



SSAT on SEND and employability

Pauline Holbrook



SSAT

We are **SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers network.**

We exist to help improve outcomes for all young people. As a membership organisation of schools and academies across the UK and internationally, we work with leaders, teachers and students to drive school improvement and innovation, and celebrate their successes. We believe in a **truly school-led system**, with schools working in partnership across and beyond the education sector.

At SSAT's heart are our **membership networks**, bringing together school leaders, teachers and students. We have been working with schools for over 30 years, and continue to offer **insight and understanding** into teaching, learning and system leadership. Our **professional development and school improvement programmes** help leaders and teachers to further outcomes for all young people, and develop leadership at all levels across the system.

We are SSAT and we provide fresh ideas for ambitious schools.

**SSAT
on
SEND and
employability**

Pauline Holbrook

ISBN: F1640A

Published September 2020

Editor: Peter Chambers

Design: SSAT Creative

Copyright © 2020 SSAT (The Schools Network) Ltd.

Abstracting permitted with full acknowledgement to the source.

SSAT (The Schools Network) Ltd, Central House, 142 Central Street, London, EC1V 8AR

SSAT on SEND and employability

FOREWORD

It's not right that so few young people with SEND are able to gain employment – especially as those that do, often become valuable employees, as well as gaining fulfilment

Educable, yes

At any one time 20% of the student population will be identified as having a special educational need or disability (SEND). The severity of need/disability will vary, as will the interventions required. Only around 2% of students identified with SEND are educated in special schools.

The 1970 Education Act gave all students the right to education, no matter how severe their disabilities. At this time the idea of any child being ineducable became obsolete. In 1974 the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People was set up. The report that ensued, commonly known as the Warnock Report, saw the introduction of the term SEN. The report also started the debate of where students with special educational needs should be educated. Inclusion became the buzzword, with some declaring the demise of special schools. Now over, 50 years on, our special schools are bursting at the seams with more free special schools being opened each year.

A high proportion of students with additional needs are also being educated within mainstream schools. This is chal-

lenging not only because of the ever-increasing complexities of students and funding issues, but also due to the very crude measures used in league tables. If a student doesn't achieve a level 4 at GCSE, does this make them worthless? Certainly not! Yet qualifications at entry level 1, 2 or below GCSE level 4 are not considered appropriate to contribute to school targets or league tables. ASCL's Geoff Barton says, "Like much in British life, GCSE results day follows a time-honoured ritual. We celebrate the achievements of our most able students, local newspapers picture them jumping for joy, and the media writes about stellar stories of success and of triumph over adversity. But there's another story – and it's one we rarely hear. Every results day, in the margins, are the many, many students who don't do so well, the young people who leave secondary education at the age of 16 with less than a grade 4 'standard' pass in English and maths. What must results day feel like for them? In the summer of 2018, we spoke publicly about the plight of these pupils, questioning why we cannot do better for them, so that every pupil finishes their 12 years of primary and secondary schooling with a qualification of which they can be proud." And, it has to be noted, the best chances of employment.

It is time for change and for the DfE to acknowledge the hard work and achievements of all students, not just those gaining five good GCSE passes including maths and English. And especially to consider those with special needs. The easy part is criticising the current system; however, Roy Blatchford and his 'Forgotten Third' commission were charged with the more difficult task of suggesting a better alternative. They focused on English in the first instance, in the interests of taking one step at a time, and because confidence in English is so important in accessing other subjects as well as in all aspects of life. The results of their deliberations are detailed in the

report: https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Campaigns/The-Forgotten-Third_full-report.pdf

It presents a vision of how we can do better for children and young people in reading, writing and speaking, from the early years, through primary, secondary and 16-18 education. And it includes a ground-breaking proposal for a passport in English to replace GCSE English Language. This proposal has the potential to be a game changer: a robust qualification grounded in the reality of the skills that young people need and which employers seek; which reflects competence and confidence at different levels; and provides the opportunity for pupils to improve over time.

The proposed passport in English to replace GCSE English Language could be a game changer: a robust qualification grounded in the skills young people need and employers seek

Changing definitions

The terminology we use today when discussing young people with special needs is far different from that used over the last 50 years. For example, in the 1970s we were using terms such as:

- Educationally subnormal
- Maladjusted
- Blind/partially sighted
- Deaf/partially deaf
- Physically handicapped
- Speech defects.

In 1994 the language changed to include:

- Learning difficulties

- Specific learning difficulties:
- Dyslexia
- Emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)
- Sensory impairment: visual difficulties
- Sensory impairment: hearing difficulties
- Physical disabilities
- Speech and language difficulties.

In the 2001 code of practice we see autism recognised for the first time and the language starts to become more aligned to that we use today, including:

- Cognition and learning: MLD, SLD, PMLD
- Specific learning difficulties:
 - dyslexia
 - dyspraxia
- Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
- Sensory and/or physical needs: visual difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs: hearing difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs: physical impairments
- Communication and interaction: speech and language delay/disorder
- Autism.

Today our language is even more specific and includes many rare chromosomal conditions as well as:

- Global or general learning difficulties: MLD, SLD, PMLD, CLDD, FASD
- Specific learning difficulties:
 - dyslexia
 - dyspraxia
 - dyscalculia
 - dysgraphia
 - dysphasia
- SEMH
- ADHD
- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Physical impairment or disability (PI/PD)
- Multisensory impairment (MSI)
- Specific language impairment (SLI)
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- Autistic spectrum condition (ASC)
- Aspergers.

But employable?

Since 1970 the quality of education received and the expectations of students with SEND has improved. Through the education, health and care plans introduced in September 2014, all students should be asked about their aspirations as they get older and reach adulthood. So significant shifts are taking place in the way we support young people with a learning disability to think about, and plan for, their future.

However, not every parent/carer or student with SEND will have even considered employment as a realistic option. I argue

that employment should be considered as an integral part of that future. Conversations about potential employment should start as early as possible. It is the role of the school to have high expectations and to challenge anyone who does not. I do acknowledge that for a small minority employment may not be realistic, but that does not mean that it should not be discussed. We live in a very fast-moving world: who knows what medical or technological development is around the corner that may open up the possibility of employment to those for whom it is not possible at this moment in time?

The *Lancet* 9 Feb 2002 included an article about a seven-year-old who at an early age had had to have the left hemisphere of her brain removed to prevent uncontrollable epileptic fits. As this part of the brain controls language and motor skills, she was expected to be non-verbal and have severe mobility issues. Yet this seven-year-old has no obvious physical disabilities and is able to speak two languages. [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(02\)07676-6.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(02)07676-6.pdf)

Employment should be considered as an integral part of the future for young people with a learning disability

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(02\)07676-6.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(02)07676-6.pdf)

This example illustrates my belief that we need to have high expectations of all learners, not make assumptions about what we think should be. All children are capable of learning.

The Equality act of 2010 states that employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, aren't substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. As a result, there are many more adults with physical or mental health needs in work. However, the number with learning difficulties in work remains significantly lower.

There is much evidence to suggest those who are in work feel more valued and have better mental health than those not in work. We know that with the right support, people with learning disabilities make hardworking and enthusiastic employees, bringing new skills, talents and perspectives to their employers, and according to Mencap 52% of people would prefer to work in a company that employs people with learning disabilities.

Yet the employment rates of people with learning disabilities remains stubbornly low, with the latest figures suggesting that only 6% of them have a paid job.

- Where is the social justice in this?
- Are we focused on what people can't do rather than what they can do?
- What can schools do to improve this?

