

THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Responding to the Ofsted recommendations
for effective Careers Guidance

A practical guide for schools

PART ONE:

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS & WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGY



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Using this guide

PART ONE: Senior Leadership Teams & Whole School Strategy

This guide is designed for school leaders and careers guidance practitioners to use when planning and delivering an effective careers guidance programme.

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook - updated in January 2015 - now focusses specifically on what is expected of schools including “the extent to which the school has developed and implemented a strategy for ensuring that all pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive effective careers guidance”, and “the impact of this guidance in helping young people to make informed choices about their next steps”.

The ‘*Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012*’ Ofsted report of September 2013 contained a huge amount of recommendations, examples of good practice and criticisms of existing provision in some schools, which has resulted in the more specific coverage of careers guidance in the inspection handbook from September 2014. To support schools in responding to this and to implement change, this guide has sectioned some of the key themes running through the report, and collated the relevant points into one place. At the beginning of each theme, the Ofsted logo identifies where direct reference has been made to the ‘Going in the right direction?’ report. Page and paragraph references are also included for ease of use.

Following the Ofsted observations, each theme contains a section entitled ‘Context and Challenges’, where considerations such as the school environment, involvement of staff and communication channels with parents are discussed. Recognising the additional priorities and pressures of a school, this section aims to reassure readers that the ideas and recommendations provided in this document are considerate and achievable.

Finally, the practical ideas section then provides readers with ideas of how to get started with that particular theme. These ideas may also reference other resources we have created for schools, such as ‘*5 Steps to an Outstanding Careers Guidance Programme*’ which can be found on our website.

Future parts of this guide will include:

- ✓ Targeted groups
- ✓ Embedding careers across the curriculum
- ✓ Inspiring careers lessons
- ✓ Breadth and impartiality of information
- ✓ Labour market information
- ✓ Enrichment and employer engagement
- ✓ The role of the careers advisor
- ✓ Effective careers interviews
- ✓ Using data, evidence and tracking



The role of the Senior Leadership Team

The role of the Senior Leadership Team



Where Ofsted inspectors visited schools that were demonstrating very effective careers guidance, it was noticed that leaders and governors had made careers guidance a high priority. (Pg 6, Key findings).

In those schools identified as successful, both leaders and governors were commended for their *'forward thinking'* and for *'making careers guidance part of their strategic efforts to foster better achievement and well-being for all their students.'* (Pg 5, Executive summary).

It was also noted that: *'Thorough monitoring of the quality of careers guidance provision was rarely observed in the schools visited. Leaders and Managers did not know the extent to which their students had the information and guidance they needed to make the important decisions that shape their future careers.'* (Pg 5, Executive summary).

Context and challenges

Governors and Senior Leadership Teams are faced with many different agendas and are hugely limited for time to commit to each one. What can be agreed however is that Governors, Senior Leaders and teachers do place high importance on preparing their students for their future education and careers, and that initiatives that contribute to this agenda are prioritised and supported.

Careers guidance plays a vital role in education and students thrive in lessons where teachers can explain the relevance of what they are learning. As students benefit from excellent, inspiring and meaningful careers guidance activities, the role of the Senior Leadership Team is to put in place the means for teachers and external agencies to deliver these activities and then to use data to monitor effectiveness. Importantly this does not involve a 'move away from' rigorous in-depth curriculum lessons towards a fully vocational approach but instead is about enhancing the curriculum and planning in conjunction with excellent lessons.

To plan and deliver a truly effective and engaging careers guidance programme all staff need to play a role. This needn't be as onerous as it sounds, however unless it is communicated with sensitivity and with solutions it can leave colleagues feeling as though they are having extra responsibilities placed on them.

Careers guidance and education, when delivered seamlessly as part of the whole school agenda, can not only help to ensure young people are prepared to enter society and ready for work, but it can be used to enhance lessons and help students to think about the importance of their education.

The role of the Senior Leadership Team in careers guidance is one of ensuring all staff not only understand the benefits of an engaging and inspiring careers guidance programme, but that they are enabled - through training and excellent resources - to deliver one.

Practical ideas

The 'Going in the right direction?' report made several observations of good practice, they were:

- ✓ Ensure your governing body, ideally by identifying a designated governor, has responsibility for overseeing the quality and monitoring of the impact of careers guidance activities.



