CSCL) who oversees and supports a designated Careers Leader in each individual school. This ensures strategic alignment across the trust while maintaining effective, school-level careers leadership. Enterprise Advisers Business volunteers called ‘Enterprise Advisers’ work with secondary schools or colleges, through the [careers hub](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/careers-hubs/what-are-careers-hubs/) model, to provide strategic support in developing a careers plan and building employer networks. |

### Collaborating with other schools

Schools are expected to fund their careers programme from their core funding allocation; however, some schools access additional funding streams to enhance provision, extend opportunities, or target support for specific groups of pupils. Collaborating with other schools and colleges can also help to spread the cost of careers activities while maintaining quality.

[Careers Hubs](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/about-us/our-network/careers-hubs), each with a dedicated Hub Lead, bring together a group of secondary schools and colleges with partners in the business, public, education and voluntary sectors. The number of schools in Careers Hubs is growing and evidence shows that they are making the fastest progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

### What Ofsted look for

Ofsted inspectors consider whether students are ready for the next stage of education, training or employment by the time they leave school. This includes the effectiveness of careers guidance in enabling students to make progress. Sources of evidence used by inspectors include nationally published information about students’ destinations when they leave the school.

## How to monitor the careers programme

This section of the toolkit summarises each of the recently updated Gatsby Benchmarks and outlines success indicators and potential information sources to help you monitor your school’s/trust’s careers programme.

Although there are eight individual benchmarks, these should also be considered as a whole, reflecting the school/trust vision for careers education and personal development.

### Benchmark 1: A stable careers programme (which meets the requirements of the 7 other benchmarks)

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * A programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by stakeholders, parents, employers and training providers. * The careers programme is frequently assessed, with input from students, parents, staff and employers. | * Careers guidance is featured within the school/trust development plan. * The school/trust has mechanisms for securing quality. For example, using the Careers Impact [internal leadership review](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/careers-impact-internal-leadership-review) or are considering some form of recognised quality assurance or accreditation for careers provision. * Strategy and delivery are informed by stakeholder feedback. * The Careers Leader works collaboratively with others (the SENCO for example) to embed a whole school approach. * Effective CPD and support is provided to the Careers Leader. | * Details of the careers programme published on the school/trust website – this should be communicated in a way that is understandable for parents and employers. * Reports and presentations from the Careers Leader. * Key points arising from stakeholder feedback. |  |

[Access benchmark 1 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A1)

### Benchmark 2: Learning from career and labour market information – role, pay and vacancy trends

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * Students and their parents are provided with good quality, accessible information about future study options and labour market opportunities, as well as support from an informed adviser to make best use of available information. * Opportunities that are tailored to meet the needs of each young person and their family. | * Resources like the [National Careers Service](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/) are being used to support students and parents to make informed choices. * Labour market information (LMI) is being used to help students identify careers with good prospects. * Organisations like [Local Enterprise Partnerships](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnerships-map) have been engaged to help interpret local LMI. | * Reporting and case studies that show the range of information used to inform students and parents of different courses, job roles and progression pathways. * Evidence of informed advisers (from the local authority or a careers guidance professional, for example) supporting students. |  |

[Access benchmark 2 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A2)

### Benchmark 3: Addressing the needs of each pupil

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * Tailored advice and support that meets the needs of each student. * Embedding equality and diversity throughout the careers programme. * Actively seeking to challenge common misconceptions and stereotypes. * Alumni and other role models are woven into the careers programme. | * Destination data is used to shape the careers programme and advice given. * Activities are tailored to meet the needs of students, resulting in positive destinations. * The SENCO, pastoral leader and Careers Leader work together to address each students’ needs. * Data is captured on aspirations, intended and actual destinations of all students. | * Data on the education, training and employment destinations of students over the last three years. * Examples (case studies) of careers activities tailored to meet the needs of particular students (such as those eligible for pupil premium and/or with SEND). * Digital tracking data that highlights whether all students are accessing opportunities. |  |

[Access benchmark 3 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A3)

### Benchmark 4: Linking curriculum learning to careers

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * All teachers link curriculum learning with careers. | * Curriculum content for each subject area is linked to the world of work throughout the academic year. * All staff are aware of progression routes and careers from their subject area. * Each curriculum area has a clear plan for how they discuss progression and careers with each year group. * Strong working relationships exist between the school and employers. * The governing board utilises insight and experiences that governors/trustees bring from the world of work when monitoring and reviewing the curriculum. | * Examples of meaningful employer engagement with the curriculum and careers strategy. * Feedback from staff on the impact of careers CPD on the curriculum. * Feedback from employers on the impact of their involvement. |  |

[Access benchmark 4 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A4)

### Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * Every student has multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace through a range of enrichment activities, including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes. | * Students in all year groups and their parents are engaged in careers enrichment activities. * Wide-ranging enrichment activities are not restricted to providing generic careers advice. * Collaboration with partners such as CEC boosts employer engagement. * Student voice is used to identify areas of interest and target engagement. * Opportunities to learn from employers are linked to the curriculum (not one-off events). | * Reports of student and parent attendance and engagement with enrichment activities, such as careers fairs and visiting speakers. * Examples (case studies) of personalised interactions between students, employers and employees. * Student surveys. * Feedback from parents and employers. |  |

