

Insight Briefing: The Potential of Teacher Encounters

Publication information

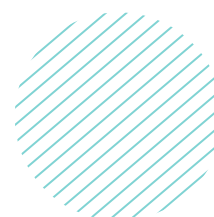
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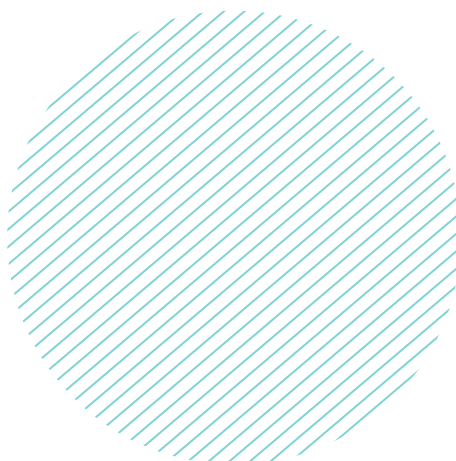
About this insight briefing:

There is an increasing interest in the role subject teachers have to play in supporting their students with careers education. This insight briefing shares findings from two small partnership projects designed to help bring teachers together with local businesses. The two 'Teacher Encounters' projects took place in the 2021/2022 academic year in Oxfordshire and Berkshire with positive impact results.



Contents

- p4** **Executive Summary**
- p5** **The rationale for Teacher Encounters**
- p6** **About the test projects**
- p7** **Impact findings**



Executive Summary

The evaluations of the Teacher Encounters projects in both Oxfordshire and Berkshire found evidence of significant benefits for teachers, young people and employers, demonstrating the potential value for larger scale initiatives of this nature.

1. Teachers increased their knowledge of local businesses and pathways

- In Berkshire, by the end of the project, teachers were, on average, more confident in discussing apprenticeships and traineeships with students.
- In Oxfordshire, teachers reported significant improvement in confidence about local growth industry sectors with the majority of participants saying they had developed useful learning about the kinds of jobs and career opportunities in and around Oxfordshire over the course of a year.

2. Teachers increased their capacity to connect learning in lessons to how it is applied in the workplace

- In Oxfordshire, 77% of teachers thought that they would draw on local labour market insights and relationships to a greater extent in the coming year.
- STEM teachers in Berkshire developed lesson plans that incorporated the real-world application of a Year 10 science topic following their placements. For example, a physics teacher, matched with a construction company, obtained the company's crane radius charts to use with students when teaching about turning moments and levers.

3. Teachers increased their commitment to employer engagement

- In Berkshire, teachers were more likely to agree that 'Engaging with employers helps students to make informed decisions about their future career' and that 'Employers are best placed to advise on the skills that students need in the workplace'.
- In Oxfordshire, confidence in engaging local employers to support activities and learning increased from 27% at the baseline to 55% at the end of the project, with no teachers reporting a decline in confidence.

4. Students were better able to make connections between curriculum subjects and careers pathways

- 82% of Year 10 students in the Berkshire project said it improved their understanding of jobs and careers, 77% said it improved their thinking about future careers and 60% said it influenced their specific plans after Year 11.
- In the Oxfordshire project, Year 8 students reported a greater increase in motivation and relevance in the subject covered by the programme compared to other subjects. 45% per cent of students also said that the activities influenced their thinking about post-16 or post-18 pathways.

5. Employers saw business benefits with onward commitment to offer teacher encounter opportunities

- Employers welcomed the opportunity to build partnerships with local schools, fulfil community, social and environmental commitments, and increase brand awareness.
- Employers anticipated achieving a wide reach to young people through engaging with teachers and expected this to bolster their talent pipeline in the future.

The rationale for teacher encounters

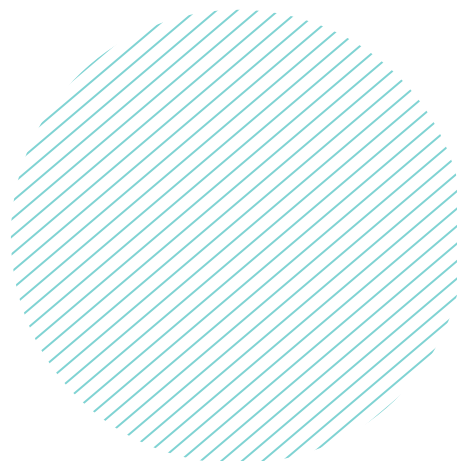
An important imperative for subject teachers' engagement in careers education, (within the nationally adopted framework of the Gatsby Benchmarks) is to highlight to students the relevance of their subject in context of different future careers.

Highlighting the relevance of subjects to students can take different forms, such as employer-based projects, linking the curriculum to real-world applications, or teaching skills that are valued by employers. Teachers may also be instrumental in connecting students with employers directly, translating labour market information, or just discussing careers and futures informally.

Although they are key influencers for young people, teachers want more information about the range of future options including up-to-date knowledge of study and career pathways that they did not experience themselves, such as vocational routes. Research by [The Sutton Trust](#) shows nearly nine in ten teachers (88%) feel their training doesn't currently prepare them to deliver careers support to students. In addition, a report by [PLMR](#) shows that while 70 per cent of teachers agree apprenticeships provide excellent future opportunities, only 26 per cent feel confident advising students about how to find an apprenticeship.

A teacher encounter provides an opportunity for teachers to engage directly with employers to see and learn about the different career pathways relevant to their subjects, and to observe how their subject is applied practically in business. This can take many forms, from two hours to multiple days, face-to-face, virtual or a mix of both. From just one teacher to multiple colleagues.

Teachers can then meaningfully use these insights to enrich their curriculum teaching, helping their students build a deeper understanding of opportunities, connections between learning and industry and the essential skills that need to be honed for different roles. This knowledge can empower educators to effectively support students to take their best next step.



About the test projects

Although different in their models, both projects aimed to build the knowledge and confidence of subject teachers and help them advise their students about a full spectrum of options awaiting them after GCSEs. Building on previous examples such as the [Edge Foundation's](#) teacher externships, and local activity, both projects were designed to address local needs around skill shortages and challenges in accessing employers and employer-enriched curriculum resources.

'Inspiration Beyond the Classroom': Berkshire Careers Hub

Designed for Year 10 teachers of STEM subjects, the project looked to respond to local STEM skills shortages, challenges recruiting local talent, and a lack of opportunities for teachers to engage and build relationships with employers. Each teacher spent up to four days with one business followed by roundtable meetings and collaborative lesson planning with employers.

Across a total time commitment of approximately six days for each teacher, the Careers Hub (with a provider organisation Pathway CTM) matched 15 science and maths teachers with 10 local STEM businesses. Each partnership was able to spend up to four placement days together, sharing knowledge around the application of science and maths in industry, the range of roles and career pathways on offer, and the skills valued by employers.

Participating Employers:

NHS (National Health Service); Thames Water; Berkeley Homes; Redrow; Vodafone; Westcoast; Thales; Three; RSSL (Reading Scientific Services Limited); British Airways.

'Find Their Future': Oxfordshire Careers Hub

This was designed for Year 8 teachers with the following challenges in mind: recruitment (especially apprenticeships), low awareness of local sectors among students and teachers, and the difficulties faced by teachers when accessing quality employer resources. This programme focused on a greater breadth of learning for 16 teachers across a range of 21 employers. Each partnership focused on three main activities: creating and collating CPD, LMI and curriculum resources; community building with employers (through webinars, in-person visits and facilitated exchanges); all culminating in the teacher's delivery of 3-10 activities for their students (enriched with employer support, such as guest talks, site visits and lesson content). Excluding classroom delivery, the overall average time commitment for each teacher was approximately equivalent to three days.

Participating Employers:

EKFB; Rebellion; NHS (National Health Service); Oxfordshire Advanced Skills; Geocento; Pivot Power; Unipart; Push Start Marketing; Ignite Sport; Oxford Biomedica; Satellite Applications Catapult; Reaction Engines; BMW; Radioactive Waste Management; UK Atomic Energy Authority; Royal Air Force; PML Designs; Rutherford Appleton Laboratory; Science and Technology Facilities Council; Prodrive; Diamond Light Source.

Impact findings

Whilst the Berkshire project focused on depth - each teacher spending up to four days with one business, in contrast to the Oxfordshire project's focus on greater breadth from a range of employers, they achieved similar immediate benefits for teachers and students. This suggests that a range of approaches to teacher encounters can be successful.

