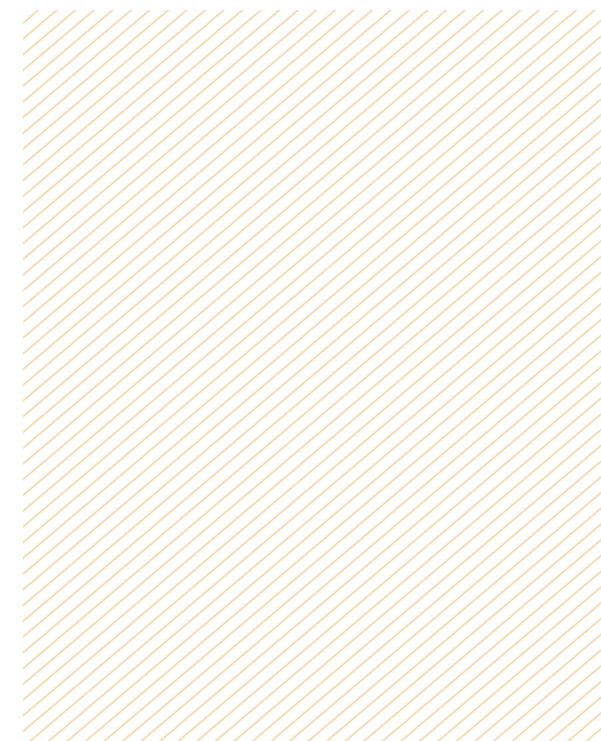


Education Inspection Framework Guide for Careers Leaders and Education Leaders

Updated Autumn 2025

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Introduction

This guide is designed to support education leaders and Careers Leaders by highlighting key changes in Ofsted's approach to inspecting careers education. It aims to clarify recent changes, reassure leaders on what is expected, and emphasise the importance of meaningful implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Through the [Careers Impact System internal leadership review](#) process and the five conditions for success, we offer a structured framework to help leaders confidently articulate the intent, delivery, and impact of their careers provision.

Additionally, this guidance highlights the significance of contextualising provision to reflect the unique needs of learners and provides clear examples of embedded good practice to support both leaders and inspectors in recognising high-quality careers education.

Effectively articulating the impact of your careers provision is a vital part of both self-evaluation and continuous improvement as well as for external evaluation. It enables leaders to engage stakeholders, align provision with strategic priorities, and secure sustained support. Crucially, it also ensures that during Ofsted inspections or external accreditation, the focus remains on demonstrating how your careers programme meaningfully supports learner outcomes, aspirations, and future pathways. This is not solely about meeting statutory duties and non-statutory guidance, but about evidencing how your provision is embedded, purposeful, and responsive to the needs of your learners and institutional context.

Undertaking a Careers Impact internal leadership review is a crucial way to support all leaders to convey the purpose and impact of the careers provision.

To strengthen your ability to clearly articulate the wider role and impact of careers within your setting, we recommend undertaking a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#).

Undertaking a Careers Impact internal leadership review

An internal leadership review based on the Careers Impact Maturity Model helps position careers as a key driver for school, special school, and college improvement. It supports quality assurance, promotes continuous improvement, and aligns with institutional priorities. The review engages leadership teams, encourages distributed leadership, and enhances understanding of best practices in careers leadership.

It helps achieve meaningful progress on the updated Gatsby Benchmarks, recognises strengths in careers provision, and ensures sustainability through ongoing evaluation and impact evaluation.

Leaders should be able to convey the purpose and impact of their careers provision clearly and confidently, including:



Explaining the rationale and sharing the vision: Demonstrate how your careers provision is shaped by your institution's unique context such as learner and community demographics, local labour market intelligence, and strategic priorities. This shows that your approach is intentional, responsive, and rooted in evidence-informed decision-making.



Strategically planning provision to meet learner needs: Make effective use of information and data including destinations data, learners' perception of career readiness, stakeholder voice, etc. to tailor provision to individual learner and cohort needs and the evolving labour market. Highlight how your model supports equity, inclusion, and personalised progression.



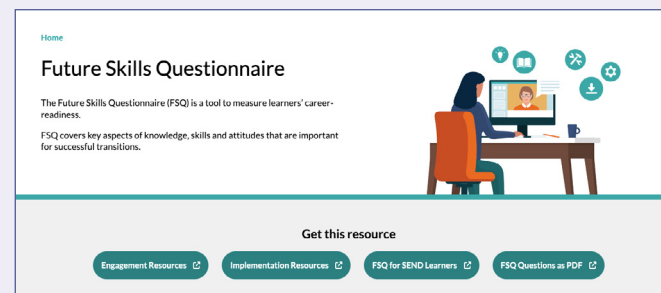
Defining the offer and what student careers learning journeys look like: Articulate a clear and coherent overview of your careers provision, detailing its structure, content, and delivery model. Ensure the offer reflects an intentional design that supports positive learner outcomes and aligns with institutional priorities.