- ✓ Give either a full-time or part-time member of staff responsibility for coordinating the overall provision of careers guidance.

- ✓ Commission external careers advisers and control the quality of the service provided.

- ✓ Ring-fence budgets that enable students to take part in meaningful external careers guidance events such as college, university or workplace 'tasters'. (Pg12, Para 14).

Utilise a checklist or self evaluation form to ensure that your approach is robust and regularly appraised. You could create your own checklist, based on your own school ethos, or start with a ready made one, such as the one contained in '[5 Steps to an Outstanding Careers Guidance Programme](#)' which can be found on our website. Make sure that monitoring using a checklist or self evaluation form is formative as well as summative.

Placing careers guidance as a visible priority of the Senior Leadership Team will promote the same level of commitment from the rest of the school team. To achieve this you could:

- ✓ Ensure the senior leader with responsibility for careers guidance is directly involved in creating the careers guidance strategy. (See 'Developing your whole school strategy' Pg 7).
- ✓ When communicating that students' future achievement is the responsibility of every member of staff, be sure to also include the benefits of this whole school approach to every day teaching and learning, the correlation with improved behaviour and attainment, and provide training or practical ideas to support teaching staff.
- ✓ Demonstrate to staff that your strategy contains easy to achieve targets by sharing your plans with them, for example in the form of calendars outlining responsibilities and dates for activities.
- ✓ Share your plans and methods for how you intend to evaluate the impact of careers guidance activities and invite the colleagues involved to report on progress and share good practice.
- ✓ Create a working group of teachers to develop ideas for improving the careers provision across the school, in the same way you may have task groups for literacy and numeracy as part of cross department school improvement.



Developing your whole school strategy

Giving your strategy clear aims

Developing your whole school strategy

Giving your strategy clear aims



It was recommended that schools should *'develop and implement a clear strategy for careers guidance'*. (Pg7, Recommendations).

Inspectors observed that schools providing effective careers guidance had a *'clear vision for how information and advice on careers would support their students' overall development.'* (Pg11, Para 14).

Current government guidance requires schools to interpret careers guidance very flexibly and Ofsted observe that *'this model of provision is a sophisticated one'*. (Pg10, Paras 9 + 10).

Context and challenges

Deciding on a clear aim can make a sophisticated model more achievable and is a quick way to demonstrate to all staff, students, parents and carers that students' education and their futures are your number one priority.

With a good clear strategy you will be strengthening every student's chance to find and secure excellent, positive and rewarding future opportunities, and this starts with an overall aim.

The challenge in creating a clear aim is that it needs to reflect your school ethos, your vision for the future of your learners, and importantly needs to inspire parents and students without intimidating staff. Get it right and you have an excellent message to promote across the community, and critically, a shared vision of what your school aims to provide for its learners.

Practical ideas

Decide on a clear outcome or theme that you can stick to and refer back to very early on in the planning process. This should be agreed upon by governors, senior leaders and key staff. Ensure that every intervention you plan is enabling students to progress towards this outcome.

Ensure that your overall aim is directly in line with your school vision, values or mission statement as well as with DfE guidelines and Ofsted recommendations on careers guidance.

Your aim needs to communicate the aspirations of what you would like all students to achieve by the time they are ready to leave school. It should be quite simple and is probably something similar to the ideas you are already communicating during assemblies and staff training. For example: *'All students will be fully equipped to make excellent decisions and will have developed the lifelong skills required to search for, secure and succeed in positive future destinations.'*



Developing your whole school strategy

Developing a long term plan

Developing your whole school strategy

Developing a long term plan



Only 1 in 5 schools were considered effective in ensuring that all students in Years 9, 10 and 11 were receiving the level of Information Advice and Guidance they needed to support decision making. It was observed that high priority *'was given to providing careers guidance to Year 11 students and to focusing support for vulnerable students'*. (Pg 5, Key Findings).

It was noted that schools were only implementing short-term planning, relying on the funding still available to them even when they were aware that funding would no longer be available after September 2013. (Pg 13, Para 18).

In an example identified by inspectors where students who were at risk of NEET were optimistic and enthusiastic about their future career and education plans, it was observed that *'planning was often built up over three years'*. This was using a variety of careers guidance activities that *'helped to build their confidence, their employability and their personal development skills.'* (Pg 18, Para 36).