Impacts and benefits for teachers

For the teachers involved in both projects, the impacts and benefits were evident in their **increased knowledge** of local businesses, career opportunities and pathways; **increased commitment** to employer engagement; and their **increased capacity** to link the curriculum to careers:

- 84.6% said they had learned “quite a lot” about the kinds of jobs and career opportunities in and around Oxfordshire over the course of this year.
- 100% of survey respondents in Berkshire said they found out about different roles and pathways into the business, often meeting apprentices and staff who had not pursued academic routes, and by the end of the project, teachers were, on average, more confident in discussing apprenticeships and traineeships with students.
- In Berkshire teachers were more likely to agree that “Engaging with employers helps students to make informed decisions about their future career” and that “Employers are best placed to advise on the skills that students need in the workplace.”
- In Oxfordshire, confidence in engaging local employers to support activities and learning increased from three out of 11 at the baseline to six out of 11 at the end of the project, with no teachers declining in confidence.
- Teachers also reported increased frequency of engaging employers in activities and lessons. Four teachers who originally said they would never/almost never engage employers in activities and lessons reported an increase to up to three times a year.
- Following the four placement days in Berkshire businesses, the participating STEM teachers developed lesson plans that translated the curriculum into real-world scenarios for Year 10 science students.
- In Oxfordshire, 10 out of 13 teachers thought that they would draw on local labour market insights and relationships to a greater extent in the coming year (six said a ‘bit more’ and four ‘much more’)

What teachers thought

“The extra knowledge has given me more confidence when speaking to students about their future careers.” (Berkshire)

“GCSE Students understand jobs but don’t understand how they fit into specific jobs – this helps to show students what people actually do in their roles.” (Berkshire)

“Understanding how industry works having never worked in it myself. I am better able to explain how a large company works and the manner in which the dynamics change according to the customer base; consequently the impact this can have upon jobs and future employment.” (Berkshire)

“I think the Find Their Future programme has been a wonderful project to be part of. I have learned a lot about the local economy and it was invaluable having help to connect with employers (I didn’t have much success on my own!).” (Oxford)

“Speaking with employers has made me more confident in possible career options.” (Oxford)

“I just wanted to share how much I have enjoyed being part of the project... it has been great to see how the jobs market is changing and the opportunities available for our young people in the county. It was also great to reconnect with my reasons ‘why’ I chose Geology & Geography as a career and have the time to share this with our students. Thanks for the opportunity!” (Oxford)

Impacts and benefits for students

For students involved in both projects, **learning more about careers within the curriculum** enabled them to make clearer connections between the subject and future pathways which, in turn, **increased their motivation** for the target subjects:

- For a majority of the Year 10 students in ‘Inspiration Beyond the Classroom,’ learning impacted positively on their understanding of jobs and careers (82%), thoughts about future careers (77%), and specific plans after Year 11 (60%).
- In the Oxfordshire project, the Year 8 students reported a greater increase in motivation and relevance of the subject covered by the programme compared to other subjects.
- 45% of students also said the activities influenced their thinking about post-16 or post-18 pathways.

Impacts and benefits for employers

Employers taking part in both programmes were excited about the opportunity to build partnerships with local schools, fulfil talent, CSR and ESG commitments, and increase brand awareness:

- They saw the benefits and potential of inspiring young people by engaging with their teachers and expected this to improve their talent pipeline in the future.
- Several planned to continue or extend this kind of work with schools in future years.
- Feedback indicated they would recommend the programme “a lot” to other employers in their network, and relayed benefits associated with community spirit, motivation and productivity.

What students thought:

“I think the best part of the project was getting to hear from different people and about their different sides of geography (at least now I know it’s not all about rocks).” (Oxford)

“The best part of the Find Their Future project was meeting people who wanted to talk about their jobs and careers.” (Oxford)

“It was nice to know about this because it would help me and others possibly re-think or take on interest in geography related careers for the future. (Oxford)

Berkshire Careers Hub: Spotlight on collaborative lesson planning between teachers and employers as part of the ‘Inspiration Beyond the Classroom’ project:

With support from Pathway CTM, teachers worked with their matched employer partner to identify relevant aspects of the business to apply to Year 10 curriculum teaching. For example, a partnership between a teacher and an employer in the distribution industry alighted on using a packaging dimensions challenge to give numerical methods a real-world context and logic.

Examples of lesson plans produced by the teacher-employer partnerships in Berkshire:

- Redrow – Cranes in Construction
- Westcoast - Moments Lesson (Safeloads of Forklifts) and Packing Problems
- Berkeley Homes - Moments at Work (Crane Radius)
- Three – Electromagnetic Waves Communication