WHAT DOES EMPLOYMENT LOOK LIKE FOR PEOPLE WITH SEND?

Could a person with a special educational need do your job? I would say yes, as I know a very successful headteacher who has dyslexia. At some point in their life someone supported them in their aspiration to become a teacher and subsequently a headteacher. Do you know the aspirations of your SEND learners? Do your SEND learners access work experience, work fairs and other activities you organise or participate in to support your students in identifying their next steps? With the September 19 Ofsted framework having a greater focus on *all* learners, including those with SEND, I anticipate these and many more questions will be asked by inspectors when visiting any school.

In short, why shouldn't a person with a special educational need aspire to any job? When visiting the sixth form at St Martins special school in Derby, I found students were eager to share where they were moving onto at the end of the summer term. All but a few had their places secured in further education. One student told me he was off to college to study accountancy and went on to explain how the school had supported him in gaining the qualifications, particularly in maths, that he needed to

access the course. For the past year he had also been given the responsibility for managing the accounts of the school's enterprise business. This personalised support provided him not only with the qualifications he required but also focused work experience which will support him in his chosen career.

For some students, fulltime work may not be appropriate due to their medical conditions, etc – yet part-time or limited hours work may be appropriate.

For some, the route into work could be via an apprenticeship. Since the requirement for level 3 qualifications in maths and English was changed in 2017 for students with an EHCP this route is now a viable one for many more young people. <https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/education-health-and-care-planning/updated-specification-of-apprenticeship-standards-for-england.htm>

Chris Scott's story

Chris, now aged 27, has autism. He joined Catcote Academy for the sixth form provision in 2009 and continued his education post-19 at Catcote Futures.

During his time at Catcote Academy & Catcote Futures, familiar staff supported Chris to undertake internal work experience placements in the school's coffee shop, to increase his skills and confidence for working in the catering sector.



Throughout this time Chris became a valuable member of the team. He showed a flair for cooking and gained the necessary skills needed to take the next step.

Chris started working with support at The Vestry café, which is run by the academy in the town's art gallery, during summer term 2015, as staff slowly stepped back allowing him to gain confidence with other people, make new friends and experience the world of work. He was able to complete several sessions per week. He loved every minute of his time there, travelling there and back independently. This filled him with a huge sense of achievement, seeking more challenges, with the confidence to fulfil them.

In the academic year 2016/17, Chris began a supported internship in catering and he joined the catering team at Hartlepool Borough Council's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). He carried out a wide range of duties, including cooking and preparing buffets (involving baking and confectionery making) for large and small functions and meetings, and serving customers. He adhered to health and safety procedures. Chris enjoyed this new challenge and said "my internship is going really well, I am enjoying preparing food from scratch to a very high quality."

Alex Docherty, the centre's cook at HBC has stated that "Chris has made such a big difference to our workload, he is a very fast learner and is very enthusiastic."

Following successful completion of his supported internship, Chris has been moving on to an apprenticeship in hospitality and catering and is an employed status apprentice in Catcote Academy. He has recently

completed his NVQ Level 2 and his level 3 in food hygiene. He is an invaluable member of staff and is now 'running' Catcote School's bistro.

Others may not achieve the industry standards required to gain paid employment but may get as much satisfaction, confidence, social interaction etc from volunteering. I spoke to a parent whose son volunteers for one hour a week in a charity shop. His role is to open the door and say good morning. He loves his job; it gives him a sense of pride in himself. It also offers him opportunities to develop his confidence, improve his self-esteem, and provide opportunities for social interaction with adults outside his family.

Schools, and senior leaders in particular, play an important role in supporting and encouraging students and their parents to consider and talk about the possibility of employment. A whole-school approach with senior leadership buy-in and support is vital: where this is apparent positive conversations about employment take place naturally.

Having an employment champion or similar role within schools can be very beneficial. They can support a range of activities including:

- workshops and training about employment
- vocational profiling – information about the individual's aspirations, interests and abilities for work – as a planning tool
- better engagement with, and understanding of, local employers
- employment-focused events and activities across the curriculum.

The sad thing is that there are many adults who do have industry standard qualifications yet, despite interview after interview, no employer is willing to take that leap of faith and employ them. Is this why we are seeing more and more charitable organisations setting up social enterprise initiatives employing those who others shy away from?

Kate Carpenter's story

When I was 19 I went to a college where I could live for three years. I studied hospitality and housekeeping. I was proud because I got NVQ level 1. After college I went to live in my own house with two friends. I wanted a job as a waitress. I went for lots of interviews but no one gave me a job. So I went to work on some days in the charity shop, and did more college courses.



I liked being a volunteer and helping people.

In 2017, Sheila Hollins [the founder, editor and lead author of *Books beyond Words*], asked me if I would make a book with her about living in my community. In my village the friends at church have helped me a lot to live there, so we called the book *Going to church*. I became an Author. I took photos of my church and the people, and talked to them about their jobs at church. Sheila and I worked with an artist, who drew pictures, and we made a story using some of my ideas.

When the book was published we had a book launch. It was held in Lambeth Palace, where the Archbishop of Canterbury lives.

You can use the *Books Beyond Words* for book clubs. I have a book club at my house. After the book I was asked to tell people about my story of becoming an Author. I went to Glasgow to talk to people at the World Downs Syndrome Conference. I sometimes go to schools to tell students about writing a book.

I go to a special school one day a week and help the students there with their book club. They are helping me to become a teaching assistant. I like this but I still want to be an Actress!!

So in short what does employment look like for a person with SEND? The answer is it is as varied and as wide as it is for a person without SEND.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY THEY WANT

On average, by 2020, more than a third of the desired core skillsets of most occupations will comprise skills that are not yet considered crucial to the job today. (The world-economic forum, 2018, The Future of Jobs Report).

Numerous studies have taken place over the years asking employers what skills they would like school, college and university leavers to have in order to take up positions within their companies. The ones that feature over and over again are:

- The ability to problem-solve
- The ability to communicate
- The ability to self-manage
- The ability to work as part of a team
- To be creative
- To be numerate
- To have basic digital skills.

In addition, companies identified the following competencies:

- Confidence
- Drive
- Resilience
- Reflection.

Research by Education and Employers highlights that end-of-course exams, without a proportion of ongoing assessment through projects and assignments, are standing in the way of students developing many of the skills above. I would add that the move towards final exams is also disproportionately disadvantageous for SEND learners.

The research also highlighted that nearly half of the teachers surveyed believed that there are fewer opportunities to develop employability skills and competencies since the introduction of the reformed GCSEs. A high proportion of these teachers stated that the changes to the syllabus had meant that they had to resort to rote learning. If schools are not providing opportunities for students to develop the skills and competencies employers are looking for, where do they develop them? Many students are able to develop skills such as teamwork, communication, creativity and problem-solving through extracurricular opportunities and attendance at scouts, cadets and other such youth group activities.

Skills acquisition left to chance

But is it right that we are leaving the acquisition of these skills to chance? For SEND learners in particular, these skills need to be explicitly taught. Many SEND learners don't access this type of learning out of school, for a variety of reasons. It could be that the student receives specialist transport which cannot be varied to facilitate the attendance at after-school

clubs/activities. It may be because they are autistic, and learning takes place between school hours: once home, they do not want to engage in any other types of learning – this can even make the idea of completing homework or engaging in revision activities a no-no. Sometimes it is because the student's needs cannot be adequately met in extracurricular activities. As a society, do we do enough to ensure we can include all, regardless of need? Why is it, if you have a disability either physical or intellectual and as such need additional support, you need to look to specialist providers for adventurous activities which can be vital in developing resilience, teamwork, problem-solving and confidence?