Context and challenges

There are a lot of reasons why schools tend to focus their attention on short term interventions; funding, time to plan, lack of specialist teachers, plus all of the other day to day distractions of running a busy school. What this means however is that careers provision all too often manifests itself purely as an interview in Year 11. Students may also receive support during the Year 9 options process, however this guidance is frequently focussed only on choosing subjects based on the likelihood of good attainment, rather than the correlation between subject choices and future plans.

An effective whole school careers programme that starts to support students from as young as Year 7 may be easier to achieve than anticipated. The tips in this guide will provide starting points, lesson plans, activities and ideas to help you to achieve this. By the time a student reaches a Year 11 interview, they should have a clear idea of their skills, preferred career routes (not necessarily specific jobs but certainly areas of work), how they plan to continue their education, and what they need to do to achieve their next steps right through to their dream goal.

If by the time the Year 11 cohort sit down for their careers interview they are answering the question 'What would you like to do in the future?' with 'I don't know', their careers guidance to date hasn't been successful, and you've not got them for much longer to put it right.

Developing a long term plan - practical ideas

Use your overall aim to create a clear set of challenging themes for each year group. Ensure each year group theme enables students to progress and develop the career management skills necessary to meet the overall school aim. Approach this as you would any other learning outcome - breaking it down into its component parts and allowing time for reflection and consolidation. The example below is one way you may theme your year group provision.

Year 7

Focussing on self awareness, the ability to reflect and self evaluate skills, and an idea of interests and aspirations, this introduction to careers education is completely focussed on the individual learner. As newcomers to secondary school, this is also a great time for them to create an action plan where they can look for opportunities to improve their skills. A Year 7 student may join the netball team regardless of your intervention, but wouldn't it be great if they are consciously aware that by doing so they are improving their teamwork and communication skills.

Year 8

A suitable key theme of Year 8 careers education would be decision making. Understanding how different factors can influence and sway decisions, how to consider all options and ask for advice, and an idea of the long term impact some decisions can have. This is also an opportune time to discuss stereotypes in education and the world of work, and start to rectify some misconceptions that young people can pick up from various sources.

Year 9

Preparing for the Year 9 options process is key, however with effective ground work in Years 7 and 8, learners will be better equipped to think about all elements of this decision, and have a greater understanding of what their intended future looks like. This is also a time to sharpen focus on career opportunities, the reasons why people work (i.e. an element of financial awareness, part vs full time jobs, unpaid work etc), and the chance to match the skills and interests discussed in previous sessions to the huge range of careers out there.

Year 10 (work experience)

Due to all sorts of restrictions, lack of availability, health and safety reasons, and students leaving arranging a placement until the last minute, work experiences are often not exactly that of a young person's 'dream job'. However, if supported correctly, any experience of the world of work can be very impactful. Previous support will have helped learners to understand what skills they would like to improve on, and excellent support would also mean they are aware of how this will get them to where they need to be. Help learners to create a list of targets they want to meet, which can be anything from 'I'd like to feel more confident in an adult environment' to 'I want to demonstrate I can carry out instructions perfectly'. 'I want to see if this is the job for me' in a town where every school is on work experience at the same time, is not an effective aim for a placement.

Year 10 (alternative work related experience)

Work experience has fallen foul in many schools due to the recent changes in legislation, and many are opting for alternative methods of introducing young people to the world of work. It is vital however that this is planned, and this hole in the timetable is packed with engaging, useful activities. Ideas of how to fill this time can be found throughout future editions of this guide, particularly within the Inspiring Careers Lessons, LMI, and Employer Engagement sections. If not sooner, Year 10 is also a great time to start developing awareness of the application process for both education and jobs. Creating a CV is hugely important, however there is so much more evidence a young person can gather to document their progression. Look into online portfolios, developing a LinkedIn account, collation of images, videos and examples of work to really engage all learners in 'selling themselves'.

Year 11

Year 11 shouldn't be a mad dash of last minute careers education. If planned correctly you will be in the much more relaxed and accomplished position of simply joining up the dots for the majority of your cohort. You will then have more time to dedicate to your more challenging learners and at risk of NEET students at a critical time in their journey. If the basics of careers education and guidance have been taken care of at an earlier stage, your work with Year 11 can become much more sophisticated - planning future labour market trends, understanding the local job market and where they may have to move to if they have a specific career in mind, and planning their journey of experiences to help them stand out from the crowd.

