

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 both technical and academic routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.

- By the age of 16, every student should have had a meaningful encounter* with providers of the full range of educational opportunities, including sixth forms, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and students.
- By the age of 18, all students who are considering applying for university should have had at least two visits to universities to meet staff and students.
- By the age of 18, or before the end of their programme of study, every student should have had a meaningful encounter with a range of providers of learning and training that may form the next stage of their career. This should include, as appropriate, further education colleges, higher education and apprenticeship and training providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and students.

*A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the student has an opportunity to explore what it is like to learn in that environment. This includes academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and the workplace.

What this means in practice

- Enterprise Advisers and Enterprise Coordinators work closely with local institutions and agencies on a collaborative and strategic approach. All partners – schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, careers guidance providers, parents/carers, employers and the wider community – have a common understanding of local needs and solutions. Co-operative working makes it easier to organise big events, such as careers, skills and higher education fairs.
- Schools have a multi-pronged approach to ensure students are well-supported to choose pathways they value post-18. They start this work long before students reach the point of decision as evidence shows that raising aspirations and building resilience is effective from Year 7 or earlier.
- The school makes maximum use of its flexibility to organise suspended timetable days for different year groups, such as careers and higher education preparation days for Year 12 in the summer term.

Meaningful encounters with providers cover a wide range of ways young people can learn about their post-compulsory school options. They provide off-site visits and direct interactions with key roles, such as lecturers, current students of apprenticeships.

Providers include:

- apprenticeships and other work-based training;
- further and higher education.

- The school ensures encounters with further and higher education are part of an overall approach that encompasses:
 - personalised and small-group information, advice and guidance;
 - carefully selected sources of information, including digital and print-based, which are promoted through the school's website, newsletter and social media;
 - a planned programme of on-site and off-site encounters with further and higher education to strengthen accessibility, outreach and transition-preparedness for targeted groups, such as Pupil Premium, gifted and talented students and students with special educational needs and disabilities;
 - close co-operation with parents, families and carers in recognition of their key influence on children's thinking and decision-making, specifically to develop their capacity to talk about careers with their children and encourage family learning.

The provider access legislation is new guidance that comes into force from January 2023, which builds on Benchmark 7 and adds new specific requirements for schools. You can find out more about the guidance and support with promoting all pathways [here](#)

Why this matters

- Exposure to higher and further education and to apprenticeships, helps raise aspiration and allows young people to make the right choices for them. At the moment many more young people have encounters with higher than further education.
- The UK's future depends on all of our young people finding the right path for them and fulfilling their potential.
- One in four pupils from poor families make it to university. Nearly double the amount of other children make it. If bright children from poor families had the same support to achieve as others four in ten would go to a top university - today only one in ten make it.

FSM students make up only 16.7% of students in KS5 (16-18 years) academic pathways in comparison to 28% on vocational pathways (Bit report).

1,400 more students were in sustained EET during 2018/19 connected to the level of guidance provision that schools in the sample reported, compared to a scenario in which all schools had reported zero benchmark provision.

Top tips for schools

Plan

- For programmes of support to be successful, they need to start in key stage three. A useful rule of thumb is to inspire students in Years 7-9, reinforce key messages in Years 10-11 and prepare students for making their choices in Years 12-13.
- Avoid making judgements about the prestige and status of different pathways and providers in case you unwittingly influence your students inappropriately.

Deliver

- See how the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (Uni connect) supports target wards in each catchment area to promote higher education to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Consider how encounters with further and higher education can be embedded within suspended timetable days or activities days/weeks.
- When planning staff CPD, consider how key staff can support and help students prepare for and reflect on their personal guidance interviews.

Measure

- Track destinations of leavers over three to five years using a combination of quantitative data (to pick up on trends) and qualitative data (to pick up on stories). This will allow you to plan for the future.

For further step by step support with planning and delivering meaningful provider encounters use [this guide](#)

Top Tips for employers

- Outreach activities cannot be left to higher and further education institutions alone – employers can help tackle the deep-seated cultural and social reasons why young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are in danger of being left behind.
- Highlight the significance of advanced further and higher education qualifications, including higher and degree level apprenticeships in your industry or sector.
- Check with your professional body and/or HR department to ensure that you are passing on accurate and up-to-date information about the qualifications that are recognised in your industry and the wide range of entry points and routes.
- Recognise that many parents still have an outmoded view of apprenticeships and may not have been to university or know how they have changed. Use your knowledge to bring them up to date.
- Draw on your experience of applying for courses and jobs to pass on valuable advice to young people about being enterprising, determined and resilient when searching for apprenticeships or choosing higher education.
- Anticipate the kinds of questions students may ask you. Asking direct questions about salary is not unusual so you may want to come armed with generalised information about salary ranges!
- Familiarise yourself with [Statutory Guidance](#) to best support schools you are working with.
- Familiarise yourself with [T-Levels](#) to ensure that support you are offering to schools reflects this change to the Post 16 education offer.

