



NEW COLLEGE SCHOOL, OXFORD
PRE-PREP & PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Careers Guidance and Education Policy

At New College School (NCS) we proactively establish and maintain a culture of curiosity and aspiration in which every pupil is encouraged to explore the world of work with confidence and imagination. We also prepare our pupils to engage with life beyond school in such a way that they recognise their own strengths, value the contribution of others and appreciate the diverse opportunities that exist in society.

We do this by providing a coherent programme of careers education and guidance from Years 4 to 8, designed to link classroom learning with the wider world. Our approach follows the Department for Education's (DfE) Statutory guidance: [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#) (updated 8 May 2025) and is informed by the eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, adapted appropriately for a prep-school context.

Although the statutory duty for careers guidance applies formally from Year 7 in maintained schools and academies, NCS follows the DfE's guidance to ensure our provision reflects national standards of good practice. Through lessons, visiting speakers and enrichment opportunities, pupils learn about different industries, skills and pathways, and begin to understand how their learning connects to future possibilities. The programme is led by the Careers Coordinator, Kate Lam (kate.lam@newcollegeschool.org), supported by the Deputy Head Pastoral, Brett Morrison (brett.morrison@newcollegeschool.org), with oversight provided by School Governor, Professor Andrew Counter (andrew.counter@new.ox.ac.uk), and reviewed annually to ensure it remains compliant and age-appropriate. Parents and local professionals are invited to support the programme by offering talks, visits and sharing insights from their own careers.

Gatsby Benchmarks

Our careers education and guidance programme is structured around the nationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks, which provide a clear, evidence-based framework for developing high-quality and consistent careers provision in schools. From September 2025, the Department for Education expects all institutions to use the updated Gatsby Benchmarks, which build on a decade of research into what best supports young people in preparing for the world of work.

At New College School, we use the Gatsby Benchmarks as an organisational framework to guide our careers education and guidance from Years 4 to 8. The benchmarks are typically introduced from the age of 11, around Year 7, when pupils begin the transition into secondary education. Early exposure to careers education helps pupils understand the world of work, explore different industries and start to recognise how their interests and skills may align with future opportunities. While our programme focuses on the prep-school years, the same benchmarks continue to shape pupils' learning beyond Year 8 as they move into senior school. At that stage, careers education becomes increasingly detailed, supporting subject choices, personal guidance and preparation for post-16 pathways such as A Levels, technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Each section below begins with a short summary of the relevant Gatsby Benchmark, as outlined in the DfE's statutory guidance, followed by an explanation of how this benchmark is being addressed in the NCS context.

Benchmark 1: A stable careers programme

“Every school should have an embedded programme of careers education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents and carers, staff, those in governance roles, employers and other agencies.”

Careers education at NCS is coordinated by the Careers Coordinator, with strategic oversight and resources provided by the Deputy Head Pastoral to ensure continuity and coherence across the School. Form tutors deliver structured sessions through the Wellbeing programme, where careers education becomes more formalised from Year 4 through dedicated lessons that explore skills, interests and the world of work. Prior to Year 4, many cross-curricular aspects of the NCS curriculum expose pupils to a range of employment sectors. Visiting guests are often asked about their professions, and staff actively encourage these conversations to broaden pupils' awareness and curiosity about the world of work. Members of the NCSPA and the wider parent community are regularly invited to contribute to this provision by offering careers talks or sharing professional insights, helping to connect pupils' classroom learning with real-world experience. Year 7 and 8 pupils complete annual surveys to assess their developing skills, interests and understanding of careers-related learning. The findings are used to evaluate teaching approaches and to identify suitable visiting speakers and planned visits that reflect pupils' emerging interests.

Benchmark 2: Learning from career and labour market information

“All pupils, parents and carers, teachers and staff who support learners should have access to good-quality, up-to-date information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities. Young people with SEND

and their parents and carers may require different or additional information. All learners will need the support of an informed adviser to make the best use of available information.”

