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COMPANY

Practical ways to embed high quality
work experience across the curriculum

Kelly Dillon

Statutory Guidance update

National
webinar
29th June 2026

Register now!

- Statutory Guidance updated (live 23rd June)
- Strategic shifts as opposed to “technical updates”:
 - (i) Careers guidance positioned as a core school improvement strategy
 - (ii) Stronger focus on transitions, NEET prevention and destination outcomes
 - (iii) Work experience becomes a central delivery priority
 - (iv) Personalisation, inclusion and equity as explicit system expectations
 - (v) Careers provision is becoming increasingly data-driven and accountable

Statutory Guidance 2026:

Stronger expectations on work experience

- Additional guidance on delivering the government's ambition of:
*"2 weeks' worth of work experience for every young person by the end of KS4" -
"schools should now be reforming their work experience programmes"*
- Greater emphasis on meaningful preparation, reflection and progression

Meaningful experiences of the workplace

The potential value and therefore purpose of work experience is VAST.

Clarity of purpose is essential. It's important to recognise that the goals for what you want your learners to know, understand, and be able to feel or do as a result of work experience are unlikely to be fully achieved through a single experience.

Guiding principles

To support a meaningful approach to Benchmark 6 and the updated statutory guidance we use the following core guiding principles:

- Start early to develop a progressive approach that allows for experiences across key stages or across programmes of study
- Be intent and outcome led
- Be responsive to learner need, evaluation data and regional/national labour market context

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The CEC have developed equalex, which is a framework for quality work experience (rooted in the Careers Impact System maturity model).

equalex enables all learners to develop the skills knowledge and behaviours needed to access and support 10 days' worth of meaningful experiences in an equitable way

By clearly identifying and defining your purpose and intent, you can shape how work experiences are designed and carried out. Articulating clear intent also makes it easier to evaluate the effectiveness of these experiences.

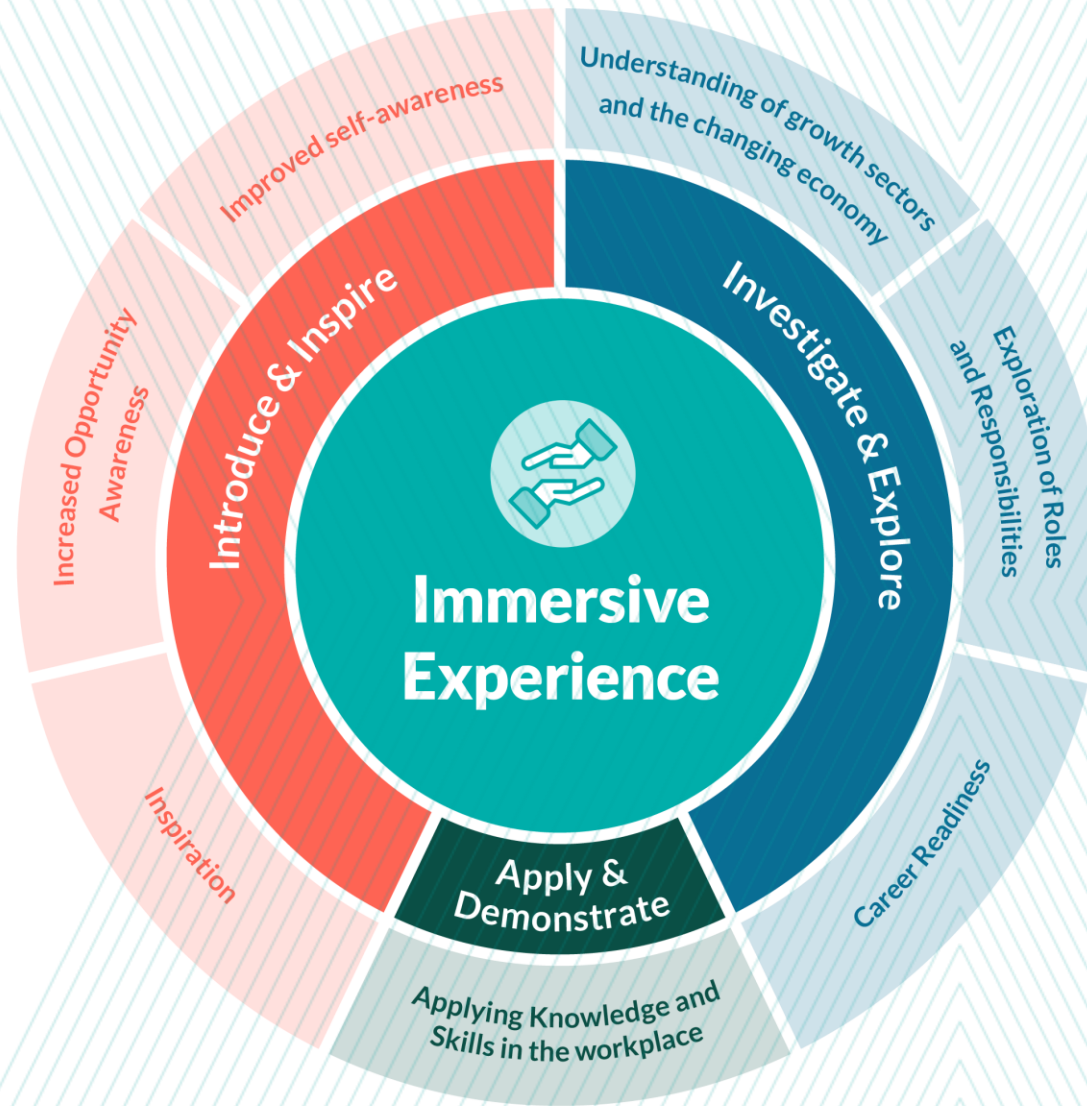
The equalex framework is a progressive programme of learning outcome and objectives to support you in your delivery and enables a progressive journey for the young person.