For SEND learners in particular, employability skills need to be explicitly taught

One difficulty we have when we discuss employability skills: do we really know what we mean? The term employability skills has been used by researchers and policymakers for many years. Some defini-

tions simply focus on the ability to secure employment, while others include the ability to sustain and progress within the workplace. The definition of UKCES (UK Commission for Employment and Skills), which drew on the work of McQuaid et al (2006), is “The set of basic/generic skills and attitudinal/behavioural characteristics that are believed to be essential for individuals to secure and sustain employment and also progress in the workplace.” Some researchers such as Koen et al and Neary et al believe that employability skills should also include skills that help with job searches, career decision-making and career management.

This is why some employers include being informed as one of the things they are looking for in potential employees. By this they mean that applicants have thought about the world of work, considered different types of employment, and understand which type(s) of employment would best suit their skills and interests before applying for a job. Importantly they should also be able to demonstrate and discuss the employability skills they have acquired through experiences both within and outside school. This supports my earlier point that we need to overtly teach employability skills and ensure that students understand that these skills are the ones they will need to secure any level of employment.

I would argue that many of the skills I have described as employability skills are actually life skills. As such, they are as relevant for a student studying A-levels, T-levels – or even the earliest levels of learning, where young people need support for all or most aspects of their personal care. These students at the earliest levels of learning still need to communicate with carers, work with carers (teamwork), be resilient and confident.

Depending on where a student is looking to be employed there will of course be job-specific skills or industrial standards to be met, or achieved within a given timeframe. Some of the more generic of these, such as first aid and food hygiene, feature in the curricular offer of some schools. However, as discussed earlier, meeting these industrial standards is still no guarantee of employment – especially for those with SEND.

Transferable skills

When employers talk about employability they usually point towards transferable skills; ie the basic personal, people, creative and problem-solving skills and attitudes needed for work (Fettes et al 2018).

With employers including creativity within this list it is worrying to see how many schools, feeling the pressure of the data government uses to compare and evaluate them, are squeezing creativity out of the curriculum. Researchers from the University of Warwick have said that this emphasis could have a negative impact on the future economic success of the UK, as creative ability is vital across all sectors, not only the ‘creative’ industries. Their study warns that Britain is falling behind other leading powers in reimagining learning and says that it’s vital that current and future generations have the technological, entrepreneurial and creative confidence and skills to drive economic growth. Professor Jonothan Neelands, education researcher at the University of Warwick, has stated: “We are concerned that the educational system as a whole is not focusing on the future needs of the cultural and creative industries and the broader needs of a creative and successful UK. This needs to be addressed across our schools. We are particularly concerned that children born into low-income families with low levels of educational qualifications are the least likely to: be employed and succeed in these industries, engage with and appreciate the arts and heritage in the curriculum; and experience culture as part of their home education.”

Vikki Heyward, chairman of the Royal Society of Arts, states that the key message from this report is that “the government and the cultural and creative industries need to take a united and coherent approach that guarantees equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life. There are

What are we doing to ensure all students leave our schools with these creative skills in their armoury?

barriers and inequalities in Britain today that prevent this from being a universal human right. This is bad for business and bad for society.”

If industry and researchers are telling us these are the transferable skills all students need to succeed in life, what are we doing to ensure all students leave our schools with these skills in their armoury?

HOW CAN WE ENSURE OUR LEARNERS ARE EMPLOYABLE?

The employability curriculum

We need to ensure that *all* learners, aged 2-19, are actively engaged in a curriculum that leads to realistic employment opportunities that are both appropriate and sustainable. It must build up skills, resilience and independence. As a society we need to see the value of students and people with SEND in the workplace, not just in economic terms but in terms of social impact.

Interest in embedding employability and the transferrable skills that it would include in the curriculum has been variable. However, in 2017 the DfE outlined the need to focus on building character traits such as resilience. More recently the department has published its statutory guidance on ‘careers, guidance and inspiration’, which sets out what schools can do to ensure all students have the employability skills needed for the world of work. It states: “A clear focus on the enterprise and employability skills, experience and qualifications that employers want can support preparation for work. Schools should help pupils gain the confidence to compete in the labour market by provid-

ing opportunities to gain the practical know-how and attributes that are relevant for employment.”

Within the Ofsted framework September 2019 it states: “Schools should provide an effective careers programme in line with the government’s statutory guidance on careers advice that offers pupils: unbiased careers advice; experience of work; and contact with employers to encourage pupils to aspire, make good choices and understand what they need to do to reach and succeed in the careers to which they aspire. Which supports readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that pupils are equipped to make the transition successfully.”

Throughout this framework Ofsted make it abundantly clear that they require this for all students, including those with SEND. The framework also makes it clear what will happen when an inspection takes place. In fact paragraph 314 states: “All parts of the EIF apply to state-funded and non-maintained special schools provision and to mainstream schools’ provision for pupils with SEND.” However, as with all provision, SEND provision has some specific factors that should be taken into account. Inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- Whether leaders are ambitious for all pupils with SEND.
- How well leaders identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- How well leaders develop and adapt the curriculum so that it is coherently sequenced to all pupils’ needs, starting points and aspirations for the future.
- How successfully leaders involve parents, carers and, as necessary, other professionals/specialist services in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND.
- How well leaders include pupils with SEND in all aspects of school life.

- How well the school assesses learning and development of pupils with SEND, and whether pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the different or additional provision being made for them, including outcomes in: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; physical health and development; social, emotional and mental health.
- How well pupils with SEND are prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training, and their adult lives, including: further/higher education and employment, independent living, participating in society and being as healthy as possible in adult life.

It is very clear from both statutory guidance from the DfE and from the Ofsted framework that all schools are required to equip all learners including SEND learners with the skills, knowledge and attributes required for adulthood, including potential employment.

When developing any employability curriculum, I would argue that the starting point will be the aspirations of students along with the local context.

As with any curriculum development, you need to consider and articulate:

- Your overall intent.
- How your intent was shaped, which is likely to be linked to the learners' aspirations and the range of opportunities for students when they leave school (which in some cases will be directly related to their needs).
- How the curriculum content meets the needs of all learners.
- How the learning is to be sequenced.
- How learning is quality assured.

- How pedagogy supports curriculum intent.
- How you work with businesses and other external providers to provide opportunities and raise expectations and aspirations.
- How you personalise in order to meet the needs and aspirations of each student.



A SEMH school in the south of England was very aware that many of their students were struggling to find employment when they left school. The CEO of the trust also became aware that there was a local shortage of welders, so started conversations with the employers struggling to fill welding vacancies. The outcome was that by working together the

school now provides accredited welding courses that the local employer recognises; and students who follow this course are more likely to gain employment once they leave school. Identification of a local need and working with employers can bring about real opportunities for employment.

Enterprise activities

Enterprise activities are another way in which employability skills can be taught within the curriculum. Activities range from year-long businesses to one-off days and activities. They can be personalised to individual students' needs and ages. An example of a short challenge could be to design and make a cone that will hold 50g of chips, while a longer project could be to set up a company to make and sell a range of printed goods.

Below are the skills post-19 students practise in the curriculum offered at Catcote Futures.

The younger students have a slightly different set called the Enterprise commandments.

Other schools use a 'big question' approach to support the development of many skills and attributes such as communication, problem-solving and resilience. Again, this approach is used with learners of all ages.



Using big questions at West Oaks

SUE TOWERS, VICE PRINCIPAL

At West Oaks SEN School and College, we have designed and implemented a curriculum to take our learners through sequences of motivating, meaningful and creative learning journeys based on ‘big questions’ over the course of their school career.