Investing in quality: Showcase the robustness of your provision by referencing recognised standards and frameworks (e.g. Gatsby Benchmarks, CDI Framework, Careers Impact System, Quality in Careers Standard, Skills Builder etc.). Use examples of effective practice and external validation (where relevant) to highlight the quality and impact of your approach and how you allocate resources to the provision.



Evidencing impact: Present measurable outcomes such as destinations data, learners' perceptions of careers readiness, stakeholder voice and employer engagement, etc. and stakeholder voice to demonstrate the tangible difference your careers provision is making.



Future Skills Questionnaire

Careers Leaders in schools and special schools can use learners' responses to the Future Skills Questionnaire to:

- Identify gaps in careers provision.
- Tailor careers provision and activities to individual needs.
- Measure progress of the careers provision over time.

The Future Skills Questionnaire is a tool embedded into our free digital product Compass+ it allows Careers Leaders to effectively measure learners' career-readiness. Simple data insight can support Careers Leaders to make targeted interventions, evaluate their careers programme and identify the impact of careers education in their setting.

To find out more click [here](#)

Ofsted Inspection Framework

Context

Following Ofsted's Big Listen consultation, which concluded in May 2024, a reformed inspection framework has now been introduced and will be applied to inspections of schools and FE & skills providers from November 2025.

The reformed Education Inspection Framework acknowledges the context in which institutions operate. It incorporates local area data, including levels of deprivation, relevant characteristics of the local community, the availability and quality of other educational and care provision, and the nature of destinations learners may progress to. These contextual factors will form a key part of the preparation for inspection phone call between the Lead Inspector and the Headteacher or Principal. This conversation is a great opportunity for education leaders to use learning from an [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#), to evidence identification of strengths and areas for improvement, informing the action they will take.

Under the new framework, Ofsted will interrogate the overall quality of provision throughout the institution and to support this, deeper guidance for schools and colleges can be found in the [inspection toolkits](#). We also recommend that you follow the guidance within Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: [Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on providing careers guidance](#).

Ofsted Inspection Framework

Evaluation areas

Under the new inspection model, institutions will receive targeted recommendations rather than an overall effectiveness grade. The single word overall judgement has been phased out and will be replaced by a report card system indicating evaluation grades for each identified evaluation area.

Safeguarding is evaluated on a met/not met scale for all providers.

Evaluation areas for Schools

Alongside Safeguarding, there are now six distinct areas of evaluation for schools, with a further two depending on the offer in your setting:

- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Personal development and well-being
- Leadership and governance

If applicable, your setting will also receive an evaluation grade for:

- Early years in schools
- Sixth forms in schools

Evaluation areas for FE & Skills

In addition to Safeguarding which is evaluated at a whole provider level, these are the evaluation areas for FE and skills providers:

- Leadership and governance (whole provider level)
- Inclusion (whole provider level)
- Contribution to meeting skills (whole-provider level for FE colleges, sixth form colleges and designated institutions only).
- Curriculum, teaching and training (provision type level)*
- Achievement (provision type level)*
- Participation and development. (provision type level)*

*Provision type level applies for all learners and apprentices, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have SEND or high needs, are known (or previously known) to social care, or face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without Level 2 English and/or mathematics.

Evaluating these areas enables:

- Nuanced reporting for parents on the different aspects of provision.
- Clarity for providers on particular strengths and recommended areas for improvement.

Alongside evaluation grades, Ofsted will have short descriptions summarising their findings. These will make up the new education inspection report cards.

With the exception of Safeguarding, which will be assessed using a binary scale of “Met” or “Not Met”, all other evaluation areas will be reviewed using a five-point evaluation scale. This approach is intended to provide more detailed insights into specific strengths and areas for improvement. Note that this is a change for the FE & Skills ‘Contributing to meeting skills’ which used to have a separate grading.

Schools and special schools: Personal development and well-being

For schools and special schools, “Personal development and well-being” is where careers education predominantly sits and considers whether the school or special school supports learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need for participations and success in later life. The focus is on “supporting pupils’ readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that they are equipped to make the transition successfully, including by providing impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance for secondary-age pupils.”

