



Careers Strategy 2026-2027

1 Purpose and Aims

At King Edward VI College, we foster a culture of curiosity and aspiration, encouraging students to actively explore their future pathways. By developing knowledge, transferable skills, and the confidence to navigate choices, we empower every student to take ownership of their learning and career progression.

The College has established a strong careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) programme, supporting students in progressing to Higher Education, Apprenticeships, and employment. This strategy outlines our key priorities and actions—both internally and through external partnerships—to further enhance this provision. Our aim is to ensure all students are well-informed, prepared, and able to make ambitious, well-considered decisions, supported by the interpersonal and professional skills needed for success in the modern workplace.

Delivery of this strategy will involve close collaboration with key partners, including the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Careers Hub, Further and Higher Education providers, and local employers. These partnerships ensure alignment with the Department for Education's national careers strategy while providing relevant, high-quality guidance.

We recognise CEIAG as a key driver of social mobility; students can only aspire to what they know. Our role is to broaden their awareness of opportunities and embed high-quality, impartial careers education throughout their journey, enabling informed choices aligned to their strengths and ambitions.

This strategy reflects our commitment to continuous improvement, with clear measures to align fully with the Gatsby Benchmarks, incorporating updated statutory guidance from May 2025. Our approach is holistic and inclusive: every student benefits from meaningful, progressive careers guidance, embedded across both the curriculum and wider College experience.

2 Careers Strategy

The Eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

- 1) A stable careers programme
- 2) Learning from career and labour market information
- 3) Addressing the needs of each student
- 4) Linking curriculum learning to careers
- 5) Encounters with employers and employees
- 6) Experience of workplaces

- 7) Encounters with further and higher education
- 8) Personal guidance

In December 2017, the Department for Education launched its national Careers Strategy, placing the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) at the centre of careers provision in England. The CEC coordinates national efforts to support effective practice, address gaps, and ensure consistency.

A central element of the strategy is the Gatsby Benchmarks, developed in 2014 and based on international research. These eight benchmarks define world-class careers education and provide a clear framework for delivering high-quality, impactful guidance.

Since 2018, the Gatsby Benchmarks have been embedded in statutory guidance for schools and recommended for colleges, and they now form part of the Ofsted inspection framework. Over 4,700 institutions use them to shape CEIAG provision, with national performance more than tripling since their introduction.

In 2024, following extensive research and consultation, the benchmarks were updated to reflect evolving best practice and the needs of a changing labour market. Revised statutory guidance was issued in May 2025 and has been adopted by the College.

At King Edward VI College, our Careers Strategy is fully aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks. We are committed to embedding them throughout our provision, ensuring all students receive high-quality, impartial careers education that supports informed, aspirational decision-making and successful progression.

Gatsby Benchmark	How We Meet This Benchmark
1. A Stable Careers Programme	The College has a clearly defined, progressive careers strategy led by a designated Careers Leader, with regular review from SLT and governing body. Careers education is embedded across tutorials, events, workshops, and guidance sessions, with regular review and evaluation.
2. Learning from Career and Labour Market Information	Students have access to up-to-date labour market and careers information via our Careers Hub, UniFrog, college website, Padlet, and 1:1 appointments.
3. Addressing the Needs of Each Student	Careers provision is personalised through Careers Plus, targeted support for vulnerable groups, and tailored progression pathways. Personal Tutors, Learning Support, subject staff and SLT can refer students for guidance.
4. Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers	Programmes such as ASPIRE, Pathways and FutureMaKE connect academic study to career destinations. Curriculum areas highlight relevant industries and opportunities through lessons, speakers, visits and projects.
5. Encounters with Employers and Employees	Students benefit from employer-led workshops, visits, mentoring via our Enterprise Advisors, and our Speaker Series. Events provide real-world context and employer insight. Students also engage with employers through our annual Careers Fair, subject masterclasses, and parent information sessions.

Gatsby Benchmark	How We Meet This Benchmark
6. Experience of Workplaces	Support is offered to secure meaningful work experience placements. External volunteering, workplace visits, and employer-led initiatives ensure students experience a range of working environments. Every student is expected to undertake a placement during their time in college.
7. Encounters with Further and Higher Education	Students engage with providers through our annual HE and Careers Fairs, subject masterclasses, and parent information sessions. We also host apprenticeship providers and FE speakers.
8. Personal Guidance	All students can access multiple one-to-one appointments with our Level 6 qualified Careers Advisors at pivotal points in their studies. Personal guidance is integrated throughout their time at College and referral routes are well-established.

