

GATSBY BENCHMARK 6

Experiences of workplaces

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/ or work experience so they can explore their career opportunities and expand their networks.

- By the age of 16, every student should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.
- By the age of 18, every student should have had one further such experience, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- Meaningful experiences of workplaces are interactions with the world of work in a real work location. Schools are real workplaces too, and can offer an appropriate balance of challenge and support for carefully identified students such as sheltered work experience placements.
 - It is important to create a range of possible workplace experiences such as visits, work shadowing, work experience and career-related volunteering and citizenship.
 - Effective workplace experiences can be incredibly rewarding for everyone involved. For young people with SEND, there may be a need to spend more time on planning and communication and agreeing expectations on both sides.
 - The school will hold pre-work sessions with the employer before the student arrives. The school and employer will agree the level of support necessary for the student and employer. If necessary, schools can often provide training for the employer.
 - After the encounter, there should be a full debriefing for the employer, school and student to help improve on future workplace experiences.
 - For students with the most severe learning difficulties, internal work experience can provide similar effects to external experiences and help them develop work-related skills, confidence and self-esteem.
- Students with social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) or behavioural problems may benefit from employer engagement activities organised for them on an individual basis. These should be provided with as much pre-work and support during the activity as possible.
 - For students with moderate learning difficulties, a planned programme of graduated employer engagement from key stage 4 can build confidence and employability skills. As students develop more of a sense of the job fields they are interested in, job coaches can be integrated into the programme to help them build job specific skills. Supported employment providers who have great employer connections can start to bring value to the individual student and can result in bringing the young person closer to employment.



GATSBY BENCHMARK 6

Experiences of workplaces

WHY THIS MATTERS

- People with negative attitudes to SEND fail to appreciate that young people are differently abled and can be accommodated with sometimes quite simple changes to learning, work processes and environments.
- Transition confidence and preparation is a key benefit of young people's participation in this type of activity. Coping with transitions can be a particular challenge for young people with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech and language difficulties and ASD. With proper support young people can develop transition capability.
- [Research evidence](#) analysed for The Careers & Enterprise Company suggests that work experience, supported internships or employment, employee preparation programmes, self-determination training and family involvement are effective in enabling young people and young adults with SEND to make a successful move from school to further or higher education, training, employment or self-employment.
- Work experience can demonstrate the capabilities of young people while providing them with first-hand knowledge of the working environment.
- Employer surveys constantly show that businesses are looking for more than just qualifications.
- Employers value a positive working attitude, an understanding of a business and its customers and real work experience. All of this can be developed whilst still at school – whether or not a young person has SEND.
- Work experience placements can lead to full-time job offers.

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

SENDSational Opportunities is a campaign by Suffolk County Council to attract local employers to offer placements for work experience, traineeships and supported internships to young people with SEND. The council believes that all young people can develop work-related skills and experience, and achieve the qualifications they need to succeed in their careers. The council believes the overwhelming majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation and support. It is engaging direct with employers and encouraging them to offer their support.

The council provides [useful factsheets](#) about the programme to guide employers on work experience, traineeships and supported internships.

The website also promotes the programme's rewards and benefits to employers:

- loyalty and commitment – SEND employees tend to be very loyal and committed to the business, less turnover of staff and savings on recruitment costs
- absence – rates are often lower
- reputation – many customers have a better perception of organisations who employ SEND people in visible job roles. A study by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University for Massachusetts in 2006 found 87% of consumers preferred to use companies that hired people with disabilities
- diversity – a wide pool of labour that reflects local communities, enables the business to have a greater understanding of needs of client groups that need extra support including disabled people, parents with buggies and older customers. Attracts the £212bn purple pound (spending power of disabled people and their families)
- consistency of work – many SEND people are happy to carry out tasks that are repetitive or require a standardised approach
- corporate social responsibility – contributes to CSR responsibilities and targets.

The SENDsational project is linked to Youth Pledge. If an employer offers either a supported internship or work experience the business can apply for the New Anglia Youth Pledge Marque which is awarded to businesses who demonstrate a commitment to supporting young people in Suffolk and Norfolk.

GATSBY BENCHMARK 6

Experiences of workplaces

OTHER EXAMPLES OF FACILITATING EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

In 2016/17 the Westminster School in the West Midlands began working with Interserve and Sandwell Leisure Trust to provide real-world work experience and skills to students. Learners spend 3 days a week at their internship placement provider for between 6 - 12 months. The young person also studies qualifications to support their employment after the internship to enable them to gain successful employment or further work-related traineeships at the end of the academic year.

The school provides one or more dedicated job coaches, paid for by the school, to support the student throughout their placement. There has been a significant increase in student confidence and independence in the workplace as a result of the programme. Two pupils were able to take on roles in facilities services in education and are undertaking supported apprenticeships with Interserve as part of a national DfE Pacesetter pilot scheme. Scott, one of apprentice students with Interserve said "In year 7 I never thought anything like this would happen to me. I look forward to learning new skills and working with others. I am proud of what I have achieved. I would like to thank the school and Interserve for all their help."

Recent changes to the English and maths criteria for young people with SEND have made it possible for applicants like Scott to be accepted onto apprenticeships. Patricia Murphy, Apprenticeship Manager for Interserve, said "The new changes will allow these young people the opportunity to develop key employment skills and experience and provide them with a solid foundation to start working life."

