

## What Are the Gatsby Benchmarks?

The Gatsby Benchmarks are a set of eight national principles that guide how schools support students to develop careers awareness, employability skills, and preparation for adult life.

In a SEND setting like Stocklake Park, careers education is not just about jobs — it is about helping students build the skills, confidence, and independence they need for their next stage of life, whatever pathway they follow.

This means careers learning happens every day, not just during discrete careers lessons.

If students are:

- practising independence,
- communicating with others,
- following routines or instructions,
- working alongside peers or adults, or
- using equipment safely,

they are developing careers-related skills — regardless of pathway (pre-formal, semi-formal or formal).

These experiences directly align with the Gatsby Benchmarks, even when they don't look like traditional "careers" activities.

## Gatsby Benchmark 1 - A Stable Careers Programme

**Ensuring careers learning is *planned, meaningful, and embedded* across the curriculum. In a SEND school, this looks slightly different—but is just as powerful.**

**What does this look like for us?**

- Introducing **careers and employability themes** in everyday learning (e.g. independence, communication, teamwork, problem-solving).
- Using **consistent vocational language**, symbols, objects, or routines linked to real-life roles and tasks.
- Personalising careers learning to meet **EHCP outcomes**, pathways (e.g. supported employment, independent living), and students' aspiration levels.

## Gatsby Benchmark 2 – Learning from Career and Labour Market Information

***Helping students recognise different job roles and understand who does what in the world around them.***

**Careers-related skills:**

- Understanding roles and routines
- Recognising who helps us
- Awareness of choice and preferences
- **Pre-formal:** Sensory stories, objects of reference (e.g. uniform, tools), role-play adults within school
- **Semi-formal:** Photo sorting of jobs, simple role labels, visiting speakers shown through visuals
- **Formal:** Exploring job roles linked to interests, supported discussions around choices and pathways

**Evidence in planning:**

Noting exposure to job roles (e.g. “community helpers”, “school jobs”)

Visuals, symbols, or objects linked to different roles

Skills linked to preferences, choices, and independence

**Gatsby Benchmark 3 – Addressing the Needs of Each Pupil**

***Ensuring careers learning is personalised to each student’s strengths, needs, and future pathways.***

**Careers-related skills:**

- Self-awareness
- Independence
- Understanding strengths and support needs
- **Pre-formal:** Responding to preferred activities or routines linked to roles
- **Semi-formal:** Identifying what learners like/help with, supported choice-making
- **Formal:** Linking skills to EHCP outcomes, vocational profiles, or pathways

**Evidence in planning:**

Individualised outcomes (EHCP or pathway linked)

Differentiated activities and expectations

Reference to personal strengths and motivators

## **Gatsby Benchmark 4 – Linking Curriculum Learning to Careers**

**Making learning purposeful - *Making clear links between classroom learning and real-life skills needed for work and adult life.***

### **Careers-related skills:**

- Following instructions
- Problem-solving
- Using tools/equipment safely
- **Pre-formal:** Cause-and-effect tasks (pressing, triggering, activating)
- **Semi-formal:** Functional tasks (sorting, counting, matching)
- **Formal:** Applying literacy, numeracy, and PSHE skills to real-life contexts

### **Evidence in planning:**

Explicit statements like *“This skill supports work readiness”*

Real-life contexts (jobs, tasks, routines)

Vocabulary linked to work (e.g. task, job, routine)

## **Gatsby Benchmark 5 – Encounters with Employers and Employees**

**Who works here and what do they do? *Giving students opportunities to learn about different roles through interactions with people at work.***

### **Careers-related skills:**

- Listening
- Social interaction
- Understanding different roles
- **Pre-formal:** Engaging with familiar staff roles (caretaker, kitchen staff)
- **Semi-formal:** Supported talks, photos, or video clips
- **Formal:** Guest speakers, role descriptions, question prompts

### **Evidence in planning:**

Reference to encounters (in person or virtually)

Communication and interaction targets

Pre- and post-session reflection activities

## **Gatsby Benchmark 6 – Experiences of Workplaces**

**Work-related experiences at every level - *Providing work-related experiences or routines that develop independence, responsibility, and task skills.***

### **Careers-related skills:**

- Following routines
- Task completion
- Managing transitions
  
- **Pre-formal:** Work-like routines within class (posting, sorting, tidying)
- **Semi-formal:** Rotations, enterprise tasks, internal work experiences
- **Formal:** Supported work placements, off-site visits, work tasters

### **Evidence in planning:**

Work-related routines named clearly

Skills such as endurance, independence, and transition management

Progression over time noted

## **Gatsby Benchmark 7 – Encounters with Further & Higher Education**

**Preparing for next steps - Encounters with provisions -**

***Supporting students to explore next steps such as colleges, training providers, or social and adult provisions.***

### **Careers-related skills:**

- Understanding change
- Exploring options
- Developing aspirations
- **Pre-formal:** Familiarisation visits, photos of new environments
- **Semi-formal:** Supported discussions about “what’s next”
- **Formal:** College visits, preparation sessions, learner voice activities

**Evidence in planning:**

Transition-focused activities

Links to post-16/post-19 pathways

Visual timetables or social stories

**Gatsby Benchmark 8 – Personal Guidance**

Supporting informed choices – SLT recognise that access to an independent Careers Advisor is an area for development and are actively working to secure appropriate provision. In the meantime, students receive personalised guidance through trusted adults who know them well with tools like AI About Me, discussions, TPPs and Annual Review Process.

**Careers-related skills:**

- Communication
- Self-advocacy
- Expressing preferences

**SEND-appropriate practice:**

- **Pre-formal:** Observing engagement and responses
- **Semi-formal:** Using visuals or structured choices
- **Formal:** Supported careers discussions and reviews

**Evidence in planning:**

Notes from guidance discussions

Learner voice captured in accessible ways

Clear links to next steps and aspirations