3 Careers Hub

The West Midlands Combined Authority Careers Hub

The Black Country Careers Hub has played a central role in shaping careers education across the region. Established in 2018 as part of the Careers and Enterprise Company's Wave 1 pilot, it initially included 35 schools and one college and quickly outperformed national averages against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Building on this success, Wave 2 funding in 2019 expanded the Hub to 52 institutions, followed by Wave 3 in 2020, extending support to 115 providers, including schools, colleges, special schools, pupil referral units and SEND settings.

Now part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Careers Hub network, the Black Country Careers Hub continues to deliver high-impact support. Member institutions benefit from termly meetings, CPD, employer engagement events, thematic workshops, and access to a comprehensive online portal with up-to-date guidance and best practice resources.

King Edward VI College actively engages with the Hub, recognising its value in enhancing our provision and creating meaningful opportunities for students. This partnership ensures alignment with regional priorities and supports a collaborative, evidence-informed approach to delivering high-quality careers education.

4 Strategic Careers Leader

In line with the Department for Education's Careers Strategy, all colleges are required to appoint a named member of their senior leadership team as Strategic Careers Lead. At King Edward VI College, this responsibility rests with David Handy, Director of Admissions, Marketing and Progression.

As Strategic Careers Lead, David will oversee the implementation of this strategy and ensure the College meets its statutory obligations, including full alignment with the Gatsby Benchmarks by August 2027. He will report regularly to both SLT and the Governing Body on progress and impact.

David will also work in close partnership with the Black Country Careers Hub, our assigned Enterprise Co-Ordinator, Enterprise Advisors, and a network of local employers, to strengthen external engagement and ensure our careers provision remains current, inclusive and effective.

5 Our Careers Team

David Handy will lead our team which will include the following staff members:

Louise Harper - Careers Advisor

Faye Lowe - Careers Advisor

Molly Naylor - Careers Advisor

Jane F Edwards – Employer Engagement and Work Experience Co-Ordinator

Emma Parker – Careers Administrator

6 Enterprise Co-Ordinator and Enterprise Advisors

Nathan Hutchinson is the College's assigned Enterprise Co-ordinator, provided through the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as part of the Black Country Careers Hub. Nathan plays a key role in supporting the implementation of our Careers Strategy, acting as a vital link between the College, local employers, and the wider careers network. He works closely with the Careers Leader and wider Careers Team to strengthen employer engagement, share best practice, and ensure our provision aligns with regional priorities and the Gatsby Benchmarks. Compass reviews are completed on a termly basis in conjunction with Nathan. His expertise and insight are invaluable in helping us deliver high-quality, employer-informed careers education.

Through the WMCA /Black Country Consortium LEPs Enterprise Advisor Network, King Edward VI College are delighted to have been assigned our own designated enterprise advisors. Lauren Moulton and Sarah Bradford will be supporting our Careers Team to assist us in facilitating activities which fulfil the requirements of Gatsby Benchmarks 5 and 6.

7 Senior Leadership Team

At King Edward VI College Stourbridge, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) plays a vital strategic and operational role in shaping and delivering our careers programme. Working closely with the Careers Leader, the SLT ensures that careers education is embedded across all aspects of college life and aligned with our wider vision for student success. Members of the SLT actively champion progression opportunities, support the coordination of key events and initiatives, and ensure that every student receives high-quality, personalised guidance. Through regular review of data and the careers progression, and collaboration with key stakeholders, SLT help maintain a forward-thinking, inclusive and impactful approach to careers education across the college.

8 Careers Link Governor

To support the strategic oversight of our careers provision, Jules Singh has been appointed as the College's designated Careers Link Governor. Jules will work in partnership with the Careers Leader and wider Careers Team to monitor progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks, champion careers education at board level, and ensure that the Governing Body remains informed and engaged with the development and impact of our careers strategy. His role will be key in providing both challenge and support, helping to ensure that the College's careers provision remains ambitious, inclusive and aligned with national expectations.