Oliver Flowers, Deputy Headteacher said "It is fabulous news with regards to the adjustment of the English and maths entry requirements for apprenticeships. This will inevitably open many more doors for young people with a learning disability who are able to complement the world of work. The school has a proven supported internship model where our young people have been able to demonstrate their keen ability to be successful in the world of work. In the past, the barriers associated with the English and maths entry requirements would have meant this wasn't an option for them. Now many more young talented individuals will have a chance to better themselves through the world of work on an apprenticeship with private sector organisations such as Interserve. This will change many lives and provide rich opportunities for people with a learning disability."

The school hopes to build on this pilot and provide more opportunities for young people with learning disabilities.

GLEBE SCHOOL

Glebe School in Bromley is a school for students with complex needs including autistic spectrum disorders, visual impairment, speech and language difficulties and physical difficulties which offers two-week work experience placements to students in year 11 and 12.

[Placements](#) have included offices, supermarkets, farms and other organisations and businesses. The school works hard to maintain good links with the employer community and is grateful for their support in the students' preparation for life outside school. The school is also very proud of the great success that students have made of this opportunity and includes a wide range of photos on the website of students in different work experience settings.

MEADOW HIGH SCHOOL

For older students with learning difficulties, extended work experience and placements can be valuable. For example, Meadow High School organised work placements for year 14 students in the 6 months leading up to their school leaving date. The experiences were part of their transition activities and included making connections with local hotel and horticulture businesses.

AVENUE SCHOOL

The Avenue School set up an internal enterprise work experience programme for young people with severe learning difficulties. From the first day, they showed more confidence and a real pride in their work. They also created a fully inclusive team to make and sell products at their first Christmas market for parents and made £1,200 profit.

NEXT

The retailer Next has started to provide work experience for local students with SEND at one of its distribution centres. Staff felt they had "become better people" having worked with the young people with SEND.

GATSBY BENCHMARK 6

Experiences of workplaces

RESOURCES

SCHOOLS WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

- Brookfields School's [Pathway to Employment](#) whole career programme and film on employers.
- [Change 100](#), from Leonard Cheshire, brings together employers, disabled students and graduates to offer work experience.
- [ChangeNow](#), from Leonard Cheshire, supports young people with SEND into work placements.
- [ChangeLondon](#) is a bursary fund from Leonard Cheshire to support London based SMEs to recruit and retain disabled people.

TOOLS FOR EMPLOYERS TO USE PRIOR TO WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH SEND

- Preparing for Adulthood offer [supported employment providers self-evaluation](#) guidance and tool.
- [Supported employment providers](#) list from BASE.
- Mencap offer guidance on [work experience placements](#).

STRUCTURED LEARNING AND WORKING TRAINING SCHEMES

- Government information on [supported internships](#).
- [EmployAbility Let's Work Together](#) supported internship programme from National Grid.
- [Into Apprenticeships](#) from Disability Rights UK is a guide to applying for apprenticeships in the UK.
- [Disability Equality Training](#) from Leonard Cheshire Disability, is a one-day workshop to support employers to become more inclusive of disabled staff and customers.

SKILLS DAYS

- [Whizz-Kidz](#) is a charity which organises work placement and work skills days for disabled young people between 14-25 years old.

GATSBY BENCHMARK 6

Experiences of workplaces

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Get to know some of schools' acronyms such as SENCO (special educational needs coordinator), TA (teaching assistant), EHCP (education, health and care plan), SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), SLT (senior leadership team), SEMH (Social Emotional and Mental Health) and LDD (learning difficulties and disabilities).
2. If you are hesitant about whether you or your business could offer work experience to a young person with SEND, watch the testimonials of companies that support students from Catcote Academy in Hartlepool on their [Facebook](#) page.
3. Working with young people can be incredibly rewarding for your employees who supervise and support them. It impacts positively on employee development, job satisfaction and work culture.
4. Formulate a policy for your organisation around the links you want to have with schools and colleges. It should explain the business and philanthropic case for having links, such as social responsibility or encouraging the next generation, and enable you to prioritise how you use your resources.
5. Participate in local collaborative networks such as the local enterprise partnership, local chamber of commerce, rotary club or similar group to coordinate and plan links with special schools, schools and colleges.
6. Find out what your insurance limitations are, particularly for work shadowing, workplace visits and engaging in the classroom.
7. If you are a small business, consider joining up with another small business to offer joint work placement opportunities.
8. Schools must decide whether adults working with pre-16 work experience students need to be vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
9. Set open-ended and real-life projects to inspire students and develop their enterprise and problem-solving capabilities.
10. Explore different work experience models and get accredited with the [Fair Train](#) work experience quality standard for employers.

TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGE

- Find out what the benefits to employers are and pitch your case to the employer in a business-like way. Be clear about what you are asking of them, such as work experience.
- Young job seekers with conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome often have difficulty in communicating their value to employers. Prepare them, by getting them to apply for their work experience placements with a CV and go for an interview.
- Fully brief employers about a student's learning difficulties or conditions such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and behaviour management issues – employers need to know for health and safety reasons, but they also like the challenge of succeeding with a student.
- Support employers by providing training and maintain close links with them during placements.
- Recognise the contribution of employers in simple ways such as presenting certificates at prize days, carrying news stories on the school's website and Facebook page.
- Provide word mats and picture cards with vocabulary specific to experiences of work.
- Take photographs of students taking part in activities to support debrief and reflection.
- Use passports with pages for recording experiences and achievements to strengthen students' reflection, self-advocacy and self-presentation skills.