- **Exceptional (highest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded ‘exceptional’ when all the strong standards have been met and if it meets all the additional standards in the ‘exceptional’ section of the toolkit.
- **Strong standard:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘strong standard’ when all the expected standards and all the strong standards have been met.
- **Expected standard:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘expected standard’ when all the standards are met – this includes meeting the legal requirements and the expectations set out in statutory guidance, as well as the professional standards required of the particular type of provision, where these apply.
- **Needs attention:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘needs attention’ when the ‘expected standard’ has not been met because some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in scope or impact and/or not fully meeting the legal requirements.
- **Urgent improvement (lowest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded ‘urgent improvement’ when it needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education and/or care for children and learners.

[The toolkits](#) provide the grading standards and/or indicators for each evaluation area.

In gathering evidence about careers education or learners' and apprentices' preparation for their next steps, inspectors consider the extent to which:

Schools and special schools:	Post 16 provision in schools/special schools	Colleges and training providers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders ensure that all secondary-age pupils are well prepared and supported to progress in education, employment or training, including continuing in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. • Where relevant, there is an appropriate careers programme that meets the Gatsby Benchmarks and includes impartial advice and guidance from a qualified careers adviser, opportunities for workplace experiences, and engagement with employers, colleges, training providers and universities. • Secondary-age pupils have an appropriate understanding of relevant trends in local and national employment and the implications of the choices they make in relation to these. • Pupils with SEND develop independence, contribute to their community, make positive friendships and are supported to be as healthy as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders ensure that all students are well prepared and supported to progress into education, employment or training, including continuing in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. • The work-related learning and careers programme meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme and includes high-quality work experience; work-related learning is well planned and relevant. • Students have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and skills that are valued in the workplace. • The post-16 provision enables some students with SEND to develop their independent living skills to prepare them for later life. • Leaders have established effective partnerships with local employers and with further and higher education institutions to prepare students for their next steps; students are aware of the academic, technical and work-related opportunities open to them. • Students have an appropriate understanding of trends in local and national employment and the implications of the choices they make in relation to these. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners and apprentices develop the employability skills and personal attributes they need for their intended job roles, further study or, where appropriate, for greater independence. • Leaders provide learners and apprentices with structured, tailored careers education and guidance that reflect their interests, aspirations and potential next steps. • Learners and apprentices understand the range of progression routes available to them and can make informed decisions about their future learning, employment and/or training. • Learners and apprentices, in particular those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, such as young carers and those without level 2 English and/or mathematics, are supported to explore and plan for progression from their current role or course, including through the use of work-based mentors, where relevant, and they feel confident and well prepared to take their next steps.

Feeling confident for inspection

Whilst it is impossible to predict the exact questions or lines of enquiry, an Ofsted inspection is not about highlighting anything beyond what is already recognised as good practice, namely, the meaningful implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks and the meeting of [Provider Access Legislation](#) for schools. Inspectors are looking for evidence of consistent, embedded practice that is coherently planned and suitable for the context of the institution. They will also look for evidence that staff have the knowledge and skills to support and teach the content of the programme.

Therefore, focus should be on:

1. Feeling prepared.
2. Feeling confident to articulate the intent and impact of your work.

Publishing information about the careers programme

[Maintained schools must](#) and [academies and colleges should](#) publish information about their careers programme online, including:

- The name and contact details of the Careers Leader.
- A summary of the careers programme.
- Details of how students, parents, teachers, and employers can access information about the careers programme.
- How the institution measures and assesses the programme's impact on learners.
- The date by which the institution will review information.

[Careers guidance and access for education and training providers - GOV.UK](#)

[Website audit document | CEC Resource Directory](#)

Feeling prepared

Ahead of an Ofsted Inspection, inspectors will look at relevant publicly available information, such as the institution's website, so it is worth a revisit to ensure that it represents the school, special school, or college vision for careers.

Your website serves as a valuable platform to showcase your careers provision. It acts as the front window into the quality and breadth of your careers provision.

Ensure you are already complying with the statutory requirements set out in the [statutory guidance](#).

For an overview of the responsibilities of schools and colleges, outlined in the publication 'Careers guidance and access for education and training providers', please review the appropriate document for your setting [here](#).

The new expected standard evaluation grade indicates that all legal requirements and expectations in non-statutory guidance have been met.

In addition to statutory information, consider including:

- Testimonials from learners, parents, carers, stakeholders, and partners including employers.
- Highlights of the range of opportunities available to learners.
- Description of how learners experience your careers provision.
- Details on how your institution meets the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Impact case studies demonstrating outcomes and success stories.
- Links to relevant local labour market information (LMI) and identified needs.

