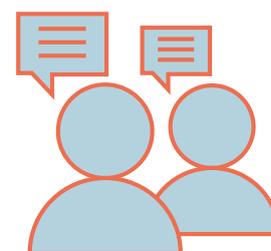


# Engaging with a School, Special School or College

## Tips for engaging with a School, Special School or College

Making the initial contact with a school/college shouldn't be a daunting experience and can be done in person or virtually. The following tips will ensure the start of your relationship develops into a successful and mutually beneficial one. All schools have a statutory duty to ensure their students from years 8 to 13 have careers guidance and this includes encounters and experiences of the workplace, so your initial contact will be extremely welcome.



<p><b>Finding out about SEND schools in your area.</b></p>	<p>The Careers &amp; Enterprise Company's <u>network</u> is an easy way to get connected. Local authorities are also a good place to start, as their websites will show SEND schools in your area. Most mainstream schools will also have students with SEND, so there is the opportunity to engage with them too. Your employees are likely to be a good source of information, as well as a simple internet search.</p>
<p><b>Preparing for your initial contact</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be that one of your employees has suggested engaging with a local school and is happy to lead this activity. If not, identify someone who will coordinate this for you and be happy to do so. An employee who has good stakeholder engagement skills is a good choice or an employee who already has a connection with the school. This could be an opportunity to support an employee's development by getting them involved. It will help if this employee is able to stay involved in delivering this experience of work.</li> <li>• Prepare a few points that you can share about your business, what you do, and the type of work involved – avoiding any jargon, acronyms and technical language.</li> <li>• You won't need to go into lots of detail at this stage about what you could offer or what the school would like, but if there is important information about your business such as any hazardous operations, you should mention it upfront rather than later in the preparation stage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making contact</b></p>	<p>A phone call is the obvious choice for your initial contact and the receptionist will know exactly who to put you in touch with when you do. This is most likely to be the careers leader or member of teaching staff who leads on careers and/or work experience. Don't be surprised if you are asked to call back at a particular time as they may be teaching.</p>

<b>Feeding back</b>	Sharing back what you've learnt with colleagues will help you in identifying those who want to be involved. Capture any early suggestions for what you could offer along with any challenges raised that can be discussed with the school.
<b>Sharing environments</b>	Whether it's in person or virtually using video/tele-conferencing or recording short videos, sharing more about your working environment is key. Teachers will really appreciate finding out more about your organisation and meeting employees, as it will help them ensure those students who can benefit most are involved. Likewise, finding out more about the school is a great way to start getting to know the students and the teaching staff.

### **Ideas for Early Engagement:**

All of the following can be delivered virtually, using video call facilities, pre-recorded videos or by sharing resources, such as presentation material:

- Visit the school for a walkaround. They will be happy to show you around and share further information about the school and their students.
- Attend an assembly. You'll get to see the majority of students and teachers altogether. You could offer to talk about your organisation at an assembly and teachers would provide any guidance in relation to the best forms of communication.
- Attend a lesson. You may like to sit in on one of the lessons, particularly if it is a lesson related to your type of business.
- Invite teaching staff to visit your office. Teachers will appreciate seeing your working environment upfront. They will take into consideration accessibility and any areas that could be distracting for some students. They may identify activities which could form part of the work encounter their students get involved in.

### **Sharing Information About Your Organisation**

Many schools and colleges will already have an idea of how you as an employer could support their students as it is likely they already work with other employers. However, it's key you are able to share more about the type of organisation you are, what types of roles and skills your employees have, as well as the commitment you are willing to provide. Ensuring there is a good match between what you are able to offer and what the students need, will result in a successful outcome for everyone.

#### **Alternative Support Routes**

There are other organisations across the country who can support you in delivering work encounters and experiences of the workplace for SEND students. Some regions will have education business partnership organisations and the simplest way to find out if there is one in your region, is to do an internet search. For example, a search for '[Derbyshire Education Business Partnership](#)' (DEBP) will take you to this link to their website.

Here are some quotes from businesses who have worked with the DEBP:



Thanks ever so much for inviting me today. These youngsters are just awesome, some proper talented children with great ideas. Our economy in 15-20 years will be booming! Well done to everyone – a great afternoon, great event which was really well thought out and well organised by DEBP.

Julie Eley

Automotive Compliance Specialist after supporting an activity with a local SEND school



This initiative is a great way to develop a close relationship with local schools and to offer support to young people into the workplace. It also allows us to think about our own workforce and the opportunities to work with young people, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Sarah Wilks

Head of Outreach Development at the Peak District National Park

Read the full case study [here](#)

Local authorities are good sources of information too and many will have teams who can support with linking employers to schools and colleges and provide support in arranging work encounters and experiences of the workplace. Here's a [case study](#) of how Norfolk County Council have been working with a local employer and SEND school.