[Access benchmark 5 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A5)

### Benchmark 6: Experiences of workplaces

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * Every student has first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and to expand their networks. | * A wide range of workplace experiences are offered. * Workplace experiences have clearly defined outcomes attached to them: what students need to take away from meeting a range of people from workplaces. * Feedback from students and employers is captured to measure impact and share success. | * Data and reporting of student workplace experiences. * Feedback from students on the value of their workplace experiences. * Case studies. * Evaluation of workplace experiences. |  |

[Access benchmark 6 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A6)Benchmark 7: Encounters with further and higher education

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * All students understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace. | * Students are introduced to careers concepts and options at an early stage. * All students are aware of all options available to them and parents understand these routes. * Parents and carers are involved in careers education so that they can support their children. * Strong engagement with providers is underpinned by regular, two-way communication and visits. * The needs of all students are clearly being considered, such as through SEND-focused careers events. | * The calendar of activities offered to students about careers and subjects, such as studying at a university or a college. * The learning outcomes for visits from further and higher education providers. * Case studies of how students, regardless of their needs, are prepared for meaningful encounters. * Destination data: explore trends and patterns which may indicate the range of options understood and taken up by students. |  |

### [Access benchmark 7 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A7)

### Benchmark 8: Personal guidance

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| Benchmark characteristics | Indicators of success | Governing board information sources | Governing board monitoring notes |
| * All students have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser whenever significant study or career choices are being made. | * Every student has had a one-to-one guidance interview before they leave in year 11. * Every student 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. * Quality assurance monitors the guidance given to students and ensures that those giving it are suitably trained. * Efforts have been made to ensure the advice students receive is impartial, such as through adviser-swapping with other schools. | * Reports and presentations from the Careers Leader. * Insights gathered from the quality assurance of careers guidance. * Feedback from students and parents. * Examples (case studies) of careers advisers providing information, advice and guidance to students on a one-to-one basis and in groups. |  |

### [Access benchmark 8 resources](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/explore/all-resources-all-one-place?f_initial&f%5B0%5D=gatsby_benchmark%3A8)

## Questions to ask

The following are examples of questions that governors and trustees might ask in governing board meetings or on [monitoring visits.](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Good-governance/Effective-governance/NGA-Guidance-on-school-visits.aspx)

Refer to your careers programme delivery plan and use these examples to develop your own questions.

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| Questions | Governing board monitoring notes |
| 1. Is the school or trust meeting its statutory duties for careers guidance?   What evidence is available to demonstrate compliance? |  |
| 1. How is the school/trust embedding the updated Gatsby Benchmarks into its curriculum and broader school improvement strategies?   Are there examples of how careers education is being woven into subject learning or pastoral support? |  |
| 1. What careers activities are currently taking place, what impact are they having, and how are governors being kept informed? |  |
| 1. Are there opportunities for governors/trustees to help expand employer and community networks? |  |

## Additional resources

### DfE

* [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools/careers-guidance-and-access-for-education-and-training-providers) – statutory guidance for schools and governing boards

### The Gatsby foundation

[Gatsby](https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/about-the-gatsby-benchmarks/) has been working on careers guidance in England since the publication of their Good Career Guidance report in 2014. Gatsby used extensive research and international evidence to define a framework for world-class careers guidance in education – the Gatsby Benchmarks

* [A summary of updates to the Gatsby Benchmarks](https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/news/quick-read-guide-to-the-gatsby-benchmarks-updates-launches/)
* The [Gatsby good career guidance handbook](https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/latest/gatsby-launches-good-career-guidance-reaching-the-gatsby-benchmarks) provides further advice on creating a careers guidance programme that is framed by the Benchmarks

### The Careers and Enterprise Company

[The Careers and Enterprise Company](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/who-we-are/) (CEC) is the national body for careers education in England. The CEC works with both primary and secondary schools, colleges and employers to improve careers education and secure better outcomes for young people.

[CEC’s resource directory](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources-governors) has an area dedicated to resources for governors and trustees that includes:

* A [free online learning module](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/careers-leaders/careers-leader-training/online-learning-modules/#Governors) to help governors and trustees learn about high quality careers education.
* [Compass](https://compass.careersandenterprise.co.uk/info): an online evaluation tool that schools can use to self-assess their careers programme and track improvements.
* [Ofsted guide](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/ofsted-education-inspection-framework-guide) for governors and trustees with key questions to support strategic careers planning in preparation for inspection.
* [Governors](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools/school-governors/governors-newsletter/) newsletter – designed to help you influence and shape careers education. Register to stay up to date.
* [Careers Education: A Guide for secondary school governors](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/careers-education-guide-secondary-school-governors)
* [Careers Statutory Guidance: At a glance guides for school, college and ITP leaders](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/careers-statutory-guidance-glance-guides-school-college-and-itp-leaders)
* [Modern work experience](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/modern-work-experience/) – how schools can facilitate a variety of experiences to improve career readiness and employability