It is important that publicly available careers information is clear, comprehensive, and tailored to its key audiences such as learners, parents, and external partners. It is equally vital that curriculum leaders, senior leaders, and teaching staff are actively involved in shaping this content and that they understand and share consistent key messaging about the careers provision. Their input ensures that the information accurately reflects your current offer, opportunities, and learner experiences.

It is recommended in Statutory Guidance, that institutions undertake a Careers Impact internal leadership review. This process involves key senior staff and will support you in understanding what embedded good practice looks like and how to recognise it.

“We strongly recommend the use of the [Careers Impact System](#) which supports a quality assured, sustainable and strategic approach to careers leadership and establishes a shared and standardised language of quality improvement for careers, aligned to school and college improvement.”

Department for Education [Statutory Guidance](#).

Supporting leaders to articulate intent and impact

At the heart of strategic careers leadership is the ability to confidently communicate the intent, design, and impact of your careers provision. The Careers Impact internal leadership review is a powerful tool to support this, offering a structured approach to self-evaluation and strategic reflection.

Through this process, leaders gain:

- A clear understanding of strengths and areas for development within their careers provision.
- Evidence-based insights to inform inspection discussions and stakeholder engagement.
- Increased confidence across leadership and staff in articulating impact and strategic direction.
- A demonstration of a culture of continuous improvement and strategic oversight.
- Strengthened collaboration across departments, fostering shared ownership of careers education.
- Development of robust impact measures aligned with institutional priorities.
- The ability to monitor progress over time and adapt strategies responsively.

The Careers Impact System identifies five conditions for success that underpin sustainable and strategic careers leadership. Framing your provision through these five areas provides a coherent structure for articulating a robust, impact-driven approach to careers provision whether for internal reflection, external validation, during an Ofsted inspection or within stakeholder engagement.



Articulating and exemplifying your approach


How can you demonstrate that what you offer:


- Is of high quality?
- Meets the needs of all learners?
- Is having impact?


Let's consider how you can succinctly articulate and exemplify your approach using the five conditions for success to help frame your conversations.


It is also important to cultivate the support available from key volunteers such as Governors, particularly your Careers Link Governor, and Enterprise Advisers. Along with Senior Leaders within your organisation, you can use the strategic reflection questions in the table below, to help the development of careers leadership and provision and increase confidence in articulating the impact effectively.



 Conditions for success	Articulate and exemplify What? Why? How? So what?	Strategic reflection: Questions to consider with Senior Leaders, Link Governors, and Enterprise Advisers
<p>A clearly defined and widely understood Leaders Vision for is the foundation of intentional and impactful provision. Leaders who can confidently articulate how their vision aligns with the institution's unique context such as learner and community demographics, local labour market intelligence, and strategic priorities institutional are better positioned to drive improvement, secure stakeholder buy-in, and demonstrate strategic leadership.</p>	<p>What to articulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How your careers vision statement reflects and reinforces your institution's core values and improvement priorities. • The role of careers as a strategic driver of learner outcomes for all, not an isolated or peripheral activity. • The intended impact of your provision such as reducing NEET figures, broadening aspirations for pupil premium learners, or increasing meaningful employer engagement. • The success criteria that will be used to measure progress and impact over time, including for disadvantaged or vulnerable learners. <p>How to exemplify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the vision embedded in institutional development plans, strategic career plan and departmental planning. • SLT and governance meeting minutes that reflect understanding, challenge, and endorsement of the vision. • Staff and student surveys that demonstrate awareness of and alignment with the careers vision. • Use of local labour market intelligence, learner demographics, and strategic priorities to show that the vision is evidence-informed and context-responsive. <p>Consider: This clarity of vision not only strengthens your careers provision it also supports wider institutional conversations around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and governance. • Achievement. • Inclusion. • Curriculum and teaching (and training) – specifically intent and implementation. <p>By framing your provision through this lens, you demonstrate a coherent, strategic, and impact-driven approach to careers that is embedded, evaluated, and continuously improving.</p>	<p>Embedding vision into strategic planning</p> <p>How can the vision for careers more effectively shape priorities and be embedded across improvement planning?</p> <p>Identify opportunities to integrate careers into the development plan, curriculum design, and resource allocation to ensure it drives whole-institution improvement.</p> <p>Strengthening distributed leadership</p> <p>What actions can be taken to build a stronger shared understanding and accountability for the vision for careers across leadership, governance, and staff?</p> <p>Consider how communication, training, and collaborative planning can reinforce alignment and ensure careers is seen as a collective responsibility.</p> <p>Responding intentionally to context and challenge</p> <p>How can the vision for careers be further refined to better respond to differing learner needs, community context, and barriers to opportunity?</p> <p>Use data and stakeholder feedback to adapt your provision, ensuring it is inclusive, aspirational, and strategically targeted to address disadvantage.</p>

