**Written evidence submitted by Ofsted (BYC028)**

In November 2016 Ofsted published its report titled: ‘Getting Ready for Work’ [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enterprise-education-how-secondary-schools-prepare-young-people-for-work](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/5jXvCMw3pC6Q3R7cwejQw?domain=gov.uk)

# Key findings

* **The extent to which schools used their curriculum to prepare pupils for the world of work was largely dependent on whether school leaders considered it to be a priority.** This ranged from schools such as the one where a headteacher described enterprise education as ‘a luxury we can’t afford’ to others that saw the acquisition of knowledge and skills prized by employers as central to the school’s purpose. Schools often cited pressures on finance and curriculum time as reasons for not prioritising enterprise education.
* **Even where schools were delivering enterprise education, it was often unclear whether this was having any impact on pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills.** Under a quarter of the schools inspected formally assessed pupils’ learning in this area and even fewer used external validation, such as accredited award schemes, to verify pupils’ achievement.
* **Opportunities for pupils to take part in meaningful work-related learning or work experience were limited at key stage 4.** Local employers and their national representatives suggested that a lack of work-related learning was a major barrier to young people gaining employment. School leaders who offered well-managed work experience in key stage 4 reported that it had a positive impact on pupils’ attitudes to school on their return and was therefore well worth the investment in curriculum time.
* **Business involvement in some of the schools visited relied too heavily on the personal networks of teachers and parents, potentially resulting in disadvantaged pupils missing out.** Teachers and employers we spoke to for this survey said that they had little time to create and develop partnerships and, where partnerships did exist, they were vulnerable to staff leaving or changing roles. Where schools provided time for work experience, the responsibility for finding placements was often left to the pupil. While inspectors saw some very impressive examples of work-experience placements, some arose solely because the pupils’ parents were well connected.
* **A lack of coordination across local areas has created an environment for schools and businesses that business leaders described as ‘chaotic’.** Projects such as those sponsored by local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) are at the very early stages of development. Business leaders consulted for this report raised concerns that there is little coherence to provision and a lack of strategy by government, business organisations or individual schools. They were largely unaware of the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company. School-business links were most productive when they were official and between organisations, rather than informal and between individuals. Relationships were often hampered by poor communication between school and business staff and a lack of clarity over what was wanted from the partnership.
* **Schools appear to be more likely to promote apprenticeships than in recent years, but parents and pupils are concerned about the quality and reputation of apprenticeships.** Inspectors found that a relatively high proportion of schools – 68%, or 27 out of 40 – were good or outstanding in this regard. However, some parents and pupils were concerned about the current state of the apprenticeship market and were reluctant to pursue a route that they thought would narrow their options in the future.

# Recommendations

The Department for Education (DfE) should:

* re-visit Lord Young’s report from 2014 and promote the importance of well-planned provision for enterprise education, including the promotion of economic and business understanding and financial capability
* ensure that the availability of apprenticeships is communicated well to parents and pupils, and that the potential value of apprenticeships as a viable alternative to traditional university routes is promoted
* further promote the Careers and Enterprise Company to encourage schools and businesses to work together in delivering enterprise education.

# Ofsted should:

* ensure that inspection judgements take greater account of the coherence and rigour with which schools prepare pupils for employment and self-employment.

Secondary schools should:

* ensure that there is a coherent programme to develop enterprise education, including the economic and business knowledge, understanding and skills of all pupils
* develop stronger links with business by using local networks provided by, for example, the chambers of commerce and LEPs, and set clear objectives for the intended outcomes of these partnerships
* make the most effective use of the expertise of their specialist teachers in delivering these programmes and ensure that all teachers involved in delivery have access to appropriate professional development
* ensure that these programmes have effective mechanisms for monitoring and assessing progress in relation to developing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Employers should:

* support local schools in greater number by offering activities such as mock interviews, participation in careers fairs and careers talks
* provide well-planned and constructive opportunities for pupils to gain work experience and an insight into a range of roles and occupations through work shadowing.

**Findings**

## Work experience

1. In 2012, the government removed the statutory duty on schools to provide pupils with work-related learning at key stage 4. Ministers acknowledged its importance, but told the delegated legislation committee that ‘schools are best placed to decide what is appropriate to suit the needs and circumstances of their pupils.’
2. In order to gauge what is now happening in practice, inspectors on 109 routine secondary school inspections collected additional information on work experience provision in the spring term 2016. Of these schools, 63 were found to have work experience as an expectation for all pupils at key stage 4. In these schools, work experience was seen as important in order to develop personal skills, build confidence and self-esteem and widen pupils’ horizons. For example, one headteacher told inspectors:

‘We wish to raise the aspiration and broaden the horizons of our students by giving them a real experience of the world of work before they leave school. For many of our students, their world is very narrow and this is an opportunity to mix with people beyond their own community. It also begins to embed some of the real world skills, which students need, to engage effectively with college and work i.e. independence, interpersonal skills, organisation, time management etc.’