These themes not only take our learners through subject content but are also layered, to teach and practise key skills that we know to be vital preparation for adulthood. These skills are fundamental to our learners’ success and wellbeing throughout their school career – but especially for their future beyond school.

Our commitment to these skills begins in the EYFS and primary phases where the ‘characteristics of effective learning’ form the foundations for learning. The active, play-based learning creates a climate for our pupils to experience ‘irresistible enticements to learn’, with motivation to engage and collaborate, while carefully constructed continuous provision encourages our children to communicate and to begin to develop their own ideas and problem-solve. We aim to give our learners the environment within which they develop the confidence and willingness to ‘have a go’. In this way we begin to ‘shape’ the West Oaks learner.

This philosophy is then reflected and layered throughout the phases as learners progress into our 16+ provision, where enhancement of already established independence becomes a significant aim of the curriculum. This is where communication skills, problem-solving and collaborative experiences are

extended through meaningful and age-appropriate work experience projects such as:

- Our two workshop projects (village/farm-based): designing, producing, buying and selling.
- Pop-up cafes and small-scale catering: shopping, cooking and customer service.
- Horticulture and small arable farming: growing and selling produce
- Preparation for adulthood: personal hygiene, independent travel, household skills.
- WeCanDoCo: our registered charity which further promotes enterprise opportunities.

Through these, our 16+ students demonstrate their ability to transfer their learned skills.

We see our students visibly grow in confidence in their final year, as a result of progression through our well-defined curriculum, to become truly ready to transition into the next stage of their adult life with a 'can do' approach.

Preparation for adulthood at The Oaks Secondary School

The year 11s at The Oaks Secondary School take part in Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) as part of their enrichment activities on Friday afternoons. The PFA programme helps students develop valuable life skills and characteristics for when they leave school. These skills help them make informed and long-lasting decisions about their career options post-16. At The Oaks we encompass the ASDAN Uniformed Services Vocational Taster, which offers a flexible approach to learning,

where students can develop and demonstrate a range of skills from teamwork through to problem-solving.

The Uniformed Services Vocational Taster contains modules in military (army, navy, air force); policing and public order; fire and rescue service; prison service and security work; health and safety in uniformed services; and careers in uniformed services. This allows students to have a broad understanding of the different types of careers in the uniformed services that are available to them when they leave school. The programme has a literacy and numeracy theme throughout, as students have to log their progress and produce evidence of each task that they have completed. The students are also responsible for managing their own learning, as they select the tasks that they would like to complete within each module.

One of the things that is appealing about this programme is that it introduces the students to skills and attributes which may be required of them if they choose to work within the uniformed services in the future. The programme encourages students to think about their next steps post-16, while developing their employability skills and personal effectiveness. It allows students to work outside the classroom and their comfort zones, and develop skills for life.

Employability education at Isebrook SEN College

GARETH IVETT, FORMER ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER
AT ISEBROOK, NOW HEAD OF DAVENTRY HILL SCHOOL

Employability education became a significant focus for the school. As a senior leadership team we took the following steps:

1. **Skills for employment and skills for life** were introduced across the whole school. One skill was highlighted each week from year 7 to 13, and every lesson was driven by the focus. An assessment and self-assessment scheme was developed to measure progress and highlight areas for development of all students.

This is Me Believing in myself	Social Me Understanding and working with others	Thinking Me Thinking: rationally & imaginatively
Resilience	Communication: active listening	Innovation
Responsibility	Communication: speaking effectively	Evaluation
Self-motivation	Collaboration	
Integrity	Empathy	
Self-management	Motivating & influencing others	

2. **We developed an employability model**, clearly defining stages of development for the new employment curriculum and an employability continuum, polarised into five stages of experience of the world of work to ensure access to experience for all:
 - Stage 1:** Enterprise
 - Stage 2:** 'Day in the life of...'
 - Stage 3:** Short-term work experience
 - Stage 4:** Extended work experience
 - Stage 5:** Supported internships.

3. **The sixth form curriculum was completely rewritten** based on PfA (preparing for adulthood) strands. This contained an employability focus and substantial work experience. A clear ethos, with vision and values, was established and we created a brand, Foundations for the Future.

4. **New staffing positions, deemed essential to success, were:**
 - a) Transitions manager (a role already in position but significantly developed) – to work with students and families from year 9 ensuring impartial support and advice given in relation to destinations. The remit of the role was to continue to support beyond the school until age 25.

b) A senior teacher to develop a broad and balanced employability curriculum that could deliver personalised progression: KS3, skills for employment; KS4, passport to my future; KS5, employment.

c) Job coaches were trained in systematic instruction to support learners with meaningful work experience.

- 5. The school leased a retail shop in the town centre to support the practical work offer.** They developed two businesses, operating from the premises to provide a broad range of experience ensuring inclusivity, irrespective of need.

The school also developed a partnership agreement with a local theme park, Wicksteed Park. It was important that this partnership was of benefit to both organisations.

Curricular offers such as those described by these schools provide opportunities to reach even the hardest-to-reach learners. Even they have some interests! We often know a lot about a student's diagnosis, what they have difficulty with, but very little about what they can do and *do* do, particularly outside school. For students with SEND it is crucial that we understand what engages and interests them, together with why it does that, in order to personalise learning.

ENGAGEMENT: CRUCIAL FOR LEARNING – AND EMPLOYABILITY

We know from the work of professor Barry Carpenter that learning does not take place without engagement. Engagement is the single best predictor of successful learning for children with learning disabilities (Iovannone et al., 2003). Without engagement, there is no deep learning (Hargreaves, 2006), effective teaching, meaningful outcome, real attainment or quality progress (Carpenter, 2010) and employment, whether full or part time, is a measure of all these.

The Engagement Profile and Scale are classroom tools developed through SSAT's research into effective teaching and learning for children with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. They allow educators to focus on a child's engagement as a learner and create personalised learning pathways. They prompt student-centred reflection on how to increase the learner's engagement, leading to deep learning. http://www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.2-Engaging-in-learning---key-approaches/All/downloads/m10p040c/engagement_chart_scale_guidance.pdf

They have been more recently trialled as part of the 2016 Rochford report: *Review of assessment for pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests.*

Engagement is multi-dimensional, and encompasses responsiveness, curiosity, investigation, discovery, anticipation, persistence and initiation. The seven indicators of engagement are:

Engagement is the single best predictor of successful learning for children with learning disabilities

Responsiveness: the ‘noticing’ phase. How does the learner demonstrate awareness/recognition of the activity?

Curiosity: a prelude to further exploration or retreat. How does the learner display curiosity about the activity (eg ‘questioning behaviours’ such as peering, fleeting touch, verbal questioning)? Can you see the desire to explore further?

Investigation: the ‘hands on’ phase. What exploratory behaviours does the learner use when investigating the activity?

Discovery: how does the learner demonstrate discovery skills within an activity? Is there realisation and surprise?

Anticipation: how does the learner demonstrate anticipation? Are they showing prediction because of previous knowledge?

Persistence: how does the learner demonstrate continued effort within the activity (eg overcoming difficulties or conditions that usually make them disengage from learning)?

Initiation: how does the learner express their initiation (eg requesting the activity or doing something new in the activity)?