Useful resources

Annual careers-related celebrations can be showcased in school or students can go along to national and local events associated with them. Examples include:

- [the Skills Show](#)
- [the Big Bang Fair](#) (science and engineering)
- [National Careers Week](#)
- [National Apprenticeship Week](#)
- [British Science Week](#)
- [International Women's Day](#)
- [National Mentoring Day](#)

Publicise [the university and college open day directory](#).

The [Higher Education Funding Council for England](#) guide to the national collaborative outreach programme aims to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education by 2020. Find out about activities in your area, such as mentoring programmes, taster days, summer schools and careers training for staff in schools and colleges.

The Sutton Trust organise summer schools for disadvantaged students.

Up-to-date information about apprenticeships for students, parents and staff can be found at:

- [GOV.UK Apprenticeships](#) and its [resources for teachers and advisers page](#)
- [Jobcentre Plus](#)
- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#)
- [National Apprenticeships](#)
- [Not going to uni](#)
- [Get my first job](#)
- [The guide to apprenticeship frameworks for employers and training providers](#)
- [The guide to apprenticeships from the Education and Skills Funding Agency](#)
- [The parents' guide to apprenticeships from the Education and Skills Funding Agency](#)

Up-to-date information about higher education for students, parents and staff can be found at:

- [UCAS](#)
- [Whatuni?](#)
- [Which? University](#)
- [The complete university guide](#)
- [UK Course Finder](#)
- [The Student Room](#)
- [Student Finance England](#)

Information about Further Education can be found at:

- [Association of Colleges](#)
- [BTEC Qualifications](#)
- [Access to Higher Education](#)



The updated provider access legislation from January 2023, specifies schools must provide at least six provider encounters for all their students, for the purpose of informing them about approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships. Schools are required to publish a Provider Access Policy on their websites setting out when and how providers can access students through the year.

It is important that all students, whatever their ability, understand the full range of options available to them so they can make an informed choice when making decisions at 16 and 18. This includes the full range of learning locations and qualifications on offer.

Careers Leaders may need to help teaching staff and others across the school understand all the options available to students.

For additional support, complete [The Careers and Enterprise Company free online Learning module: Careers Leader induction Course](#).

University/further education visit

Plan:

- Consider career learning outcomes for any FE/HE visits.
- Start young and ensure that planning accommodates for students' needs.
- Work with staff and visit hosts to agree a focus for the visit and to identify and secure relevant volunteer/alumni support.
- Complete risk assessments and planning paperwork and ensure all parties are fully briefed.

Deliver

- Share key LMI information throughout the event and build in opportunities for reflection and to check understanding.
- Ensure that resource for the visit captures intended learning outcomes.
- Allow students and staff to set themselves targets/ action plans from the visit.

Measure

- Track and record intervention using The Careers & Enterprise Company's digital tools (Compass, Tracker, Compass+).
- Collect event feedback to inform future planning and delivery of the event.

Ensuring staff, students and parents understand all routes available at 16 and 18

- Ensure you meet statutory guidance and that you Access Provider Statement is published on your website.
- Be intentional about covering all routes when planning:
 - Student career programme: pay particular attention to the balance between academic routes and vocational and technical pathways;
 - Staff CPD;
 - Parental Engagement.
- Track and record intervention using The Careers & Enterprise Company's digital tools (Compass, Tracker, Compass+).
- Work with students, staff and parents to get recorded feedback on a regular basis to inform future planning and delivery of careers programme.
- Monitor destination data to track impact on student choices.

In practice:

An academy located on the south coast is working with several charities to establish a network of volunteers and alumni at university or in apprenticeships. The school has a progressive programme helping to inform students about FE/HE:

- Years 7 to 9 experience multi-subject taster days at their local university;
- Years 8 and 9 take part in a welcome day with workshops and an evening graduation linked to choosing their GCSE and other options;
- Years 10 to 13 benefit from conferences, master classes, experience days and residential summer schools at a range of FE colleges and universities.