Resources to support career exploration are readily available to NCS pupils, parents and staff through the school’s digital platforms, including the VLE and StaffShare, which host up-to-date links and materials on different professions, skills and pathways. Careers lessons and follow-up discussions often prompt pupils to seek further information in these areas, and staff are encouraged to guide these enquiries and share relevant resources provided by the Careers Coordinator. Visiting speakers and careers events also introduce pupils to a wide range of professions, helping them understand how different jobs connect to skills taught in school. Parents are signposted to reliable websites and materials to continue these conversations at home, ensuring that every pupil has access to accurate and age-appropriate information about the world of work and future study options.

Benchmark 3: Addressing the needs of each young person

“Learners have different careers guidance needs at different stages. Careers programmes should help learners navigate their concerns about any barriers to career progression. In addition, opportunities should be tailored to the needs of each learner, including any additional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, young people with SEND and those who are absent.”

The taught careers lessons at NCS are delivered as part of the Wellbeing curriculum, which carries the same expectations of accessibility and differentiation as other subjects, ensuring that all pupils can engage meaningfully with careers education. Lessons are designed to be inclusive, with teaching approaches adapted to meet the needs of individual learners. The Careers Coordinator works closely with the Head of Inclusion to ensure that pupils with SEND are fully supported and that any barriers to participation are identified and addressed. Staff are encouraged to discuss pupil progress and interests regularly so that activities can be tailored to the cohort and adapted where needed. The careers curriculum includes explicit teaching on challenging stereotypes, ensuring pupils learn to question assumptions about gendered roles and see a diverse range of role models across different professions. This approach ensures that every pupil can access the content knowledge as deeply as possible and begin to recognise their own strengths, ambitions and potential future pathways.

NCS keeps systematic records of each pupil’s careers education from Year 4 to Year 8, creating a coherent record of the lessons, activities, surveys and discussions they experience during their time at the School. Pupils can access their own records, and form tutors encourage pupils and parents

to refer to this information when discussing aspirations or preparing for school transitions. In line with DfE expectations, relevant careers information is shared with senior schools so it can be integrated into the pupil's ongoing record. National tools such as Compass are used supplementarily to support self-evaluation and alignment with statutory guidance, while the School continues to maintain its own core systems for record-keeping and monitoring provision.

Benchmark 4: Linking curriculum learning to careers

“As part of the school's programme of careers education, all teachers and subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses which are not specifically occupation led. Subject teachers and staff should highlight the progression routes for their subject and the relevance of the knowledge and skills developed in their subject for a wide range of career pathways and future career paths.”

Careers education is woven throughout the NCS curriculum to help pupils see how subjects connect to real-world applications and future opportunities. Prior to Year 4, cross-curricular learning introduces pupils to a variety of professions through themed topics, projects and visiting guests, who are often asked about their roles to spark curiosity and broaden pupils' awareness of the world of work. From Year 4 onwards, subject teachers are encouraged to highlight how the knowledge and skills developed in their disciplines relate to different career pathways. For Years 7 and 8, all subject teachers explicitly highlight the progression routes associated with their subject during each academic year. Teachers explain how the knowledge and skills developed in their subject contribute to a wide range of career pathways and future opportunities. This approach ensures that every Year 7 and 8 pupil, in every subject, has annual opportunities to understand how curriculum learning connects to the world of work, in line with statutory guidance.

NCS benefits from strong links with parents, local professionals and the University, enabling pupils to meet experts from a range of fields, from train drivers and archaeologists to medical professionals, toy designers and town planners. Events such as SHTEAM Week and visiting workshops further embed career connections across the curriculum, encouraging pupils to appreciate how what they learn in class can shape their future ambitions.

Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees

“Every pupil 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 opportunities, including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, and could include pupils' own part-time employment where it exists (part-time work can contribute to benchmark 5 but should not replace the need for other meaningful employer encounters).”