Educators can ask themselves questions such as: ‘how can I change the learning activity to stimulate Robert’s curiosity?’ ‘What can I change about this experience to encourage Shannon to persist?’ The adaptations made and the effect on the student’s level of engagement for learning can be recorded, together with a score on the engagement scale. Over time, it is possible to chart the success of interventions and adjustments, and the effect this has had on the pupil’s levels of engagement for learning. These tools can be and are used effectively in both mainstream and special schools.

Using the engagement profile for children with special needs
The work below was undertaken as part of the SSAT’s Leadership Legacy Programme by Roxie Cavill

The action research took place in Coteford Infant School in an intervention group. Coteford is a three form (nursery to year 2) mainstream primary school which has a specialist resource provision for children with physical disabilities, So it has a high proportion of children with a wide range of special needs. There are currently 15 children with educational health care plans (EHCPs) and a total of 41 on the SEN register. Many have been diagnosed with autism, varying on the spectrum from children who are non-verbal to high functioning ASD.

The participating group in this research project is working through the Attention Hillingdon Programme. The programme is a four-stage progressive model designed to improve children’s attention levels (J Meller, 2015).

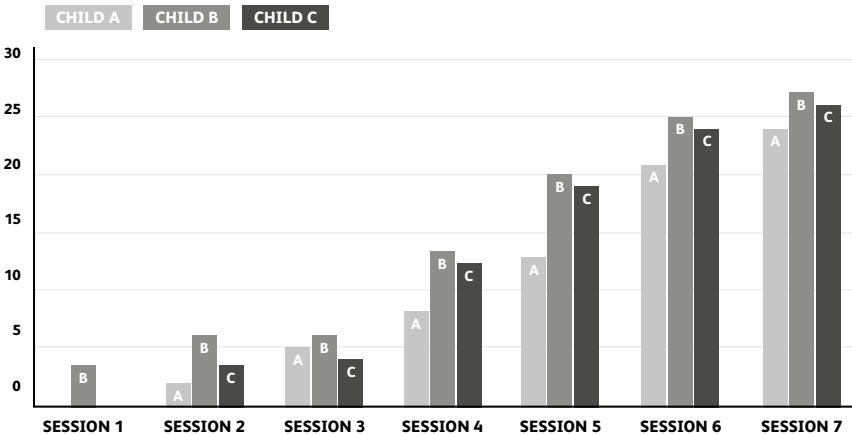
“Children with autism typically display low levels of engagement, particularly in their social world, which limits the opportunities for learning that occur for their typically developing peers” (D Keen, 2009).

Engagement and attention go hand in hand when learning: if a child is not engaged they will not be able to sustain their attention (Changing Minds, 2019). This is why I decided to carry out the research in that specific intervention group.

So, what is engagement? According to Carpenter, the process of engagement is a “journey which connects a child and their environment to enable learning and achievement.” This tells me that ensuring high engagement levels requires many things to be considered, such as people, ideas, materials and concepts.

The graph below shows the progress made by each child in terms of their levels of engagement within the programme.

Engagement Scores



Career talks at KS4

A recent research report, *Motivated to achieve* (see below), shows that participation in career talks with volunteers from the world of work can change the attitudes to education of key stage 4 students. This can influence their future plans and subject choices and motivate them to study harder; and it supports an improvement in academic attainment – even when taking place only a few months before their exams start. The research also highlighted that lower achievers and less engaged learners responded best to the intervention. This is particularly pertinent for schools facing funding challenges and considering where best to allocate their finite time and resources. <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Motivated-to-Achieve-Final-Full-report-Embargo-6th-June-1.pdf>

It follows that encounters with the world of work are vitally important for all young people. Employer engagement is now at the heart of the DfE's careers strategy, and international bodies like the OECD argue that it is essential that young people engage with workplaces as part of their education. This is because such encounters help to broaden young people's horizons, raise their aspirations, challenge stereotyping, increase motivation to learn, and ensure they have the skills and knowledge about the full range of modern jobs and career routes open to them. In doing so it also helps reduce the mismatch between young people's career aspirations and the reality of the labour market. <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/What-is-a-Meaningful-Encounter-with-the-world-of-work-final-1.pdf>

Project Search is a programme which was originally founded at the Cincinnati Children's hospital in the US, and can now be found in many countries including here in the UK: a number of

Project Search sites are being coordinated by the DFN Charitable Foundation. <https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/>

Project Search offers a year-long internship programme that provides real-world job experience, support to find fulltime paid work, and then support for both ex-students and employers once they are in work. The project is a partnership between school and employer. Each partner agrees to provide resources, support, etc, to the students during their internships, together with ongoing support. Each student will usually undertake three different job roles within their internship, each being progressively more closely matched to their skills and interests. This then gives them the best opportunity to move into paid employment. A number of schools are running the Project Search programme; others have developed similar programmes judged to be better suited to the needs and abilities of their student population.

Project Search at Whitefield Academy Trust

In 2013 Whitefield Academy Trust founded a North East London branch of Project Search, which is run in partnership with Barts Health NHS Trust and supported employment service Kaleidoscope Sabre Associates. SEARCH's training and job placement offers an unparalleled success rate, with over 70% of students who complete placements moving into full-time work.

The programme has proven so successful that it now takes special needs students from many other schools in the partnership between the host employer (Barts Health NHS Trust), education establishments (Whitefield Academy Trust and local schools/colleges) and the supported employment services. It offers total workplace immersion, with a combination of employability skills

introduction, career exploration and hands-on training through a series of job placements in the host business

Rachel Black's story: internship

Rachel started her internship programme with Catcote Futures in July 2017. She spent three days on work placement at her old school, Springwell Primary, as a lunchtime supervisor and offering classroom support. Having worked hard on her placement, she was offered paid employment from September 2018. Assistant head Louise Hargreaves reported: “Rachel always has a smile on her face and has a friendly and approachable manner. She follows instructions well and is helpful and patient when working with the children.”



For those working with students with severe and profound learning disabilities I would remind you of the work of Vygotsky (1978), who argues that mentally retarded children are not capable of abstract thinking. But perhaps that is because a teaching system

It is vital that schools provide opportunities for students to develop higher level thinking and reduce their learned helplessness, so they can become more independent

based solely on concrete principles means that they are never exposed to this higher-level thinking. Teaching concrete principles is necessary but should be considered a stepping-stone to higher, more abstract principles, without which their cognitive development will not have a chance of ever moving towards this higher processing. I am sure readers will be familiar with the concept of the zone of proximal development. This can be simply described as the distance between the actual development, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.

However, what we sometimes fail to do, especially when working with students with severe learning difficulties, is to slowly and systematically take the props away; otherwise the students will have a degree of learned helplessness. I think it is vital that schools work to provide opportunities for students to develop higher level thinking and reduce their learned helplessness in order that they can become more independent.

Schools/teachers can look to reduce learned helplessness by: using a range of strategies that are regularly discussed within the school/team/classroom; and challenging activities and ways of working that are not supporting increasing levels of independence. These strategies could include:

- Building activities and classrooms that allow for independent development.
- Ensuring all staff working within the classroom understand the importance of developing independence, and know how and when to support and/or give more time for task completion or communication.
- Having high expectations of all learners.

- Recognising and acknowledging that there is nothing wrong with a degree of failure. Mistakes are going to happen. This goes hand-in-hand with students trying new things/taking risks.
- Recognising and rewarding independent behaviours.
- Recognising, responding to and encouraging student-initiated activities.
- Planning for fading/reducing/removing prompts, both verbal and physical.
- Providing choices and opportunities for students to practise and to demonstrate their ability to be independent.