9 Careers Advice Provision

Students are currently receiving the following careers related support or participating within the activities listed below during their time at college. We have a universal offer for all students, and we also offer Careers Plus, a programme for LAC / EHCP students. Student also have access to an online booking request for one-to-one appointments, via our website.

Year 12 Careers Programme – Aligned to Gatsby Benchmarks

Activity	Gatsby Benchmark	Description
Careers appointments on request	8 – Personal Guidance	Students can book one-to-one appointments with our Level 6 qualified Careers Advisors for tailored, high-quality support to help guide future decisions.
Careers Plus support for students with additional needs	3 – Addressing the Needs of Each Student	Targeted support for students with additional needs, offering bespoke guidance and resources to overcome barriers and plan for progression.
ASPIRE: Preparation for Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry & veterinary science	4 – Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees 7 – Encounters with Higher Education	A structured support programme that prepares high-achieving students for competitive HE routes, connecting academic study with future professions.
Pathways programmes	4 – Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees 7 – Encounters with Higher Education	Career-specific programmes that highlight subject links to employment sectors, offering focused advice on routes, skills, and experiences needed.

Activity	Gatsby Benchmark	Description
HE Careers Fair (national universities, access programmes)	7 – Encounters with Higher Education	An annual event giving students first-hand contact with universities across the UK, including those offering widening participation and access routes.
Support for work experience placements	6 – Experiences of the Workplace	Help and guidance to source and secure work placements that build industry knowledge and essential workplace skills.
Apprenticeship and employer workshops	3 – Addressing the Needs of Each Student 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Interactive workshops designed to develop employability skills, including CV writing and interview preparation, for students considering non-university pathways.
Speaker Series (local employers, FE, HE, apprenticeship providers)	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Regular talks and Q&A sessions with professionals from a range of sectors to broaden understanding of careers and post-18 options.
Meet the employer events	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Informal networking events that connect students with employers, offering insight into job roles, industries and career expectations.
Mentoring through external partners	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Personalised mentoring support from our external partners, providing advice, encouragement and industry perspective.
Promotion of external volunteering opportunities	6 – Experiences of the Workplace	Students are encouraged to take up volunteering, gaining real-world experience, developing transferable skills and enhancing personal development.
Tutorial focus on careers progression, advice and guidance	1 – A Stable Careers Programme	Careers education is embedded within the tutorial / FutureMaKE programme, ensuring all students receive consistent, structured advice throughout the year.
UCAS applications (summer term, to include HE drop in's, etc)	7 – Encounters with Higher Education	Guided support for all students completing UCAS applications, including personal statement drop-ins and university preparation advice.
UniFrog	2 - Learning from career and labour market information	Integrated into the tutorial / FutureMaKE programme, Unifrog helps students explore career pathways, compare university and apprenticeship options, and access up-to-date labour market insights to support informed decision-making.

Year 13 Careers Programme – Aligned to Gatsby Benchmarks

Activity	Gatsby Benchmark	Description
Careers appointments on request	8 – Personal Guidance	One-to-one appointments with Level 6 trained Careers Advisors offer personalised support tailored to individual goals and next steps.
Careers Plus support for students with additional needs	3 – Addressing the Needs of Each Student	Bespoke, targeted guidance and resources for students with additional needs, ensuring access to appropriate progression support.
ASPIRE: Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry & veterinary preparation	4 – Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees 7 – Encounters with Higher Education	Specialist support and application preparation for students pursuing competitive higher education routes.
Pathways programmes	4 – Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees 7 – Encounters with Higher Education	Structured progression pathways into a range of sectors, linking subject knowledge to future careers.
HE Careers Fair (national universities, access routes)	7 – Encounters with Further and Higher Education	Direct engagement with a wide range of universities, including access and outreach teams, broadening HE awareness.
Support for work experience placements	6 – Experiences of the Workplace	Guidance and opportunities to secure meaningful work placements, building employability and industry insight.
Apprenticeship and employer workshops	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Skill-building sessions focused on CV writing, job applications, and navigating non-university pathways.
Speaker Series (local employers, FE, HE, apprenticeship providers)	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Access to talks from professionals and providers, offering insight into real-world roles, pathways and sectors.
Meet the employer events	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Informal networking events enabling students to meet professionals and explore industry expectations.
Mentoring through external partners	5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees	Individual mentoring provides trusted support and industry insight for long-term career planning.