The equalex Learning Outcomes:

To meet the equalex quality standard for workplace experiences, students must have the opportunity to meet and evidence the learning outcomes across all 3 core themes.

We encourage innovation regarding delivery of this framework and while we intend to share best practice, we have not prescribed how the outcomes must be achieved.

While this framework is intended to be delivered via workplace experiences, some activities can also be mapped against other areas of a progressive careers programme.



The **equalex** Learning Outcomes:

Each of the learning outcomes have up to 3 learning objectives.

For example:

Introduce and Inspire	
Learning Outcome	Learning Objective
Developing Self-Awareness Students are aware of their passions, skills and work preferences and understand how these could inform their career choices	Students recognise essential workplace skills and are able to self-assess their current skill level.
	Students can identify their passions, interests and skills and consider how they might inform potential jobs or career pathways.
	Students can describe their work style and ideal working environment and can give examples of workplaces that would and would not suit their preferences.



equalex graduate – Learner profile

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Knowledge

- **Awareness of pathways** into a career in the different industries and the roles associated with those pathways
- Able to use the knowledge gained to help make **informed decisions** about their transition thinking through the range of options available to them at Post 16 and Post 18
- **Increased confidence** around their own skill set and how this can best support them in the future workplace

Behaviours

- Developed an **understanding of workplace culture** and how this differs across different sectors
- Developed **positive workplace behaviours** through multiple experiences
- **Feel confident** in making **positive informed decisions** regarding their **future options**

Skills

- Can **self-advocate** and **articulate the sector skills** they have developed to support future choices
- Are equipped with the **skills** to support them in making a **successful transition**
- Have **developed skills and qualifications** relevant to their chosen pathway through employer experiences and projects
- **See the relevance** of skills from their curriculum learning and qualifications to their future options

At the end of an equalx programme a learner will;

- **Understand relevant pathways and what that means for them**
- **Realise their own potential around pathways and career options**
- **See the relevance of curriculum to workplace**
- **Have agency in their own skills development**
- **Have improved careers readiness score**
- **Have taken part in multiple, meaningful work experiences**

Good career guidance the next 10 years

A meaningful experience will:

- have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the young person
- be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the young person
- involve extensive two-way interactions between the young person and employees
- include opportunities for young people to meet a range of different people from the workplace
- include opportunities for young people to perform a task set by the employer or to produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace
- include the employer providing feedback to the young person about their work
- be followed by opportunities for the young person to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through their experience

Benchmark 6: Definition of meaningful

Explore ▾

Submit a resource

Home

equalex

Developed by the **Careers & Enterprise Company** and supported by **Careers Hubs**, the equalex framework, defines learning outcomes and objectives and allows educators to embed meaningful workplace experiences within a progressive whole school careers programme.