‘But employment means they lose benefits’

Another myth that is often used as a reason why people with learning difficulties can't go into employment is that they will be worse off as they will lose benefits. In fact, most people with learning disabilities will get more money in a full-time job than if they do not work and are on benefits. Those who work 16 hours or more a week are considered to be working full-time and the more hours a person works, the better off they will be. People will have more money in a full-time job because they should get national minimum wage, and may still be able to apply for other benefits.

Universal credit, which is being rolled out across the country, brings together a range of benefits that were previously separate, such as job seekers allowance (JSA) housing benefit and tax credits. Universal credit is designed to make it easier for people to work and keep some of their benefits. The panel below demonstrates this point.

Example 1: earning and receiving universal credit

Paul is aged 21 and living at home with his parents: His universal credit entitlement is £251.77 per month. He finds a job in a warehouse and works eight hours per week at the minimum wage, earning £266.93 a month. Universal credit deducts 63p in the £ for earnings. In this case that equates to a deduction of £168.16 per month, leaving Paul entitled to £83.60 of universal credit each month. Paul therefore receives each month:

His wage £266.93
 Universal Credit £83.60 _____
 Total income £350.53

Hence, Paul is £98.76 better off by working.

If a person is earning sufficient income from a job, universal credit may not be relevant, but it is still likely that they will be better off in work than on benefits.

Example 2: no universal credit, but employment still profitable

Suki is 25 years old and living at home with her parents. Her universal credit entitlement is £317.82 per month. Suki finds a job of 18 hours per week at minimum wage (£8.21). Her monthly wage is £640.38. Universal credit has a built-in earnings taper which is applied, deducting 63p in the £ for earnings which is £403.26pm. This shows that Suki's earnings exceed her universal credit entitlement, so no universal credit is payable. This is shown below:

Her wage is £640.38 per month
Universal credit entitlement £317.82 per month.
*Despite the universal credit not being paid, Suki is
£322.56 better off by working.*

The two examples are cited in the following government website, which also provides more information about permitted earnings etc: **<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>**

The additional links below are related to permitted work and useful information from Disability Rights UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-and-support-allowance-permitted-work-form>

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

In order to give your students the best possible chance of employment, the curriculum offered needs to be relevant to local context and the students need the core skills, knowledge and attributes those employers are looking for. As their teacher, you also need to develop positive relationships with employers to allow them to understand what your students can do! Developing these relationships takes time and often real tenacity. In the same way as every activity in school is a learning opportunity for your students so every meeting, meal out, shopping trip, etc, you and your staff have is an opportunity to engage with employers.

The teachers need to develop positive relationships with employers to allow them to understand what these students can do

Many schools have appointed a careers/employability lead, and all the ones I have met have great tenacity. Once they have a slight inkling that a business may be interested in finding out more about the school, helping with projects, fundraising etc, they are in there working their magic. They will take time to talk to

managers about the school, their students, their aspirations, the support they can give, examples of other work experiences and internships as appropriate. They will invite them into school to see for themselves and meet students who would be particularly interested in working in their setting, even if only for a day or two. More importantly, if the employers are not totally convinced from the start the school will keep inviting them back to plays, coffee mornings, careers events, enterprise days, etc.

Once the employer is committed to offering work placements and the like, key staff at the school such as job coaches need to really understand the work that the student will be asked to do. This could be as simple as a conversation with an employee, observing the employee at work or even rolling up their sleeves and doing a shift themselves. For example, careers lead Jackie is proud to tell me that she and her colleague have completed a shift at a local McDonald's store; and as a picker at a local recycling company. Interestingly, when they had finished their shifts they both said how much more complex the tasks were than they had originally thought. This ensured that when they were preparing the students for these placements, they really understood the role and the complexity of the tasks that the students were going to be asked to do. It also made job carving much more accurate, enabling the students to succeed. (The value in 'carving' lies in creating a job that meets the unique needs of an employer but also uses the specific skills of a person with multiple disabilities.)

It is vital for good relationships between the school and the employer that the employer feels supported and informed. By that I mean the relationship needs to be open and honest: if the student looking for a work placement has

a medical condition that could impact in the workplace, or has issues with self-regulation, for instance, this must be discussed before the placement takes place. If appropriate, staff training should also be offered, along with clear plans for management of known situations and a rapid response from the school should it be necessary.

Leaving employers without support that they can call upon is a recipe for disaster in my experience: it is often cited as the reason why an employer stopped offering work placements.

Regular reviews

It is also good practice to have regular reviews with the business, the students, job coaches, mentors, and parents/carers to discuss any concerns, share 'wow!' moments, identify learning that has taken place and look to the future. In looking to the future, one academy is embracing technology by trialling the use of QR codes to enhance the students' ability to work independently.

One academy is embracing technology, trialling the use of QR codes to enhance the students' ability to work independently

As work opportunities are built on strong relationships it is important to guard against it all falling down if the person you have the relationship with leaves the business or school. While individual relationships are often the way you get your foot in the door, it is important then to build on success. You can do this by getting senior staff in the business and the school's senior leadership team to work together, to ensure that the partnership has a moral imperative to continue to serve the young people in the community.

An approach that has proven successful over time is described by Paul Silvester, headteacher of Newman Community Special School:

“Special and mainstream schools must build up skills, resilience and independence and be rewarded and acknowledged when they do so. We must see the value of pupils in the workplace not simply in economic terms but in social impact. Educational provision is not just about a GCSE rollcall in school halls in August, but also celebrating employment of a young person with special needs.”

“About 18 years ago I heard of a scheme on Merseyside where the local authority had supported the setting up of a fish farm. It included a wormery, and used cardboard and access to fresh water. I won't go into the details but this scheme ended up employing ten people full-time and training each year a further eight. After the initial setup costs, the scheme was self-sustaining and the trainees had an excellent track record of getting employment after the year-long work experience. From that moment I have committed myself to trying to have a route through to employment for special needs students, which looked at what they can do rather than what they can't and actually was sustainable and productive. That journey looked at guided learning hours, curriculum, primary experiences, risk-taking parents and carers – and the biggest smiles of success possible from young people (and their families) who have gained employment in the real world.”

“The starting point is not special needs but models that encourage aspiration, that support employment initiatives and are sustainable. When I was working in mainstream

secondary, one of the government measures was to increase university take-up. Tony Blair produced the target figure of 50%. Many families without a tradition of university progression did not lack the capacity to go to university; they lacked the knowledge, the understanding and support. These all apply to young people with learning disabilities and their families. In my mainstream school, the funding allocated to supporting a pathway to university started in Y9. In the North East they said this was too late, so invested the funds in primary visits and resources. From that grew an ambition among many to go to university and knowledge of the funding, the application process and the benefits of the experience. The same is true for those with learning disability: the pathway for a post-19 employability programme must start at age 9 at the latest. We have just started a Project SEARCH programme in Rotherham this year; we have rung up 40+ parents/young people to go on it, but only four have said yes. It is too late to ask at 18+, it must be built up over many years.”

“If you have a culture which looks at employment as a real possibility, it is quite likely that part-time or voluntary routes become alternatives. This does not work the other way around: a voluntary scheme will not, in my experience, lead to sustained employment. It is worth investing in a full-time supported internship scheme as the gold standard, because the other routes will stem from that.”

TRACKING PROGRESS; ACCREDITATION

Schools use a variety of ways to track progress with regards to employability, including the use of external accreditation. Here are some of the more popular.

ASDAN: Employability qualifications provide a framework for developing and recognising general employability skills at entry 2 to level 2. They are suitable for use with both pre-16 and post-16 learners.