Activity	Gatsby Benchmark	Description
Promotion of external volunteering opportunities	6 – Experiences of the Workplace	Opportunities to develop workplace skills, confidence and experience through meaningful volunteering.
Tutorial focus on careers progression, advice and guidance	1 – A Stable Careers Programme	Embedded careers content delivered through the tutorial system ensures consistent support throughout the year.
Financial awareness and university preparation	7 – Encounters with Further and Higher Education	Sessions focused on budgeting, student finance and HE costs to support informed decision-making.
Parent & guardian masterclass: HE & student finance	7 – Encounters with Further and Higher Education	Targeted guidance for families supporting students through HE applications, including finance and transition.
UCAS process, personal statement workshops, progression advice	7 – Encounters with Further and Higher Education	Timetabled workshops and one-to-one drop-ins supporting students throughout the university application process.
UniFrog	2 - Learning from career and labour market information	Integrated into the tutorial / FutureMaKE programme, Unifrog helps students explore career pathways, compare university and apprenticeship options, and access up-to-date labour market insights to support informed decision-making.

10 Careers Related Events

- Staff contribute to the delivery of careers guidance through: Employer visits and talks to students, promoting the colleges careers programme, organising trips and events.
- Local Employers contribute to the delivery of careers guidance through: Work Experience Placements and guest speaker spots.
- HE institutions contribute to the delivery of careers through online workshops and seminars, presenting at the colleges HE fair and supporting students through widening participation programmes and summer schools.
- Our Enterprise Advisors contribute through mentoring, talks, creating connections for students with local employers.
- Parents contribute to the delivery of careers guidance through: Support to arrange work experience.

11 Access to Personal Guidance

All students at King Edward VI College have full access to personalised, one-to-one careers guidance delivered by our Level 6 qualified Careers Advisors, ensuring expert, impartial support tailored to each individual's aspirations. Every student will have the opportunity to participate in multiple careers interviews and personal guidance sessions throughout their time at college, in line with the expectations set out in the Gatsby Benchmarks (Benchmark 8). Appointments can be booked in person by visiting the Careers Hub, by emailing careers@kedst.ac.uk, or by completing the online booking form available [here](#). Students may also be referred for guidance by their Personal Tutor, Lead Tutor, Learning Support Team, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), or subject teachers. Whether students are considering university, apprenticeships, employment or other pathways, our Careers Team is on hand to support informed decision-making, goal setting and confident progression.

12 Alumni

Our alumni play a valued and active role in enhancing the careers provision at King Edward VI College Stourbridge. Many return to support current students by delivering workshops, speaking at events, and offering real-world insight into a wide range of career sectors. They work closely with subject teams to bring curriculum learning to life, sharing their post-college journeys and helping students connect academic study with future pathways. Alumni regularly attend our flagship events such as the HE & Careers Fair and sector-specific panels, offering both inspiration and practical advice. Their continued involvement is a powerful example of success beyond college and an integral part of our wider progression strategy.

13 Objectives for 2026-2027

The Careers Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) outlined in the Careers Improvement Plan (February 2026 document) is a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing various aspects of our careers programme. The plan focuses on several key areas for development, including gathering more detailed information on alumni destinations to better understand the impact of our programmes, improving work experience (WEX) participation to ensure all students gain practical experience, and enhancing personal guidance for students through timely appointments and increased parental awareness. Additionally, the plan aims to strengthen the integration of careers education within the curriculum by working with Faculty Directors, Subject Leaders and Careers Champions and ensuring consistent employer engagement across all subject areas. Community links are also a priority, with initiatives to establish partnerships with external stakeholders and increase community use of college facilities. The plan includes measures to improve data tracking and monitoring, ensuring accurate and detailed reports to inform decision-making. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen the relationship between the Careers Team and the Governing Body, enhance the use of Labour Market Information (LMI) to support the careers programme, and improve communication of learning journeys available to students. Finally, the plan sets a goal to achieve the Quality in Careers Standard, demonstrating our commitment to providing high-quality careers education and support.