Watch the video below, '**Leadership in Action: Defining the Future of High-Quality, Modern Work Experiences**,' to learn about the benefits.



Get this resource

Outcomes and Objectives ▾

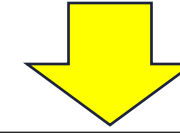
Leadership in Action 🎥

FAQs ▾

Resources for SEND 🔗

Curriculum Audit Tool 🔗

Careers impact system and equalex



Theme 5 Encounters with employers/employees and experiences of the workplace (Benchmarks 5 and 6)				
5.1 Effective employer engagement	The school or special school engages with a range of employers.	The school or special school identifies and engages with employers, including those from key sectors regionally as well as those of interest to learners.	Engagement with employers is informed by relevant LMI and learner need and there is evidence that employer engagement informs multiple progressive and meaningful employer encounters for learners.	Engagement with employers is informed by relevant LMI and learner need. There is evidence that employer engagement informs multiple progressive and meaningful employer encounters for learners and curriculum planning/high quality teaching.
5.2 Meaningful encounters with employers	There are ad hoc employer encounters for learners including careers fairs, etc.	All learners engage in progressive meaningful encounters with employers.	Documented careers learning journeys that are planned, progressive and responsive are underpinned by relevant careers-related learning outcomes and include multiple meaningful encounters with employers.	A documented, responsive and differentiated careers learning journey, underpinned by relevant progressive careers-related learning outcomes, includes multiple meaningful and progressive employer encounters. Impact evaluation, school or special school vision and priorities, and learner needs assessments, inform multiple meaningful encounters with employers with clear intent for all learners and for specific cohorts.
5.3 Meaningful experiences of the workplace	Workplace experiences are offered to learners.	All learners access workplace experience(s).	Documented careers learning journeys that are planned, progressive and responsive are underpinned by relevant careers-related learning outcomes that include multiple meaningful experiences of the workplace.	A documented, responsive and differentiated careers learning journey, underpinned by relevant progressive careers-related learning outcomes, includes multiple progressive and meaningful experiences of the workplace. Impact evaluation, school or special school vision and priorities, and learner needs assessments, inform multiple meaningful experiences of the workplace with clear intent for all learners and for specific cohorts.

Positioning of careers

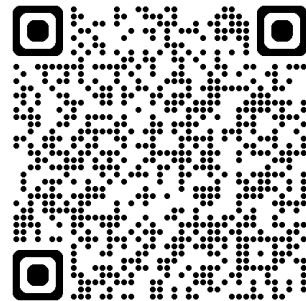
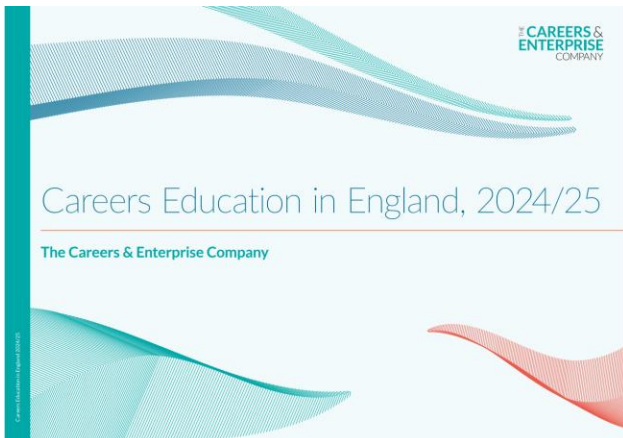
NEET Prevention – context

- **The challenge is growing** - the number of young people aged 16–24 NEET is now at its highest since 2014
- **Careers education is one of the most powerful tools we have for prevention** - the highest-quality provision reduces the likelihood of a young person being NEET by 8% post-16 and post-18
- **Key principles to boost NEET prevention through careers education include:**
 - Identify the need, act early
 - Target barriers that are exacerbated by economic disadvantage
 - Provide continued support
 - Creating social capital for young people with more limited networks e.g. employer engagement and trusted and relatable role models/mentors
 - Track progress and outcomes
- **Data-driven early prevention** - With 94% of schools and colleges now using CEC's digital tools, this rich data enables earlier identification and smarter interventions

NEET Prevention – impact

The better a school's careers provision is, the more likely its students are to say they are ready for work and the less likely they are to be NEET

Our latest published evidence shows improved careers education results in students making faster progress in their work readiness and essential skills; an estimated 6,000 fewer learners become NEET every year, saving the Exchequer £300m annually.