OCR's approach to employability was redeveloped in 2015, aiming to ensure learners are provided with the best foundations for future success in today's workplace. The qualifications remain flexible, with a practical range of 18 units and learner-friendly tasks that cover all the assessment criteria. They feature a straightforward structure for administration and assessment, with on-demand moderation to suit your centre's needs.

- Employability skills entry level 3 award
- 10399 (from 2015)
- Employability skills entry level 3 certificate
- 10400 (from 2015)

- Employability skills level 1 award
 - 10401 (from 2015)
- Employability skills level 1 certificate
 - 10402 (from 2015)
- Employability skills level 2 award
 - 10403 (from 2015)
- Employability skills level 2 certificate
 - 10404 (from 2015).

Gateway qualifications: the Gateway suite of employability skills qualifications have been developed at entry 3, level 1 and level 2 as awards and certificates. The qualifications offer the generic, transferable employability skills needed for employment such as teamwork, communication and problem solving. The qualifications are designed to enable a learner either to progress directly into employment, or into learning at a higher level as part of a progression pathway towards employment in a specific sector. They have been designed to complement learning in specific sectors where there is a need for the learner to obtain additional employability skills alongside sector-specific skills.

- Gateway Qualifications entry level award in employability skills (entry 3)
- Gateway Qualifications entry level certificate in employability skills (entry 3)
- Gateway Qualifications entry level extended certificate in employability skills (entry 3)
- Gateway Qualifications level 1 certificate in employability skills
- Gateway Qualifications level 1 extended certificate in employability skills

- Gateway Qualifications level 2 award in employability skills
- Gateway Qualifications level 2 certificate in employability skills.

City & Guilds: Employability skills qualifications are designed to support an individual successfully gaining a job, progressing in a chosen field, preparing the individual for further study and supporting the development of techniques required for successful independent living.

These qualifications are aimed at anyone who wants to live a more independent life; progress in education and/or their employment prospects; and get into a job, develop on the job or move onto the next job, as they progress along the career ladder.

The qualifications have been designed in collaboration with a variety of experts from various industry sectors, training providers and employment and recruitment professionals. Their aim is to ensure the content matches what is needed and valued by today's employment market, also meeting the needs for study programmes, traineeships and TechBacs.

NOCN: The suite of NOCN qualifications in Using Employability Skills has been designed to address the needs of learners working at entry level – and in particular those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The qualifications aim to ensure that all learners are given the same opportunities to access appropriate education and improve their life chances. The qualifications provide a foundation for lifelong learning focusing on transferable social, life and work skills which are essential for living and working in the community.

NCFE's level 1 certificate in Job Search and Employment Potential is suitable for learners aged pre-16 and above. This qualification aims to develop and enhance skills required for the working environment and improve learners' confidence and communication skills in order to prepare them for employment or for a change in employment.

SSAT also offers, as a benefit of membership, pupil leadership accreditation for primary aged students and a student leadership award for secondary aged students. Below you will find the criteria for the student leadership award, which is very closely linked to the skills and attributes identified by employers.

SSAT Student leadership accreditation criteria

Guide to the award criteria

		LEVEL		
STRANDS		BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
Developing myself	1. Commitment	Being punctual & regular	Being dedicated	Getting others involved
	2. Organisation and planning	Knowing what to do	Planning ahead	Organising a group
	3. Communication	Communicating within a group	Communicating outside a group	Communicating with a range of people including in public
	4. Being accountable	Being trustworthy	Having a responsibility	Having responsibility for success
Contributing to my community	5. Being a role model	Behaving well	Being respected	Being respected and helping others become respected
	6. Using my skills to help others	Recognising personal skills	Using skills to help others	Actively looking for opportunities to help others
	7. Understanding my community	Being aware of my community	Contributing to my community	Making a lasting contribution to my community
Working with others	8. Team working	Being part of a team	Working well in a team	Leading a team
	9. Presenting	Telling the audience things	Explaining things to the audience	Convincing the audience
	10. Challenge and reflection	Acting on others' comments to improve	Acting on self-reflection to improve	Acting on my own and others' reflections to improve at the same time

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

Schools can also track their progress in careers and employability education by using the Gatsby benchmarks. Recently, special schools were given a get-out clause on these standards – and virtually overnight websites that had these benchmarks rated as 20%, 30%, 50% etc met were suddenly rated as 100% met. While some may find this acceptable I feel that all students deserve the right to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes careers education. That said I do think that individual special schools need to interpret the standards according to their current student population, which as we know is like shifting sands at times.

For instance, schools with a wide range of needs would need to interpret according to different needs. So taking benchmark 2 as an example, it could be interpreted in the following ways (while the arrangements for the first three groups below appear almost identical, the providers will differ according to individual needs, as will the information given at the information session as this will be highly personalised):

PMLD learners and their parents/carers will attend an information session outlining the different options available post-19. Visits to at least 2 different providers will be arranged for students and parents/carers will be encouraged to attend.

SLD learners and their parents/carers will attend an information session outlining the different options available post-19. Visits to at least 2 different providers will be arranged for students and parents/carers will be encouraged to attend.

ASD learners and their will attend an information session/ careers day outlining the different options available post-19. Visits to at least 2 different providers/employers will be arranged for students and parents/carers will be encouraged to attend.

SEMH & MLD learners are likely to have statements as written in the standards.

All students will have access to a careers specialist; options will be discussed through annual review of EHCP from year 9.

Benchmark	Requirement	Details
<p>1. A stable careers programme</p>	<p>Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every school should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it. • The careers programme should be published on the school's website in a way that enables pupils, parents, teachers and employers to access and understand it. • The programme should be regularly evaluated with feedback from pupils, parents, teachers and employers.
<p>2. Learning from career and labour market information</p>	<p>Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the age of 14, all pupils should have accessed and used information about career paths and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options. • Parents should be encouraged to access and use information about labour markets and future study options to inform their support for their children.

Benchmark	Requirement	Details
<p>3. Addressing the needs of each student</p>	<p>Students have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each student. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school's careers programme should actively seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations. • Schools should keep systematic records of the individual advice given to each pupil, and subsequent agreed decisions. • All pupils should have access to these records to support their career development. • Schools should collect and maintain accurate data for each pupil related to their education, training or employment destinations.
<p>4. Linking curriculum learning to careers</p>	<p>All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of their subjects for a wide range of future career paths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the age of 14, every pupil should have had the opportunity to learn how the different STEM subjects help gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of careers.

Benchmark	Requirement	Details
<p>5. Encounters with employers and employees</p>	<p>Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every year, from the age of 11, pupils should participate in at least one meaningful encounter* with an employer. <p><i>*A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the student has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace.</i></p>
<p>6. Experiences of workplaces</p>	<p>Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and to expand their networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the age of 16, every pupil should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have. • By the age of 18, every pupil should have had one further such experience, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.

Benchmark	Requirement	Details
<p>7. Encounters with further and higher education</p>	<p>All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the age of 16, every pupil should have had a meaningful encounter (see * above) with providers of the full range of learning opportunities, including sixth forms, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and pupils. • By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying for university should have had at least two visits to universities to meet staff and pupils. <p><i>*In this case, a 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the student has an opportunity to explore what it is like to learn in that environment.</i></p>
<p>8. Personal guidance</p>	<p>Every student should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every pupil should have at least one such interview by the age of 16, and the opportunity for a further interview by the age of 18.

When careers guidance is good it will include the following points (which of course are not exhaustive):

- Ensure that each student has a clear, aspirational destination identified through person-centred planning.
- Ensure the student is offered a personalised route to meet their identified goals.
- Don't underestimate the student's abilities.
- Be brave – don't be over-influenced by accreditation. Much of it, sadly, holds no currency in the outside world.
- Know your students – ensure that there are constant reviews (formal and informal), as aspirations can change.
- Ensure recruitment is correct (put your players in the right positions).
- The link to the outside world is imperative – employ someone who speaks 'business'.

CONCLUSION

SEND learners are clearly disadvantaged when it comes to employment, and one of the contributing factors, as statistics show, is they are more likely to be excluded from mainstream schools. The Timpson review further highlighted the impact this is having on NEET figures. An excellent summary can be found at <https://www.wrigleys.co.uk/news/education/what-does-the-timpson-review-of-school-exclusion-mean-in-practice/>. Given the range of factors that lead to poor behaviour and exclusion, schools and health and social care agencies therefore need to work together, before and after exclusion, to give children the best chance to succeed.

An example of where a school went the extra mile: a KS4 student was at the point of exclusion due to his behaviour in class and his lack of engagement with learning. Instead of exclusion, he was asked, “what do you want to do when you leave school?” His reply was “either a mechanic or a chef.” The school then agreed to set up work experience tasters in each. Following the tasters, the student decided that working in a kitchen was what he really wanted to do. Luckily, the school employed their own chef, who provided meals for various community groups using the school facilities, as well as for students. At a weekly review following a couple of weeks of working in the kitchen, the student asked his tutor if he could have extra maths and English lessons, stating that he could not always read the recipes, and if ‘chef’ gave him a recipe for

We need to be advocates for our students in ensuring that employers, both local and national, see what they can do, rather than focusing on what they can't

four people but he had to make it for 20 he could not work out how to do this.

This story highlights that, no matter how many times we tell some students there is a reason behind what they are learning, they can't quite accept it until they are in a position to see it for themselves. This student could have been excluded: instead,

a personalised plan resulted in him re-engaging with learning, and developing industry standard skills which resulted in him gaining employment when leaving school.

SEND students, like all students, need access to relevant and appropriate careers education, and opportunities to learn about and engage with the world of work. By sharing our experiences in developing and providing such opportunities, both successful and not so successful, we will inspire more schools, students, parents, carers and employers to have even higher expectations of what is possible. We need to be advocates for our students in ensuring that employers, both local and national, see what they *can* do, rather than focusing on what they can't.

REFERENCES

References

- Carpenter, B., (2010). Engagement Profile and Scale. *The Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research Project: Developing meaningful pathways to personalised learning*. http://complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.2-Engaging-in-learning---key-approaches/All/downloads/m10p040c/engagement_chart_scale_guidance.pdf
- Fettes et al. (2018) Putting Skills to Work: It's Not So Much the What or even the Why, but How. <https://thecet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Putting-Skills-to-Work-June-2018.pdf>
- Hargreaves, D., (2006) A New Shape for Schooling? London: SSAT http://complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-3.2-Engaging-in-learning---key-approaches/D/downloads/m10p020d/a_new_shape_for_schooling_1.pdf
- Keen D., (2009). Engagement of Children With Autism in Learning. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*. 33. 10.1375/ajse.33.2.130. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/australasian-journal-of-special-education/article/engagement-of-children-with-autism-in-learning/AA587201E3B38DA5A11293F9441D9A71>
- Koen et al (2012) Training career adaptability to facilitate a successful school – to –work transition. *Journal of vocational behaviour* 81. 395-408 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/244486320_Training_Career_Adaptability_to_Facilitate_a_Successful_School-to-Work_Transition
- Iovannone, R, Dunlap, G, Huber, H and Kincaid, D. (2003) Effective educational practices for students with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 18. 150-166. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10883576030180030301>
- McQuaid, R., Green A and Danson M. (2006) The Concept of Employability

Meller, J., (2015). The Attention Hillingdon Programme. Available: <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2015/04/AttentionHillingdon.pdf>. Last accessed 6 March 2019.

Neary, S. et al (2015) Understanding Career Management Skills: Findings from the First Phases of the CMS leader Project. <https://core.ac.uk/display/46171158>

Vygotsky I. L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Edited and translated by M.Cole et al. <http://home.fau.edu/musgrove/web/vygotsky1978.pdf>

Other websites

<https://www.wrigleys.co.uk/news/education/what-does-the-timpson-review-of-school-exclusion-mean-in-practice/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-and-support-allowance-permitted-work-form>

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

www.gov.uk

www.dfnprojectsearch.org

<https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/What-is-a-Meaningful-Encounter-with-the-world-of-work-final-1.pdf>

<https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Motivated-to-Achieve-Final-Full-report-Embargo-6th-June-1.pdf>

https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf

<https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/education-health-and-care-planning/updated-specification-of-apprenticeship-standards-for-england.htm>

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(02\)07676-6.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(02)07676-6.pdf)

https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Campaigns/The-Forgotten-Third_full-report.pdf

THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to:

- Christopher Scott
- Kate Carpenter
- Rachel Black

For sharing their experiences of employment and volunteering.

To:

- Jackie McGarry, Careers & Employment Co-ordinator, Catcote Academy
- Sue Towers, Teaching and Learning Director, West Oaks SEN Specialist School and College
- Andrea English, Headteacher, The Oaks School
- Gareth Ivett, formerly assistant headteacher, Isebrook SEN College
- Roxie Cavill, teacher, Coteford Infant School
- Elaine Colquhoun OBE, CEO, Whitefield Academy Trust
- Paul Silvester, Headteacher, Newman Community Special School
- Debbie Gerring Headteacher, St Martins School

And all of the colleagues who have had conversations with me over the years that inspired me to write this. Thank you for sharing your practice, knowledge and enthusiasm in order that together we can fight for deep social justice for all students.

DEDICATION

This pamphlet is dedicated to Alan Chapman (1952-2019). Alan was responsible for setting up post 19 provision at Catcote Academy in 2002 when faced with the parent of a student who had no appropriate provision to move on to. The provision has grown year on year until in 2018 the academy achieved Independent Specialist Status for Catcote Futures which now has 80 post 19 learners. His motivation, aspiration and enthusiasm to provide employment opportunities has inspired me and many colleagues around the country through his generosity of sharing the Catcote story and resources to anyone who was interested. He was a passionate believer in the right of employment for all. Through his passion and commitment, he ensured that people with additional needs have a voice and are able to live meaningful and productive lives.

Pauline Holbrook

Pauline has worked in the special education sector for over 30 years. She has experience of teaching, leadership, training and undertaking research. Her philosophy is that all students require outstanding teaching that takes into account their needs, abilities and aspirations in order to prepare them for adult life.



SSAT on SEND and employability

Pauline Holbrook has written from the premise that all learners have the ability to learn and that we need to have high aspirations for each and every learner and acknowledge that employment is a real possibility. This pamphlet is designed to encourage discussion about employability and gives many examples of how schools can support SEND learners into the world of work.

Skills such as using public transport, handling money, understanding body language and how to behave in a work situation need to be explicitly taught to the majority of SEND learners and therefore need to feature within their personalised learning offer.

A key role of schools is to prepare students for the next steps on their life journey. Sue Williamson in SSAT's Fighting for Deep Social Justice pamphlet emphasises the school's role in ensuring that all learners, whatever their ability or context, leave school fully prepared to lead fulfilled and purposeful lives.

SSAT believes that schools should have high aspirations for all learners and that the achievements of all learners should be celebrated not just those who achieve 5 good GCSE's. For SEND learners we must ask ourselves what is an appropriate curriculum offer? How can we include aspects of work-related learning? What are the learner's aspirations and what can we do to help them achieve them?