 Conditions for success	Articulate and exemplify What? Why? How? So what?	Strategic reflection: Questions to consider with Senior Leaders, Link Governors, and Enterprise Advisers
<p>High-quality careers provision is built around intentionally planned student career learning journeys that are responsive to individual needs and structured around clear, measurable milestones. These journeys should reflect a coherent offer that supports positive learner outcomes and aligns with institutional priorities.</p>	<p>What to articulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The drivers behind your careers provision design, including how it is purposeful, progressive, and underpinned by learning outcomes mapped across key stages or programme levels. • How you ensure personalised pathways that respond to the needs of priority cohorts (e.g. SEND, disadvantaged learners). • Your vision for learners as leavers. What you want them to know, understand, and be able to do at each stage of their careers journey. <p>How to exemplify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A careers learner journey map showing intentional learning outcomes and milestones, including tools to review learner perception and impact. • Insights into how priority cohorts are identified and how careers education is tailored or targeted to meet specific needs and reduce barriers. • Use of impact data, such as trends in destination outcomes, learner career readiness (e.g. FSQ data), and learner voice. <p>Consider: How the intentional planning of careers learning journeys contributes to wider conversations in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum and teaching (and training) – specifically intent and implementation. • Personal development and wellbeing. • Contribution to meeting local, regional and national skills needs. • Inclusion. 	<p>Strategic decision making</p> <p>Who shapes the learning outcomes for careers education in your setting?</p> <p>How are decisions made, and what processes ensure that outcomes are intentional, progressive, and aligned with learner needs and institutional priorities?</p> <p>Equity and inclusion</p> <p>In what ways are careers learning journeys personalised for vulnerable learners?</p> <p>How do you ensure that learners with SEND, those who are disadvantaged, or at risk of becoming NEET receive tailored support such as targeted Personal Guidance or bespoke work experience?</p> <p>How do you ensure that all learners have equal access to and are supported to participate in high-quality career education opportunities?</p> <p>Impact evaluation</p> <p>What evidence demonstrates that your careers provision is impact-led and data-informed for priority/vulnerable cohorts?</p> <p>How do you use data to differentiate provision and evaluate its effectiveness in improving outcomes for vulnerable learners?</p>

 Conditions for success	Articulate and exemplify What? Why? How? So what?	Strategic reflection: Questions to consider with Senior Leaders, Link Governors, and Enterprise Advisers
<p>A robust careers provision is underpinned by intentional resource allocation and a distributed leadership of careers model that embeds careers across the institution. This approach ensures that careers education is not the responsibility of a single individual, but a shared endeavour supported by senior leaders, middle managers, teaching staff, pastoral teams, and external partners.</p>	<p>What to articulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your commitment to Careers Leader training and ongoing professional development, ensuring strategic capability and confidence in leading provision. How careers is positioned as a whole-institution responsibility, with clear rationale for distributing leadership across SLT, curriculum leads, support staff, and external contributors. How staff CPD supports clarity of roles and responsibilities for example, through engagement in teacher encounters and professional learning via The Careers & Enterprise Academy. How your approach reflects an investment in quality, aligned with recognised standards and frameworks such as the Gatsby Benchmarks, CDI Framework, Careers Impact System, and the Quality in Careers Standard, etc. <p>How to exemplify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of Careers Leader development, including training logs, qualifications, and leadership activities. A staffing structure that demonstrates shared ownership, with defined roles supporting holistic and inclusive careers offer. Impact of professional development on learner experience, illustrated through CPD feedback, teacher engagement, and learner outcomes. <p>Consider: How this distributed leadership model supports wider strategic conversations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and governance. Inclusion. Personal development and wellbeing. Participation and development. Contribution to meeting local, regional and national skills needs. Attendance and behaviour. Achievement. 	<p>Leadership and training impact</p> <p>What measurable impact has the Careers Leader's participation in funded training had on the strategic direction and outcomes of careers provision?</p> <p>How has having the Careers Leader line-managed at senior leadership level influenced whole-institution engagement and prioritisation of careers?</p> <p>Strategic resource allocation</p> <p>What specific resources inc. time, staffing, budget, etc. are allocated to support the implementation of the strategic careers plan?</p> <p>In what ways do these resources enable sustained, high-quality delivery and continuous improvement of the careers provision?</p> <p>Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>Which clearly defined roles and responsibilities support the delivery of the strategic careers plan across the institution?</p> <p>How do these roles contribute to the impact of the careers provision for all learners?</p>