OnTrack+

OnTrack+ allows leaders to **identify, prioritise and manage activities** for learners who require enhanced intervention to help prevent them from becoming NEET.

The objective of the feature is to provide the basis for early intervention from KS3 against disengagements and ultimately NEET outcomes.

The identification process works by using:

- **Automatic indicators** - Generated from the learner data shared with Compass+ from your MIS (e.g., FSM, pupil premium). These produce a statistically valid prediction.
- **Manual indicators** - Optional and must be entered and managed by the school (e.g., multiple school moves, young carer).



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Manage OnTrack+ Record Reports

Search in 135 records... Reset Filters Create Custom Group Download report

Show columns (21) Select all

PERSONAL INFORMATION: UPN, Date of Birth, Year Group, Form Group, Indicators, Indicators movement since

INDICATORS

INTERVENTION FLAGS: Flag for intervention, Previously unflagged for intervention, Last reason(s) given for being unflagged, Interventions contributed to last unflagging

AUTOMATIC INDICATORS: Persistent absence, Persistent lateness, Free school meals, Pupil premium, EHCP, SEN, IDACI

MANUAL INDICATORS: Multiple school moves, Suspension, Young carer, Academic achievement below standard, Looked after child

OnTrack+ Actions	Last Name	First Name	Year Group	Indicators
View profile	Adams	Dominic	Year 9	5

Users can illustrate the group through reporting and export functions, manage interventions at the group or individual level, and track the effectiveness of interventions with young people by reassessing their OnTrack+ outputs and FSQ use.

OnTrack+

“Within 10 minutes of using OnTrack+, I found 14 learners at risk of becoming NEET who could have fallen through the gaps.

Ontrack+ is a game-changer in what I can do for those learners right away.”

Holyhead School

COMPASS +
THE CAREERS LEADER DASHBOARD

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“Using the insights OnTrack+ provided, we ran an intensive one-day careers and college application workshop for 60 at-risk learners. With Careers Advisers and local college representatives on-site, learners received one-to-one guidance to help choose a college course and were then supported to complete and submit those applications.”

Derby Moor Academy

Embedding careers

Curriculum embedding

Using the [curriculum audit](#) will enable you to have a clear picture of what your current provision looks like and identify any gaps against the equalex framework and where experiences are already taking place

You can then start to plan your student career learning journey to support modern work experience

Next steps:

Look at where equalex activity can add meaning and would be relevant, think about:

- What topics are particularly challenging to deliver could employers help support this through experiences
- Where are their opportunities to deepen activity to make it a meaningful experience
- What opportunities across the wider school day exist to further offer opportunities - enrichment, drop down days
- Take a look at the resources available in [My Learning My Future](#) to support thinking around embedding within different subject areas
- Use this [guide](#) to support your thinking

What could this look like?

- Support colleagues to align all planned visits in the annual calendar to your learning outcomes and any visit can become an experience of work.
- Consider the wider approach to careers in the curriculum and if there are any opportunities to make changes to planning of careers education supported by employers or of employer encounters to become experiences of work (e.g. through project-based learning set by employers or curriculum visits.)
- A meaningful experience gives the young person the opportunity to explore what it is like to work in that environment, what skills are valued in the workplace, their recruitment processes and what it takes to be successful. This could be achieved through visits to workplaces, work shadowing and/or work experience.
- Work experience is not always in one particular key stage nor is it for any particular length or group size. Modern work experience for learners is a progressive offer of multiple experiences that measurably support learners to make aspirational and informed decisions, effective and sustained transitions and to be 'careers ready'.

What to do next - Employers

Now you have an idea of what your offer looks like you need to identify employers to support with experiences and equalex activity.

