

# GATSBY BENCHMARK 7

## Encounters with further and higher education

### WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and the workplace.

- By the age of 16, every pupil should have had a meaningful encounter with a provider of the full range of learning opportunities.
- By the age of 18, all students who are considering applying for university should have had at least 2 visits to universities to meet staff and students.

### WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- Meaningful encounters can be with providers of apprenticeships, work-based training and further and higher education, facilitated both in school and through off-site visits. Young people can learn about post-compulsory schooling options in a range of ways including through direct interactions with lecturers, current students or apprentices and alumni.
- Careful early planning is essential to avoid young people dropping out or losing confidence.
- Young people with social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) or behavioural difficulties in special schools can find it helpful to be introduced early to the range of options they have after completing school. For example, moving on and transition fairs will invite all local colleges to allow students to find out about courses. Students should be encouraged to explore the full range of routes available including their local college, apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational opportunities or higher education.
- Schools should understand that some students will continue to need transport to college. Families may prefer their child goes to college from school.
- For young people with physical disabilities and other disadvantages but who do not have learning difficulties, the Sutton Trust organises dedicated summer schools at 12 major universities across the country.

# GATSBY BENCHMARK 7

## Encounters with further and higher education

### WHY THIS MATTERS

- Parents, carers and families are hugely influential in determining the transition path for young people with SEND but will need support to understand what is possible.
- In 2016 just 44% of deaf young people achieved 2 A levels or equivalent qualifications by the age of 19 compared with 65% of those with no identified special educational need.
- For looked-after children, some of whom have SEND, this transition can be really challenging. Only 6% go to university, compared to 40% of their peers. Schools should look at providing additional support, particularly if they are moving out of care as they move to higher and further education.

### EXAMPLES OF FACILITATING ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

#### CASE STUDY: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Gloucestershire College helps reduce students' and parents' anxiety around transition by putting support in place before they arrive and ensuring students are warmly welcomed. Students are:

- sent pictures of their tutors and staff well in advance of their start
- provided with their timetables so they can start to plan their time and routine
- invited to open days and taster events where they can meet staff and look around the college

The transition team has produced a [virtual tour of the college](#), with a special focus on the areas of the college that students will need to become familiar with such as their curriculum areas, the learning support centre and communal spaces.

The college has made this video into a [virtual reality tour](#) which students experience through a headset (as if the student is really walking around the college).

The college has also produced [videos of current students with SEND](#) talking about how they get on at college and the support they receive.

These innovative tools are particularly useful for students with anxiety who may not want to visit or attend college in person, and for school refusers.

This case study was adapted from [SEN support: research evidence on effective approaches and examples of current practice in good and outstanding schools and colleges](#).

# GATSBY BENCHMARK 7

## Encounters with further and higher education

### CASE STUDY: BROOKFIELDS SCHOOL

Brookfields School is a specialist SEN school in Reading. As part of their further and higher education programme, most students in years 11, 12, 13 and 14 spend half a day each week at local colleges. The school has links with Reading College, Berkshire College of Agriculture and Newbury College. Students have the chance to participate in life at college, take courses and be part of these larger educational establishments. Courses include IT, cookery, metalwork, motor vehicles, horticulture, drama and photography.

The school's employer engagement manager and work experience coordinator have built a network of over 60 local businesses who support the school's Pathway to Employment programme and provide work experience for students. The programme, developed with the support of the Talentino, a careers provider, consists of 5 interrelated strands:

- Way2Work - careers at every level education lesson
- work-related learning
- business enterprise programmes
- work-based experience
- supported internships

As well as running a careers week with personalised programmes for students to follow, the school presents gold, silver or bronze awards to the companies that support their Pathways to Employment programme.

Brookfield's [Pathways to Employment](#) film (2016) is available on the school website.

### RESOURCES

- Mencap [guide to further education](#).
- [Looked-after Children and Care Leavers](#) guide from UCAS.
- Buttle UK provide information about the [Quality Mark for care leavers](#).
- Leonard Cheshire Disability charity's [Change 100](#) programme.
- UCAS provide [guidance for disabled students](#).
- [Sutton Trust summer schools](#) for disadvantaged and disabled young people.
- Guidance on [Disabled Students' Allowances](#) for students with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability.
- [Independent Parental Special Education Advice](#) (IPSEA).
- The National Deaf Children's Society publishes a range of [supporting achievement](#) resources to ensure effective inclusion including supporting deaf young people in further education, apprenticeships and higher education.
- National Autistic Society provides advice on [supporting autistic students in college or university](#).



# GATSBY BENCHMARK 7

## Encounters with further and higher education

### TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Employers who are engaging with supported internships or apprenticeships can work with colleges to offer relevant and challenging courses fit for their businesses.
2. Offer to be a part of annual events at colleges, such as open days. Show young people and their families what you have to offer.
3. Offer a fully-accessible careers event for all students, including accessible content for students with SEND.
4. Support alumni programmes, such as Future First, to return to your school and discuss your college or university experiences.
5. As part of any event, create a space for parents, families and carers to share their questions and concerns, so you can get their buy-in and understand more about their challenges.

### TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. Support students to prepare questions for open days in advance and debrief properly afterwards.
2. Before any event, address any questions or concerns from parents and families.
3. It can be a challenge for some parents and families to get to the school. Schedule information and open evenings alongside other events to reduce travel obligations.
4. Working out the support that one of your students may need can be better done while they are still at school. Anticipate the additional challenges that some of your students may face going to further or higher education such as understanding different expectations, managing money, accessibility issues, needing an advocate or becoming a self-advocate, communicating with a wider range of peers and adults, becoming more familiar with a new setting and, perhaps, relying less on family. Partner with local providers to arrange bespoke visits and taster courses, but also encourage early applications for advertised open days, summer schools and other offers.
5. Colleges and universities are at different stages in developing their SEND inclusion provision and will welcome advice from you about what more they could do. Find out the level of provision that the learning provider has in place to support your students such as help with study skills, access to counselling, careers and employment service, buddy and peer mentoring and provision of specialist accommodation.
6. Partner with your local university and encourage placement students to provide talks to students as they consider their future options.