 Conditions for success	Articulate and exemplify What? Why? How? So what?	Strategic reflection: Questions to consider with Senior Leaders, Link Governors, and Enterprise Advisers
<p>Robust and regular impact evaluation is essential for understanding the effectiveness of careers provision and driving continuous improvement. When led by senior leaders and governors, it ensures accountability, strategic alignment, and visibility across the institution.</p>	<p>What to articulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and why regular monitoring and evaluation cycles are embedded into leadership and governance processes, ensuring careers provision remains responsive and high impact, and meets the needs of all learners. • How both quantitative and qualitative data are used to assess effectiveness, identify gaps, track progress, and inform strategic decisions. • How do you know your offer is reaching and benefiting all learners, including specific pupil groups such as 'disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and those who are known (or previously known) to social care and those who may face other barriers to their learning or well-being'. (See pages 12-16 of toolkit). • Mechanisms in place to celebrate success, recognising learner achievements and showcasing the value of careers education through newsletters, awards, assemblies, and communications. <p>How to exemplify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes from SLT/Governance meetings that indicate effective support and challenge and inclusive practices. • Evidence of governor involvement in strategic planning (including the internal leadership review process, review and action planning). • Evaluation reports and governance dashboards that present careers impact clearly and accessibly, demonstrating how data and insights have been used to shape provision and demonstrate progress. <p>Consider: How this approach to impact evaluation supports wider strategic conversations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and governance. • Achievement. • Personal development and wellbeing. • Participation and development. • Inclusion. • Contribution to meeting local, regional and national skills needs. 	<p>Key data analysis</p> <p>How are the needs of learners identified, assessed and met, reducing barriers for those who are most in need?</p> <p>How does senior leadership measure and analyse learners' perceptions of career readiness?</p> <p>How are insights from Compass + or other approaches to tracking and monitoring of opportunities and experiences, used to ensure that the careers programme is inclusive and meeting the needs of all?</p> <p>In what ways is this insight used to inform strategic evaluation, reporting, and the continuous improvement of careers provision across the institution?</p> <p>How does senior leadership analyse relevant destination data (including aspiration, intended destinations, immediate destination, and long-term destinations)?</p> <p>How is stakeholder voice across learners, staff, employers, and parents and carers systematically evaluated by senior leadership?</p> <p>How does analysis of relevant data and information shape strategic planning for careers, and broader institutional development priorities?</p> <p>How are changes to careers provision, informed by the analysis of relevant data and information, systematically mapped, and formally recorded?</p> <p>Quality assurance</p> <p>How are insights from careers-related quality assurance activities used to drive improvement?</p> <p>What mechanisms ensure that learning from internal reviews, external validation, and benchmarking informs both the evolution of careers provision and whole-institution development?</p>

The following resources will support you in deepening your strategic understanding and enhancing your careers provision.

- [Careers Impact system internal leadership review | CEC Resource Directory](#)
- Understanding the role of the Careers Leader and strategic leadership of careers: [A guide for schools, colleges, and ITPs.](#)
- Careers as a Driver for Whole-Institution Improvement: [A Guide for Education Leaders in schools and colleges](#)
- [Understanding how to effectively evaluate your careers provision.](#)
- [Understanding how to develop progressive and responsive careers provision.](#)
- [Provider Access Legislation](#) information and considerations for SEND settings [The Provider Access Legislation \(PAL\) in SEND Settings | CEC Resource Directory](#)



Supporting conversations across other Ofsted evaluation areas

Under the new inspection framework, each evaluation area places a clear emphasis on the quality of leadership and inclusive practices. Inspectors are guided to gather evidence that reflects how leadership drives improvement and ensures all learners' needs are met.

Senior leader participation in a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) or their strategic and responsive involvement in a peer-to-peer review, provides a strong indication of effective leadership. Participation not only supports informed decision-making but also demonstrates a commitment to inclusive, high-quality provision. The peer-to-peer review adds further rigour, and the resulting impact-evaluated strategic action planning can serve as potential evidence of 'strong' or even 'exemplary' practice.

In addition to these reviews, involving Senior Leaders, Link Governors, and/or Enterprise Advisers in structured discussions about careers education, guided by the reflective questions below, can help strengthen your confidence in effectively articulating how careers provision contributes to other Ofsted evaluation areas.

Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
<p>Leadership and Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do leaders understand learners' needs, and how has this shaped the careers provision? • How well do leaders and governors understand the strengths and areas for development in the careers provision and what action is being taken to improve or sustain high standards? • Has careers provision been used to address key institutional challenges? • Is there a structured careers programme with senior leadership support and a trained Careers Leader? • Is there a Careers Link Governor? • How is the strategic careers plan communicated to and understood by governors? • How well do governors understand the statutory duties for careers education? • How do governors hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the careers education for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers?

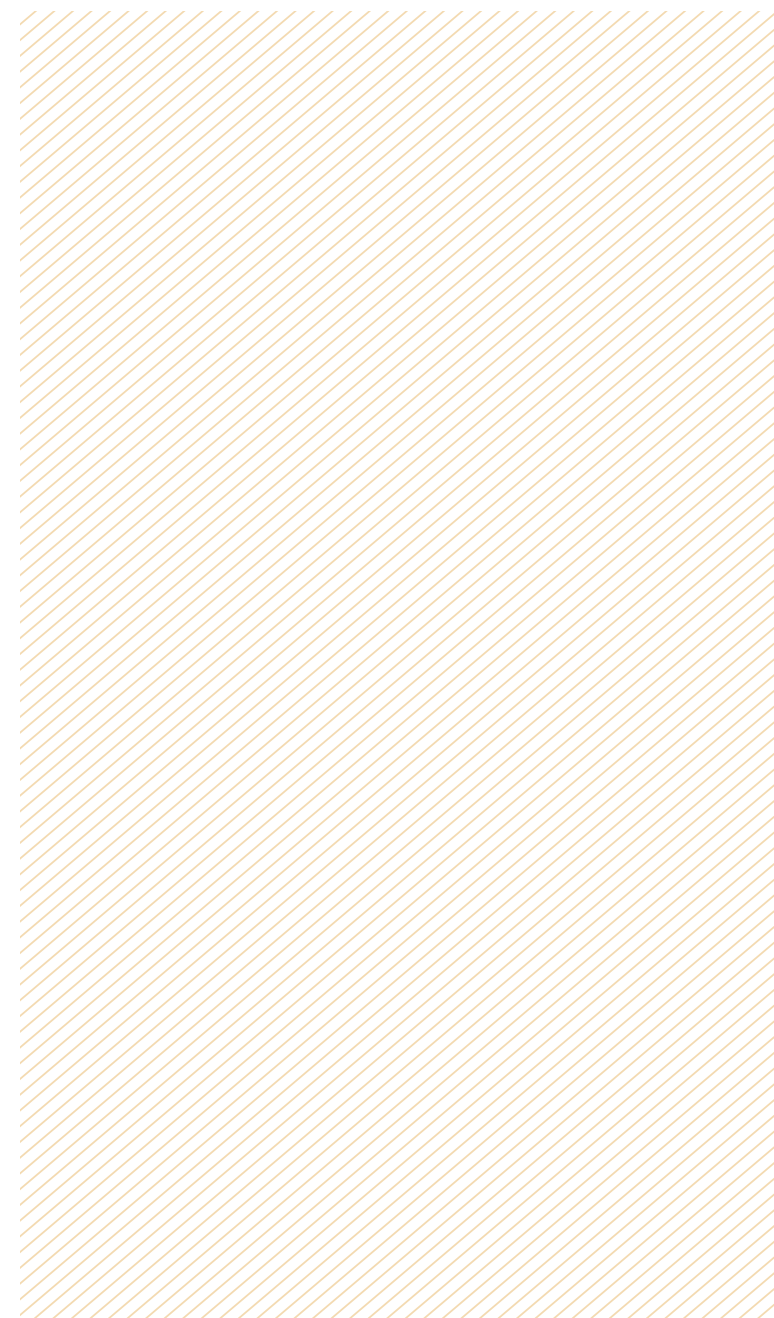
Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
<p>Curriculum and teaching/ Curriculum teaching and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively does the careers education programme link curriculum learning to career pathways, helping learners understand the relevance of their studies to future opportunities? • Is the curriculum designed to build knowledge and skills for future education, training, or employment? • How does careers in the curriculum support learners, including those who face barriers to their learning, with the knowledge they need to achieve and thrive in later life? • How could the curriculum better connect to learners' interests and aspirations? • What systems ensure careers is a shared responsibility across the institution? • How does the strategic careers plan influence curriculum intent and planning? • How is destination data used to shape curriculum decisions? • Does the curriculum reflect the needs of the local, regional and national context? • What support is available to help staff understand labour market information and transition pathways? • How are staff encouraged to highlight the relevance of their subject to careers, pathways, and essential skills? • How are staff supported to make links from the curriculum to careers, pathways, and essential skills? • Does the curriculum adequately prepare learners and apprentices with the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours needed for their next steps? • Where appropriate, how effectively are employer insights being utilised to inform the design of lessons or the wider curriculum?

Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
<p>Attendance and behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the strategic careers plan help build cultural capital, especially for disadvantaged learners and those with SEND? • Does the strategic careers plan support positive attitudes to learning and improved engagement? • How is the impact of careers education on learners' attendance and/or behaviour evaluated, and are adjustments made to improve its effectiveness? • Do employer and education encounters inspire learners and improve attendance and/or instil important behaviours for their future? • How does the wider school programme (e.g. PSHE, assemblies) contribute to careers education and learner development? • How do learners take ownership of their careers learning journeys and evidence their progress? • How do personalised careers learning journeys help leaders and staff pay close attention to the needs of vulnerable learners, so that they attend regularly and come to school on time?

Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the careers programme inspire pupils to set ambitious goals and motivate them to achieve academically to access desired career paths? • How does the careers education programme contribute to raising academic achievement by showing the importance of qualifications for future success? • How is the impact of careers education on learners' achievement levels evaluated, and are adjustments made to improve its effectiveness? • Are disadvantaged learners, those with SEND, and those known (or previously known) to children's social care receiving tailored careers guidance that addresses barriers to achievement and supports their aspirations? • Are learners participating in non-qualification activities, such as leadership, volunteering, and citizenship, to develop transferable skills that enhance their academic and personal achievements? • How are learners and apprentices supported to develop knowledge, skills and professional behaviours as they progress through the curriculum? • To what extent do learners go on to destinations that reflect their interests and meet their career goals and aspirations?

Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are early and accurate assessments of learners' and apprentices needs prioritised and acted upon? • How is data on vulnerable groups used to plan targeted careers provision? • How are personalised careers learner journeys used to support high expectations and aspirations for all, including disadvantaged learners, those with SEND or who may face other barriers to their learning or well-being? • How do you work closely and effectively with parents, taking their views into account and making best use of their knowledge of their children? • What evidence shows the impact of differentiated careers provision for vulnerable learners? • How do you ensure all learners including those absent or in alternative provision access careers provision? • How does evaluation of careers interventions inform wider institutional planning? • How are learners' personal guidance needs identified and addressed, especially for those most at risk? • How does the careers provision support and prepare learners with SEND for successful transitions, whether that is into or within the school or on to other settings or adulthood? • How have staff been supported to understand the range of barriers that pupils may face to their learning and/or well-being, including those specific to their community and the institution's context?

Evaluation Area	Questions to consider
FE Providers only: Contribution to meeting skills needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has engagement with employer, civic, community and education stakeholders informed a curriculum that contributes to meeting local, regional and/or national skills needs?• How effectively have stakeholders been involved in the design and delivery of subject level curriculums?• How is the impact of careers education on meeting skills needs evaluated, and are adjustments made to improve its effectiveness?
FE Providers only: Participation and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you ensure that all types of learner, including apprentices are supported to develop and demonstrate appropriate professional behaviours and skills required in their sectors, studies and/or when at work?• How do you measure the effectiveness of the support that learners and apprentices are given to help them plan their next steps?• How do you ensure that all learners are accessing and benefiting from appropriate careers education and guidance to help them make informed choices about their next steps?• How is the focus of careers education and guidance adapted in different learner and apprentice contexts?



In summary

Although it is not possible to anticipate the exact questions or lines of enquiry during an Ofsted inspection, the focus is not on presenting anything beyond established good practice. Inspectors are primarily seeking evidence of the meaningful and consistent implementation of the Gatsby Benchmarks, demonstrated through embedded and sustained practice.

A Careers Impact internal leadership review, engaging key staff across the institution, will empower leaders to confidently articulate both strengths and areas for development. This process will broaden understanding of the strategic role careers education plays in advancing institutional priorities. It will also foster deeper, more focused conversations that centre on the ultimate impact for learners.

Conversations with Ofsted should articulate:

- Your institution's context and how that informs and shapes your careers provision.
- How your offer meets the needs of the full range of your learners.
- How careers is embedded across your institution and how it supports wider institution priorities.
- How you know your careers provision is having a meaningful impact.

The prompts and strategic reflections within this guide support you, through internal reflection, to consider how to effectively articulate and exemplify the “What? Why? How? So what?” of your careers provision and its impact on other evaluation areas, ensuring Careers Leaders, education leaders, senior staff, governors and trustees are all prepared and confident to articulate the intent and impact of careers provision.





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