Work cross institution to identify existing employer links - you may already have these mapped out but a quick survey across institution will support identification of others

Some quick wins:

- Speak to your finance team about suppliers – catering and others
- Where are there already opportunities to deepen activity to make it a meaningful experience
- What opportunities across the wider school day exist to further offer opportunities - enrichment, drop down days
- Connect with your local Careers Hub for support

There are resources to support employer understanding around modern work experience available [here](#) - share with your network of employers

Evidencing equalex

Unit Awards for certification available Sept 26

- 7 units available under the 3 phases of equalex
- Summary sheet evidence provided from the institution
- Certificates available within 5-10 working days

Most chosen general qualifications exam board in England.

[About AQA](#) [Centre Services](#)



[Subjects](#) [Qualifications](#) [Professional Development](#) [Exams Admin](#) [Services](#)

[Home](#) > [Unit Award Scheme](#)

Unit Award Scheme

Some examples in practice



Employer
example of
progressive
programme

Activities
included links to
Science
curriculum

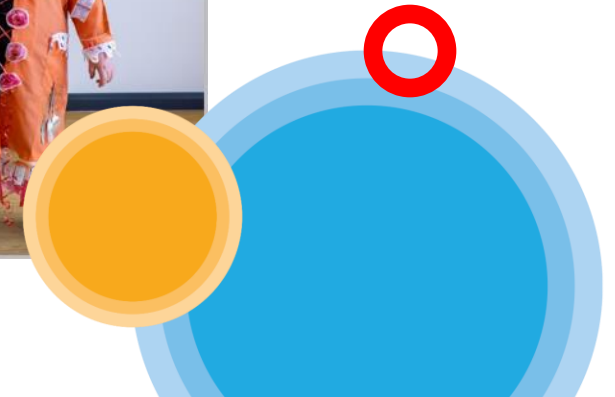
Our journey



- **Teacher Encounters**
- **Meet the students:**
Introduce & Inspire
- **Visit to YTL C Avonmouth:**
Investigate & Explore
- **Week-long work experience placement:**
Apply & Demonstrate
- **Invitations to Apprenticeship Recruitment Assessment Centre**

What this looks like – KS3

- **Dedicated Enterprise Lessons**
- Enterprise Challenges
- **Use of Enterprise Commandments**
- Whole School Events
- Fundraising activities
- Drop down careers day
- Careers advice
- College Visits
- Employer Visits
- Employer Led Assemblies



I spent yesterday at a fantastic work experience day delivered by the **B. Braun Sheffield Sharks** at Canon Medical Arena, with 15 Year 9 students from The Laurel Academy in Doncaster. It really couldn't have gone better, from start to finish the day felt like a great example of what modern work experience should be. The students were engaged and genuinely enjoying themselves, while also learning a huge amount during the day. They had a full venue tour, took part in a really engaging careers in sport interactive activity, got even had the chance to do some professional photography and filming of a TikTok with two of the Hatters players.

They also interviewed the previous Sharks captain about leadership in sport (part of their curriculum), received some sport coaching and still had time to get on court and play a game of basketball themselves.

It really stood out for me how much the students took from it all. They asked thoughtful questions, tried things they wouldn't usually get access to and were able to see a really wide range of roles linked to sport, not just what happens on the court, all from real role models. It linked really well to their curriculum and felt inclusive, accessible and relevant for everyone involved.

This experience aligned strongly with the Equalex framework and showed just how effective work experience can be when it's co-designed between employers and schools. The whole day is now a model we can point to as best practice for modern work experience.

Huge thanks again to Sarah and the whole team at the Sheffield Sharks for putting on such a brilliant day and for the time and energy they gave to the students. This is exactly the kind of experience that makes a real difference!



Following our recent Year 9 assembly with Jess Morgan from BAM UK & Ireland and Chris Fuller from Torridge District Council, a group of our pupils took part in a fantastic two half-day experience exploring sustainability, construction, innovation, and the huge range of careers within the sector.

Day One – Sustainability STEM Workshop

Led by Sustainability Manager **Jess Morgan**, Pupils tackled a real-world construction challenge. They worked in teams to problem-solve, design solutions, and pitch their ideas — gaining a genuine insight into the decision-making and creativity behind modern construction.

Day Two – Visit to Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre

Pupils were warmly welcomed by the BAM team for a behind-the-scenes site tour. They learned about different roles across the project, the tendering and design process, CAD work, environmental considerations, and how every part of the build comes together.