Sixth Form

Many sixth form tutors are well versed in the UCAS application process, and students will continue to need this support. However, with recent changes to fees and increasing media coverage of the employability and prospects of graduates, more and more 16-19 year olds are considering other options. Sixth forms need to prepare young people for the varied education and career paths ahead of them in a time when competition is fierce. Along with alternatives to higher education, a thorough explanation of Apprenticeships and where they can lead, and supporting sixth form leavers with their required documentation, a fantastic theme for this age group is personal brand. Ensure that this age group is aware of the power of social media, and the negative impacts it can have if used naively. Encourage them to improve their online profile and use professional networks to source opportunities for experience, internships or work placements.

Recording progress

Whichever themes you choose across your year groups, the most important thing is to ensure everything has been documented. Of course this is vital when asked to evidence the positive impact your interventions have had on learners in the school, but it will also provide each learner with a robust plan of action and work completed to date. As well as avoiding the blank face moment in a Year 11 careers interview, this record of progress will also avoid the blank piece of paper panic when learners are faced with a CV, Personal Statement or application writing task.



Developing your whole school strategy

Coordinating and communicating your strategy

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Coordinating and communicating your strategy



Where some schools were found to be offering a range of different careers guidance activities it was noted that *'the provision was not sufficiently well coordinated or reviewed to ensure that each student received appropriate guidance.*

Very few of the schools visited knew how to provide a service effectively or had the skills and expertise needed to provide a comprehensive service. Few schools had purchased an adequate service from external sources.' (Pg 4, Executive summary).

It was also noted that in approximately three quarters of schools where careers activities were taking place, they were often poorly coordinated. This was especially true where there was no member of staff who had management responsibilities for the events. Both the quality of the events and levels of participation were not thought to be monitored adequately. (Pg14, Para 23).

Students were asked what they thought could be improved in careers guidance and they identified the need for better organised provision. One group commented: *'We need guidance on how to make the most of the career guidance.'* (Pg 23, Para 53).

Context and challenges

A careers guidance programme will be made up of many different types of activity, from one-to-one interviews, careers lessons, collapsed timetable events, employer engagement opportunities and work experience. These events will happen at different times of year, arranged by various team members, and possibly occur off site, making them quite challenging to record and review effectively.

Without a clear strategy these activities become discrete events in a student's education, and won't enable them to benefit from the understanding of how they have prepared them for future life. They are also likely to be underrepresented or forgotten completely by the time it comes to CV or Personal Statement writing.

By effectively coordinating your programme of events and interactions, you will be providing learners with a clear journey that they take from Year 7 through to Year 11 or Sixth Form. Investing time in communicating clearly to all not only the events themselves, but how they fit into the wider vision, will also provide context to the learner's journey, and enable them to realise how it contributes to their overall success.

Coordinating your strategy - practical ideas

The most effective way to coordinate the delivery of your strategy is to encourage learners to keep an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Visible to learners and accessible as reports by staff and SLT, this will provide the backbone of your careers programme. Consider the following:

- ✓ Plan a series of lessons to help students understand the importance of standing out from the crowd so they are prepared to make the most of their career guidance plans and inform their future CVs.
- ✓ During any careers guidance event or activity ensure students are encouraged to add to their career development plan with their new ideas and achievements.
- ✓ Students also develop skills and achieve everyday in school, so get them in the habit of recording their achievements at every opportunity.
- ✓ Keep centralised records, ideally online, so that all staff can be involved in the tracking of students' plans, enabling a whole school pastoral approach to mentoring and target setting.
- ✓ Ensure all action plans students create are checked by teachers or a guidance professional who can offer advice and support.

Communicating your strategy - practical ideas

Following the design of a strategy, the senior leader responsible for careers guidance should communicate to all staff the high priority being placed on careers and share details regarding implementation of the strategy. The plan should also clearly identify the staff member or department responsible for various activities, initiatives or events.

Ensure joined up thinking between staff and parents by communicating to them everything that is happening in careers guidance across the school. An effective way to do this is by creating calendars of events highlighting how teachers and parents can support students at key times. Include year group aims or themes, the overall school aim, key dates and who to contact for more information.

Make use of your school website and social media as a communication tool - this could be a trusted student voice team rather than a member of staff if resources are tight.

Use student and parent questionnaires to determine where you are now with your provision and act on feedback. Remember to include how you have responded to student and parental input in your strategy and communications.



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