Employer encounters form a key part of the NCS careers programme, giving pupils meaningful opportunities to learn directly from professionals about work, skills and the qualities valued across different industries. While NCS pupils are not yet of an age for part-time employment, many take active roles in charity work, service initiatives and community projects within and beyond the school, developing transferable skills such as teamwork, communication and responsibility. In recent years, pupils have benefitted from talks by a wide range of visiting professionals, including an executive recruitment specialist, solicitor, CFO of a vaccine company, train driver, journalist, children's author, toy maker, scientist, literary editor, property developer, GP and other medical specialists. These sessions help pupils appreciate the diversity of career paths and personal stories that can lead to success in different fields. NCS aims to host at least two visiting speakers each academic year, representing a range of sectors and educational backgrounds, to ensure pupils recognise that rewarding careers can be pursued through many pathways, from academic study to technical training and skilled professions.

Benchmark 6: Experiences of workplaces

“Every pupil should have first-hand experiences of workplaces to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.”

While NCS pupils at this age have limited opportunities for formal workplace experience, the School provides age-appropriate activities to help them begin exploring the world of work. As part of the careers programme, pupils in Years 6 to 8 conduct an annual interview with an adult whose career interests them, enabling them to learn first-hand about professional roles, responsibilities and career journeys. This activity is carefully timetabled to allow pupils to engage meaningfully without competing academic demands, ensuring that reflection and curiosity remain central. These early experiences build pupils' confidence in communicating with adults about work and lay strong foundations for more formal work experience placements during later secondary education, typically at Key Stage 4 and beyond.

While national guidance for secondary schools refers to the equivalent of one week's work experience across Years 7 to 9, NCS adopts a distributed and age-appropriate model. Through structured activities across Years 6 to 8, including career interviews, visiting speakers, workplace visits where appropriate and guided reflection tasks, pupils build up a cumulative experience of the world of work. Collectively, these experiences contribute towards the equivalent of one week's work experience activities and ensure pupils are well prepared for more formal placements as they progress to senior school.

Benchmark 7: Encounters with further and higher education

“All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should incorporate learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers (ITPs), universities and in the workplace.”

Through the wide range of careers discussed with pupils, NCS helps them understand that there are many different routes into employment and that success can be achieved through both academic and vocational pathways. Pupils are encouraged to recognise that, while Oxford is home to world-class universities, further and higher education can take many forms, and university study is only one of several rewarding options. Within the curriculum, subjects such as Design Technology and Cookery highlight the value of skilled trades and apprenticeships, helping pupils appreciate the importance of practical, creative and technical professions. Visiting speakers and class discussions reinforce the idea that every career journey is unique, and that curiosity, effort and perseverance are key to achieving personal ambitions, whatever educational route they choose in the future.

Benchmark 8: Personal guidance

“Every pupil should have opportunities for guidance meetings with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of school or college staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These meetings should be available for all pupils whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all learners but should be scheduled to meet their individual needs. The careers leader should work closely with the careers adviser, SEND coordinator and other key staff to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded in the careers programme.”

Formal one-to-one careers interviews with a qualified careers adviser are not required at prep-school level. However, pupils at NCS receive age-appropriate early guidance through individual discussions with their form tutors and the Careers Coordinator. This approach introduces the principles of personal guidance, reflection and goal-setting from an early age, preparing pupils for the formal careers interviews that will take place in their senior schooling. NCS ensures that pupils are well prepared for this next stage through reflective discussions and structured self-assessment activities embedded within the Wellbeing curriculum. Following the Year 7 and 8 careers surveys, form tutors or the Careers Coordinator meet with pupils to reflect on their identified skillsets, interests and the industries in which those skills are most valued. Pupils are also encouraged to approach the Careers Coordinator at any time for further information or signposting to reliable resources and contacts. Information about NCS’s careers programme and how pupils can access

guidance or careers-related support is communicated through form tutors, assemblies and the school website. This early, personalised support helps pupils begin to articulate their strengths and aspirations, laying the groundwork for more formal, adviser-led careers guidance in senior school, where one-to-one interviews with trained professionals will become a regular feature of their ongoing development.