A special highlight was the chance for pupils and staff to write their names on spacers that will be built into the structure — leaving their mark on a landmark project of the future!

Key takeaways from our pupils:

- The impressive level of Health & Safety on site
- How closely the workshop connected to the real project
- The friendliness, openness, and professionalism of the BAM team
- Feeling confident to ask questions
- Seeing first-hand how GCSE Design & Technology and Engineering link to real careers
- Understanding environmental impacts on construction
- Learning about apprenticeships and future opportunities in the industry
- Witnessing CAD and design processes in action

We were blessed with glorious weather in Appledore and felt incredibly welcomed.

Our pupils came away inspired, informed, and excited about the career pathways available within the construction sector.

A huge thank you to Jess Morgan and the whole BAM team for coordinating such an engaging and inspiring experience. We look forward to working with you again — and can't wait to see the Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre once it's complete and hear about the new opportunities it will bring to our area.

NHS ESSEX HEALTH & CARE ACADEMY: A CO-DESIGNED APPROACH TO EARLY CAREERS ENGAGEMENT

What Happened on the Day:

On the day of delivery, students attended the NHS Education and Training Simulation Suite at the Community Hospital and were welcomed by staff from the NHS Essex Health & Care Academy who led the session. Students were introduced to the purpose of the visit and the expectations of being in a real healthcare workplace, with a strong emphasis on professional behaviour and active participation.

The day centred around practical, hands-on activities designed by the NHS Healthcare Academy to reflect real NHS practice. These included using personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly and a hand-washing task where students examined the presence of bacteria using UV light. This activity proved particularly impactful, helping students understand why infection control matters and enabling them to link learning to recent science lessons in school.

Throughout the session, students engaged directly with members of the NHS workforce, discussing different roles, career routes and progression pathways within the NHS. Small group sizes ensured that every student could take part fully, ask questions and receive individual guidance and feedback from staff.

The day concluded with structured feedback from NHS Healthcare Academy staff, focusing on students' engagement, teamwork and conduct in the workplace. Students then completed feedback and reflection activities, helping them to consolidate the knowledge, skills and insights gained from the experience.

Top tips for anyone else undertaking this activity

- **Co-design with employers:** Working closely with NHS staff ensured the activities were realistic, meaningful and aligned to workplace expectations.
- **Keep group sizes manageable:** A maximum of 15 students allowed staff to give individual attention and ensured all learners could fully engage with the tasks.
- **Build in hands-on activities:** Practical tasks such as PPE demonstrations and hygiene experiments greatly increased engagement and understanding.
- **Link to the curriculum:** Students were able to connect the experience to topics they had recently covered in science, reinforcing learning.
- **Provide structured feedback:** Employer-led feedback on behaviour, listening and workplace conduct added significant value for students and teachers.
- **Introduce careers early:** Many students had not previously considered NHS careers; early exposure broadened aspirations and challenged misconceptions.

KB Employment journey

📅 12th March 2025 📁 Careers, News 👤 by S Greig

This video truly highlights why, at Catcote Academy, we focus on what we *can* do! We want to share Kai's employment journey into Catcote Crew. Before Christmas, Kai participated in the application process for a job role with Catcote Crew, where he completed his very first application form. Last week, Kai attended his first interview with Mr. Ash, our Assistant head teacher of yellow and blue pathway. We are incredibly proud to announce that Kai got the job! This is a huge achievement, and we are excited to watch him continue to grow in this new role.

[KB Employment journey – Catcote Academy](#)

Reactive Design Ltd



📅 9th December 2025 📁 Careers 👤 by S Greig

As part of their work-related learning, Link 3 have been studying graphic design, with a particular focus on logo creation. Each student was tasked with designing their own extreme sports brand logo, developing it from the initial concept through to the final design, all of which was documented in their sketchbooks.

Their finished logos are to be printed onto T-shirts; this is showcase how their designs would appear in the real world. Over the 9-week course, the students learned about the five basic principles of graphic design and what it takes to create a strong, distinctive logo.

As part of Link 3's graphic design journey, they also had the opportunity to visit Reactive Design Ltd., a Hartlepool-based graphic design studio. Andrew and Stuart were extremely welcoming and answered all of the students' questions about the industry.

