

The Cheadle Hulme High School Series

This series of case studies aims to provide schools and colleges with a better understanding of how to develop their careers strategy in a structured, effective manner.

Our careers journey

Cheadle Hulme High School is in Stockport and is part of the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership. The first case study in this series is to provide an overview of the journey Cheadle Hulme High School has taken to developing a whole school embedded to careers provision and improving their careers programme.

For more information about this, or any other questions please contact Louis Garbutt at Louis.Garbutt@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Developing a careers strategy - Background

Cheadle Hulme High School joined the Enterprise Adviser Network in February 2019. They were matched with their Enterprise Adviser, Liz Perkins, Sales Director at News UK shortly after. Their Careers Leader is John Peet, Deputy Headteacher and the Enterprise Coordinator is Louis Garbutt.

The school is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Upon first completion of Compass, results were mixed, particularly for Benchmark 1 (35%) and Benchmark 5 (0%). There was an agreement between John, Liz and Louis that the Compass results signified that the school's careers provision was not sufficiently well aligned to the Gatsby Benchmarks. They also agreed that careers was not embedded through the curriculum, and although there were strategic elements to the provision, a formal 'all-school' careers strategy needed to be developed to drive any significant change and improve the achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Developing this strategy and aligning the school's provision to the Gatsby Benchmarks and school priorities became the primary objective over the first six months of the school joining the Enterprise Adviser Network.

A careers strategy was needed

At the start of this process, the approach to careers across the school was largely driven by John –because he was passionate about it. The programme of careers activities was based on what John knew to be impactful from his own experiences, guidance drawn from his knowledge of the Gatsby Benchmarks, as well as being reactive to opportunities as they arose.

He did not have any significant support from colleagues to deliver the programme and similarly, there was minimal dialogue between John and curriculum leads in regards to the careers agenda. John's management of the careers provision was through a collection of formal and informal documents that mostly he was familiar with due to him being solely responsible for the programme. This was tied together on the website through a 'Careers Overview' document that broke down the school's current provision by benchmark and loosely described student provision for each key stage.

A strategic approach – influencing change using the kotter model

The 'Careers Overview' document was assessed by Liz and Louis, and it was agreed that while it did provide valuable information on what provision was being delivered, it was not clear enough on what provision was being delivered when and to whom. They also recognised that the document didn't amount to a careers strategy strong enough to inform stakeholders about how the school approached and delivered careers. Following this analysis, the team agreed that a more robust strategy needed to be developed in order to inform a new 'all-school' approach to careers which is what the Gatsby Benchmarks indicated should be established.

In order to develop a robust careers strategy and for John to seek the change he was looking for, Louis introduced the Kotter model of change management based on practice elsewhere in the network, to help guide what steps should be taken. Namely:

- **Build a guiding coalition of stakeholders** within the school that could share ownership of the school's strategy alongside John and help distribute responsibility across the school staff.
- **Form a strategic vision** and initiatives with the guiding coalition to ensure that any strategy developed is aligned to the school's values and wider strategic objectives, ensuring it has shared ownership that extends beyond the Careers Leader.

Creating the vision

In order to support these steps Louis and Liz further developed a visioning workshop that had been delivered previously by Louis and an Enterprise Adviser at another school in the network. Meanwhile, John gathered a group of key stakeholders connected to the school who would take part in the workshop, including the Headteacher, two trustees, Head of Sixth Form, two STEM teachers and himself.

The purpose of the workshop was to get key stakeholders emotionally invested in developing a careers strategy, identify what the school's values and wider objectives were and articulate what a robust careers programme should achieve for students, staff, parents and employers. Additional benefits of the workshop included:

- Introducing stakeholders to their Enterprise Adviser and Enterprise Coordinator (raising the prestige of the approach John was taking);
- Educating stakeholders on the background and context of the workshops (Gatsby Benchmarks new Ofsted framework, Compass results) and
- Utilising the management consultancy skills of their Enterprise Adviser (allowing the EA to add significant value).

The workshop structure included:

- **Introduction:** introductions are made, and the purpose of the workshop is stated.
- **Context:** the current landscape of careers policy is explained by the Enterprise Coordinator, including the Gatsby Benchmarks, Ofsted and the 'journey so far' of the school since it joined the network.
- **AEM – Audience, Emotion and Motivation:** a strategic approach used at News UK is described to help inform the workshop, with the Enterprise Adviser describing how this could be used in a school setting.
- **Stirring the emotions:** a series of questions are asked to foster an emotional response to careers education from the stakeholders, reflecting on their own experiences in comparison to those of young people today.
- **School values and objectives:** stakeholders are asked to identify what values the school embodies, whether the school has a vision and what the current priorities are amongst senior leadership (incorporating the school improvement plan).
- **What should our careers programme achieve:** stakeholders are asked to describe (through 'blue-sky thinking') what they would want their school's careers programme to achieve for students, staff, parents and employers.



Strategic pillars: the futures programme

Following the visioning workshop, and once Liz had captured and collated notes and comments, she and John then met to develop the school's careers strategy, incorporating the results of the visioning workshop and shaped around a framework Liz had produced to support the meeting.

The framework asked John to articulate the following:

1. Purpose of programme
2. Goals of programme
3. Strategic pillars of programme
4. How will we work together?
5. Communications and engagement plan
6. Commitment to action

The resulting document called 'Strategic Pillars', clearly articulated an 'all-school' approach to careers with a defined purpose, goals and transparent actions the school was taking to deliver on its new strategy (see below). The school also had a new name for the programme, The Futures Programme. This new document was incorporated with the old 'Careers Overview' document to form a new public facing showcase of the school's careers strategy (including a new operational plan) that is now available to view on the school's website.

Through undertaking this process with the support of an Enterprise Coordinator and Enterprise Adviser, by the end of the academic year in July 2019, John and Cheadle Hulme High School's approach to careers had made significant progress. From a starting position in which the careers programme did not align with a clear strategy, was dependant on one staff member (John) and was only loosely framed on the Gatsby Benchmarks with no articulated action plan, the school ended the year in a much stronger position

The school now had an articulated careers strategy that was co-developed with a guiding coalition of senior stakeholders (framed around the Gatsby Benchmarks), and actions had been taken for staff to be responsible for careers education at different key stages with clearly defined goals. These sub-groups of staff are now being offered extra training through the Enterprise Coordinator and Enterprise Adviser with the aim of

piloting some exciting activities in Autumn ready for the new school strategy to be launched to all staff in January 2020. The strategy outlines a whole school approach and builds a culture of accountability.

All hands on deck

These actions reflect the stage of Kotter that the school is now following. Having gathered a guiding coalition and developed a vision, John has set about enlisting his 'army of volunteers' (key stage sub-groups) to help deliver the careers strategy. John is also looking to 'remove barriers' by piloting some exciting careers activities and 'quick wins' that can be then shared with all staff to drive implementation and support of the career's strategy. The test will then be to sustain the implementation of the careers strategy over the coming months and years so that careers education becomes part of the institutional change John is looking to make.



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