1. A Stable Careers Programme

- To ensure the careers programme is delivered by individuals with the right skills and experience. The College will, wherever possible, use qualified careers professionals to offer advice and guidance to all, or the overwhelming majority, of our students.
- To enable students to have an understanding of the full range of opportunities available to them, the skills that are valued within the workplace and to have first-hand experience of a work environment.
- To develop and publish a careers programme that will raise the aspirations of all students regardless of academic ability and which is tailored to meet their individual needs wherever possible.
- Ensure our Careers Strategy is fully supported by the College's Senior Leadership Team and is approved by the Governing Body.
- To ensure there is a clear focus on the activities which support enterprise, employability skills, workplace experiences and qualifications which employers' value.
- Regularly evaluate our careers strategy to determine the impact of our careers related activity based on the feedback provided to us by students, teachers, employers, and where appropriate parents.
- To maintain high quality careers provision endorsed by the Careers and Enterprise Company and to review the improvement of our programme by using the Compass evaluation and Tracker tools.

2. Learning from Career and Labour Market Information

- To encourage and increase the use of online careers tools and packages across all year. Working with our own careers team, key partners, stakeholders, local and national professional bodies.

- To utilise and then support the development of labour market information to ensure staff and students are informed in their decisions and the advice being given. Work with the Black Country Consortium LEP and the Careers and Enterprise Company to help establish key priority areas which need to be developed.
- To promote the values of labour market information to parents /carers (where appropriate) to access and understand this information. This will be shared via UniFrog, college website, and college newsletters. To investigate careers and opportunities in learning, work and apprenticeships and how these meet the local and national priorities.

3. Addressing the Needs of the Student

- To develop mechanisms to report, track and monitor compliance in relation to the Careers Strategy objectives.
- To develop accurate tracking systems to ensure students are able to keep track of their own experience, record and access the advice they have received and monitor the agreed actions and next steps
- Ensure that a programme of activity takes place which raises the aspirations of all students and challenges stereotypical thinking in terms of equality and gender.
- To ensure that students with vulnerabilities and those who are at risk are appropriately supported and identified through close working relationships with the full range of educational and support agencies.
- To ensure that careers guidance for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is differentiated, where appropriate, and based on high aspirations and a personalised approach. Careers guidance for learners with SEND should be based on the student's own aspirations, abilities and needs.

4. Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers

- To ensure that subject teachers across the whole College support the delivery of careers education and guidance and are able to link the content of curriculum with careers, even in lessons which are not specifically occupation led. Subject specialist staff can be powerful role models to attract students towards their field and the careers that flow from it.
- To ensure that careers related activities are built in throughout the College year and not just towards the end of any given topic / subject being delivered.
- To promote encounters with employers and employees, and where appropriate embed opportunities for learning in curriculum lead sessions.
- Increase the number of activities which are conducted within school with the support of local employers.
- To ensure that students have the opportunity to improve employability skills and their understanding of and awareness of entrepreneurship
- To enable learners to gain the confidence to compete in the labour market by providing opportunities to gain the practical know-how and attributes that are relevant to gaining employment.
- Create mechanisms where parents and alumni can express their interest to actively support employer related activity taking place within the school.
- The College will also encourage students and parents to attend careers events outside of the College.

6. Experiences of the Workplace

- To ensure that students receive at least ONE meaningful experience of the workplace during their time at college.

- To increase the number of employer workplace visits which will take place to enable students to gain more of an understanding of the wide range of employment opportunities available in the Black Country and surrounding areas.
- To strengthen our links with local employers and support our Enterprise Advisor to facilitate careers related activity within college.

7. Encounters with Higher Education

- Ensure all / overwhelming majority of students has been provided with information about the full range of apprenticeships including higher level apprenticeships.
- Ensure all / overwhelming majority of students have experienced meaningful encounters with universities.

8. Personal Guidance

- Ensure all / overwhelming majority of students have had access to 1 or more interviews with a professional careers advisor by the end of Year 13.

14 Promotion of Events

At King Edward VI College, we are committed to promoting all careers-related activities that take place within the College. These activities will be shared across a range of platforms, including our social media channels, Microsoft Teams, college newsletters, and the Careers Padlet. Additionally, we will build a comprehensive portfolio of case studies to evidence the expansion and success of our careers provision.

This careers strategy, along with any associated case study documents, will be made available on the College's website.

This approach will ensure that we, along with our partner organisations, are able to capture and present the necessary evidence to both OFSTED and the Careers and Enterprise Company. It will also demonstrate that our activities align with the requirements outlined in the Department for Education's Careers Strategy.

Date of Next review – August 2027