Piloting approaches in 6 schools – Lift Academies



School 1	Introducing visits to key growth sectors in KS3 as preparation for an enhanced 2 week block of work experience in KS4.
School 2	Embedding experiences of workplaces into KS3 curriculum - focus on Maths, English, Science and PSHE.
School 3	Evolving 'strive time' (timetabled enrichment) to incorporate experiences of workplaces throughout Y7-Y10.
School 4	Integrating experiences of workplaces into existing careers and character curriculum 'drop down' days, initially at KS3.
	Using experiences of workplaces as part of a NEET prevention strategy for young people who persistently disengage.
School 5	Redesigning the traditional Y10 student self sourced work experience model, creating a school constructed experiences of workplaces programme instead.
School 6 (SEND)	Developing an experiences of workplaces exchange programme, for young people with SEND, that uses SEND schools as workplaces.
	Enhancing in school encounters with employers through related workplace visits

Sharing Best Practice: What we do

FOUNDATIONS (FOR ALL LEARNERS)

1:1 Employability Sessions

Personalised support to build confidence and readiness

Simulated Work Experience (WEX)

In-school vocational training to develop real-world skills

1:1 Careers Advice

Guidance tailored to individual pathways

Community Projects & Mentoring

Connecting learners with real experiences and role models

WEX Booklets & Career Passports

Tracking progress and achievements

Careers Fayres & Post-16 Visits

Exploring future opportunities

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT & EXPERIENCES

Career Talks

Inspiring insights from industry professionals

Careers in the Curriculum

Employers bringing learning to life

Applications & Interview Preparation

Selling yourself, and interview practice

Mock Interviews with Employers

Realistic preparation and feedback

Alumni Talks

Learning from past students' journeys

Reflection Sessions

Reviewing growth and planning next steps

Workplace Visits – “Day in the Life”

First-hand experience of different roles

Work Experience Placements

Options: 1 day | 3 days | 5+ days

Road to Positive Progressions

YEAR 10

Spring Term: Skill Development and Work Experience
 Employability Skills Intervention
 CV Intervention
 Work Experience Placement: Short-term placements (1-2 weeks) to gain practical insight

YEAR 11

Autumn Term: Application & Decision Making

*Careers Fair and Post-16 Assemblies: local employers, training providers, and colleges

*Post-16 Pathways Guidance: Group introduction to college options, apprenticeships and training providers

*1:1 Careers Guidance Session

Post-16 Pathway Tours

Application Support: Assistance with completing college and apprenticeship applications

Interview Preparation Workshop

Mock interviews: Practice sessions with real employers to build confidence

Summer Term: Reflection & Celebration

Review of Career Journey: Celebrating progress and achievements from Years 10-11

Celebration Event

Post-16 Transition Support (continued help after exams)

Online Leavers Survey

Focus Group: In-depth feedback on CEIAG experience

Autumn Term: Career Exploration

Career Exploration: Identify student interests, skills, values and personality traits

*1:1 Careers Guidance Session: Student to discuss motivational interests

Workplace Visits: Organise trips to local businesses and establishments

Guest Speakers: Invite professionals from diverse fields to share their experience

Summer Term: Reflection & Planning

Reflection: Reviewing on work experience and workshops in relation to career goals

*1:1 Careers Review Session: Discuss individual aspirations and set goals

Spring Term: Final Preparations

*Careers Fair and Post-16 Assemblies: local employers, training providers, and colleges

Final Work Experience Placement: A more in-depth placement related to chosen career path

Update CV: To reflect new experience, achievements, interests, etc.

*1:1 Careers Transition Planning Session: Discuss next steps and available support at post-16 destinations (inc. City of Bristol)

Parent/Carer Engagement: Meetings to ensure family involvement in the transition process

Additional Support Strategies

1:1 Mentoring: Pair students with mentors from local businesses and organisations for guidance

Personalised learning plans: Tailor career education to individual needs and aspirations

Parental involvement: Regular updates and meetings to ensure a collaborative approach

Continuous improvement: Use feedback to refine and enhance the careers programme annually

Regular Assessments: Track post-16 progression through surveys and feedback



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er students post-16 experiences

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