1. In the 46 schools not offering work experience at key stage 4, leaders typically indicated that the high costs of delivery and a lack of resources were a barrier, particularly where finding appropriate placements for pupils was difficult. In these circumstances, a few leaders suggested that many pupils were likely to receive a poor experience of the world of work. As such, programmes that were previously in place had been discontinued.
2. Other leaders expressed that the advice given in the ‘Wolf report: recommendations final progress report’ had led them to move opportunities for work experience into their sixth form provision.[[1]](#footnote-1)[1] Several leaders acknowledged that they were reluctant to give up teaching time for all key stage 4 pupils to engage in work experience. Again, this was linked to the perceived limited value that leaders and staff in these schools attached to work experience and the related perception that time spent on enterprise activities and not on examined subjects was wasted.
3. Among the 40 secondary schools visited specifically for this survey, inspectors found a wide variety of approaches to work experience and its quality. In the 19 schools that had retained a period of work experience for all key stage 4 pupils, the traditional two weeks had sometimes been reduced to one week. Some of these schools sought to mitigate the use of curriculum time by arranging work experience in the last week of the summer term so that placements could extend into the summer holidays. However, this removed the opportunity to immediately build on learning from the work experience back in school.
4. Overall, the schools visited with good and outstanding judgements at their most recent inspection were more confident in using curriculum time for work experience. However, a few weaker schools were also embracing the perceived value that work experience could bring to the school. In one notable case, a new senior leader with experience of school improvement identified the expansion of work experience as a key component of the journey for the school. This headteacher told inspectors:

‘We are really trying to build up our employer engagement activity because it was one of those things that got sidelined when the school went into special measures. We are well placed to capitalise on local businesses as we have Eddie Stobart, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Cummins and other large players in the retail and logistics sector. We do very well for work-experience placements at Year 10 and Year 12 and have just started a work-readiness programme with Year 10 ahead of work experience in the summer term.’

1. Another headteacher of a school where key stage 4 pupils undertake two weeks of work experience told inspectors that he valued highly the improved maturity and attitudes to learning seen on the pupils’ return. However, he added that if he was the headteacher of a school judged inadequate or requires improvement by Ofsted, rather than outstanding, he would feel a lot less confident about giving up curriculum time.
2. Some schools offered work experience to a small group of pupils, often selected on the basis of not achieving well in academic subjects. Where this was the case, school leaders frequently suggested that arranging work experience for all pupils was too time-consuming and impractical to administer on a large scale. For example, completing health and safety checks on each potential employer had become a particular barrier for a few schools. Other schools prioritised their resources to enable this to happen, sometimes contracting this out to specialists. However, it was regularly pointed out to inspectors that this used to be centrally organised, but is now a cost to the school among competing financial pressures and priorities.
3. Some of the schools visited required pupils to find their own placements. In one such school, leaders argued that this encouraged ‘independence and resilience’. However, while this may be true to a certain extent, it also reinforces advantages for those pupils with parents who have good connections in industry and business. For instance, inspectors spoke to pupils who enjoyed exciting opportunities such as spending time in a district attorney’s office in the United States or working in a major financial business in the City of London, arranged through family contacts.
4. Those pupils who had access to quality work experience benefited from exposure to real life examples of careers. Pupils’ next steps and career choices were often refined by the practical experience. In some cases, not enjoying a particular role was as important in forming their career choices as enjoying it.
5. For many pupils, these opportunities were valuable because of the different knowledge and skills they learned to those in the rest of their school lessons:

‘Well, I had to be organised and sorted − you do here too, but it doesn't matter that much. But on work experience you feel on your own’.

1. Work experience offered pupils insight into the day to day of a working environment – something that most have yet to experience. Gaining these work place skills, such as communicating with a variety of different people, team work and independence, in turn, gave pupils confidence.
2. However, even where schools did provide the opportunity for work experience, they were not always embedding the learning opportunities in the classroom. Only four of the schools visited had arrangements in place for fully assessing the quality of the work-related learning that pupils received. The strength of evaluation was often linked to other factors, such as how much of a priority enterprise and employability learning were for senior leaders and whether these aspects were successfully embedded in the curriculum.

June 2018

1. [1] ‘The Wolf Report: recommendations final progress report’, Department for Education, 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/wolf-recommendations-progress-report](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/AaNtCRO3xsgAWRxhorI9_?domain=gov.uk). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)