



SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT

Careers Guidance Policy

Policy Reviewed: November 2026

Reviewed by: Grace Speakman

Review Due: November 2027

Ratified by: Rachel Pilling

Purpose and principles

Safe Start School provides accessible careers education, information, advice and guidance throughout secondary and post-16 education. Our programme helps pupils understand their strengths, explore broad possibilities and make informed choices about learning, work and adult life.

Guidance must be accurate, current, impartial and focused on the pupil's interests. We maintain high aspirations, challenge stereotypes and avoid steering pupils towards a particular provider, including our own post-16 provision. Success includes progress towards employment, education, training, independence and community participation, according to individual aspirations and needs.

Requirements and responsibilities

The school meets the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 requirement for impartial, up-to-date careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education. The Equality Act 2010 informs access and reasonable adjustments. We use the updated Gatsby Benchmarks, implemented nationally from 2025–26, as a framework for improvement.

The DfE careers guidance and provider access guidance is used as good practice. Its duties for maintained schools and academies, including the statutory minimum provider encounters, do not automatically apply to this independent school. We nevertheless provide meaningful access to a broad range of education and training providers.

The proprietor oversees quality and resources and holds the Headteacher to account. The Headteacher designates a Careers Leader, ensures appropriate staffing and adviser expertise, and reviews provision. The Careers Leader coordinates the programme, partners, records and evaluation, working with the Curriculum Lead and SENDCO. Teachers link subjects to careers and help pupils prepare for and reflect on activities.

Personalised support and guidance

The programme is informed by pupils' EHCPs, strengths, interests, communication needs and starting points. Staff use accessible information, practical activities, preparation, repetition and supported visits as needed. Adjustments should enable participation rather than narrow pupils' options.

The Careers Leader coordinates access to appropriately qualified careers professionals, including Tameside Careers Service or other suitable services where available. The school verifies the suitability and qualifications of advisers rather than assuming that a general advice qualification establishes competence in personal careers guidance.

We plan a personal guidance meeting for each pupil by age 16 and a further meeting by age 18, with additional support at significant decision points or where needed. Meetings lead to an accessible action plan and follow-up. Pupils joining later receive timely guidance matched to their transition needs.

Parents and carers receive accessible information and opportunities to contribute. The pupil's voice remains central, with their consent and confidentiality rights respected, particularly for older students. Explain limits to confidentiality; refer safeguarding concerns to the DSL and share necessary information lawfully.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks

We use all eight benchmarks to plan and review our programme. The annual careers plan records activities, intended learning, responsible staff, timing and evaluation. It identifies gaps and improvement actions; this policy does not claim that every benchmark is already fully achieved.

1 A stable careers programme

Provide a coordinated programme across Years 7–13 and any remaining registered students aged 19. Share a clear summary, Careers Leader contact route and review arrangements through the school website and other accessible communication.

2 Learning from career and labour market information

Help pupils and families understand local and wider opportunities, entry requirements, working conditions and changing demand. Teach pupils to question information and relate it to their own interests.

3 Addressing the needs of each young person

Record aspirations, participation, guidance and next steps. Adapt activities, challenge limiting assumptions and prioritise pupils at risk of leaving education or training without a suitable destination.

4 Linking curriculum learning to careers

Show how knowledge and skills across subjects apply in working life. Develop communication, numeracy, digital skills, problem-solving and confidence through meaningful tasks.

5 Encounters with employers and employees

Plan repeated opportunities to hear from and interact with people in different roles, using speakers, mentoring, enterprise activities and visits. Prepare pupils beforehand and review what they learned.

6 Experiences of workplaces

Provide suitable first-hand workplace experiences through visits, shadowing, supported placements or work experience. Build participation gradually where needed and evaluate experiences against agreed learning goals.

7 Encounters with further and higher education

Explore academic, technical and vocational routes, colleges, training providers, apprenticeships, supported internships and higher education where relevant. Explain eligibility and support without ruling out options solely because a pupil has SEND.

8 Personal guidance

Offer individual meetings with a suitably trained careers adviser at important decision points, with preparation, accessible records, agreed next steps and follow-up. Coordinate advice with EHCP and transition planning.

Progression through school

Years 7–9: build self-awareness, confidence and awareness of jobs and pathways through curriculum links, employer contact, practical tasters and accessible information. From Year 9, preparation for adulthood informs EHCP review discussions, including employment, independent living, community participation and health.

Years 10–11: deepen exploration of suitable routes, provide personal guidance and employer or workplace experiences, and support college or training visits, applications, CVs and interviews. Agree a transition plan with clear actions, deadlines and contingency options.

Post-16: review aspirations and next steps, continue appropriate English and maths and preparation for adulthood, and develop independence and employability through practical learning. Arrange further guidance, suitable vocational or workplace opportunities and support for applications and transition beyond school. Explain available learning support, travel assistance and funding routes without guaranteeing eligibility.

Work experience and provider visits

Work experience is matched to readiness, interests and individual needs; a weekly placement may be arranged where suitable. Before placement, confirm learning goals, employer suitability, health and safety arrangements, age restrictions, insurance, supervision, safeguarding and reasonable adjustments. Record consent and emergency contacts, share necessary information securely and identify school and employer contacts.

Assess safeguarding checks according to the role, activity, supervision and applicable requirements; a DBS check is not automatically required for every employer. Staff monitor attendance, welfare and learning, review concerns promptly and stop or amend an unsafe placement. Follow the school's work experience, safeguarding, educational visits and transport procedures.

Education and training providers may contact the school office for referral to the Careers Leader. Access is arranged fairly around pupils' needs, supervision, safeguarding and the timetable. Providers must offer accurate information without undue pressure. Explain access decisions and consider suitable alternative arrangements where necessary.

Monitoring impact and transition

The Careers Leader maintains secure individual records of encounters, workplace learning, guidance, aspirations and action plans. Review engagement and learning, not simply the number of activities attended. Seek pupil, family, adviser, employer and provider feedback, using accessible methods.

Track intended destinations before pupils leave and actual and sustained destinations afterwards where information can lawfully be obtained, working with local authorities and receiving providers. Identify pupils at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training and coordinate timely support, including an alternative plan where the preferred route falls through.

The Headteacher reviews the programme annually with the Careers Leader, reporting strengths, gaps and actions to the proprietor and governors through agreed oversight arrangements. Staff development responds to identified needs. Keep personal information securely under the school's data protection and retention arrangements.

Related policies and references

Read alongside Curriculum, SEND, Equality, Safeguarding, Work Experience, Educational Visits, Transporting Students and Data Protection policies and procedures.

References: Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, paragraph 2(2)(e); DfE Independent School Standards guidance April 2026; DfE Careers guidance and access for education and training providers June 2026 as relevant good practice; updated Gatsby Benchmarks at www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk.