

Work Experience Guidance for Parents

Work experience placements are an invaluable part of students' development. It teaches them early in life that school and work environments differ quite dramatically. It can increase students' maturity and develop invaluable skills that help them find and excel in work after school. A student does work experience with an employer to learn about a job or an industry. Work experience is often the first contact your child will have with the world of work. It forms part of their careers education and allows them to observe and learn – not to do activities which require extensive training or experience.

This short guide for parents will provide hints and tips on how you can help your child to secure work experience and get the most out of it. It will also explain the school and employer duties regarding work experience.

Searching for Work Experience

Searching for a work experience placement can be a valuable learning experience for the student and help build their confidence. There are different ways you can support your child if they're interested in work experience.

You can:

- talk to them about subjects they like and dislike and use this to help choose possible jobs to experience
- encourage your child to speak to their careers adviser in school, attend careers events locally or contact the careers service or their drop ins. More information is available at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Learning/Careers.aspx>
- use web tools to generate job ideas.
 - National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>
 - All About Careers: <https://www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice>
 - *Find Your Career* tool uses local labour market information to present employment trends, and salary and wage information specific to our local area. *Find Your Career* can be used by professionals, parents and students to see the real employment opportunities in the area. *Find Your Career* will show you which occupations and employment sectors are growing, and which are declining in this area. Find Your Career is at <http://ncc.emsicareercoach.com/>
- pass on any contacts who could help your child
- encourage them to start their search for a placement early
- make sure they try to arrange their own work experience
- help them to rehearse telephone calls they may need to make to an employer
- proofread emails and letters they send to employers
- think about the location of placement and how they will get there

- ensure that your child makes a good impression when connecting with recruiters online. You need to ensure that they conduct themselves appropriately when online and only post content that you and they would be happy for an employer to see. For more information on maintaining a good “digital footprint” check out <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/online-reputation-%E2%80%93-taking-care-our-digital-footprint-advice-young-people>
- talk to your child about the benefits of work experience and help them to understand how useful it can be
 - gives insight into the skills required for a particular job
 - is an opportunity to test out a job to see if your child really likes it
 - can broaden their knowledge of jobs they have never considered
 - will increase their awareness of their own skills and strengths
 - helps them understand how the subjects they study in school link to certain jobs
 - gives insight into what the world of work is really like and employers' expectations
 - can increase their motivation to do well in school
 - puts them in contact with potential employers
 - can give them useful experience for their CV and provide referees
 - helps them appreciate the skills needed to succeed in a job

How to find work experience

Find hidden opportunities

The first thing to do is to look at your network of family, friends, colleagues, contacts, employers and previous employers to see if they know of an opportunity or someone who will create one. At the very least they may know someone who works at the company that you're interested in and could give you their contact details. Small companies are a great option when it comes to hidden opportunities. While some big companies tend to advertise formal internship and work placement schemes, small companies generally rely on word of mouth and speculative applications. So doing some research into smaller organisations in your area can pay off.

Social Media

Using social media sites such as Twitter and LinkedIn to keep up to date with what companies are doing and, in some cases, connect directly with employers can help. Often young people will need help with this part as they will be less familiar with professional social media platforms. While many if not most opportunities aren't advertised formally, vacancies may be mentioned in passing on social media channels.

Speculative applications

Based on your research, support your child to write to, email or telephone companies that they are most interested in working for. It's best to help your child build their confidence by encouraging them to make contact themselves.

Start by practicing with them, a mock phone call to an organisation to ask for a name and contact details. When ready they can make the real calls.

Alternatively they might like to make contact by email. If all they can find is a generic company email address, help them to draft an email politely asking for the contact details of the recruitment team. When ready they can send the emails.

Once you have the contact details, your child will need to send their letter or email of application to the named person. This will show that they've put in some effort and aren't just blanket emailing or calling lots of companies. They can start with a general introductory email or letter (and attach an up-to-date CV if they have one). They should prepare a draft for you to check. They should use the body of the email or letter to:

- briefly introduce themselves, what they are studying, their interests and achievements
- what their hopes and dreams are for their career and what experience they are looking for, and why (but add on that they are willing to be flexible)
- when they are looking to undertake the experience and for how long (but again that they will be flexible. This is important because organisations usually want to help but are time poor, so while a week long placement may be ideal, initially asking for an informal interview or a few days' worth of shadowing will help establish a relationship which could lead to further work experience opportunities for your child).
- If they have sent a CV, describe what they have attached
- it is also worth asking if the contact cannot help you, do they have any contacts in other firms they work with who might be able to help
- politely sign off with a thank you for their time

Ask in School

We do have contacts of partner organisations and other employers we have worked with before. This might be a source of work placements if the child has run out of steam in finding their own placement. We will use our best endeavours to help find something appropriate.

When to follow up your application

Knowing when to follow up is tricky, as students want to appear interested whilst not coming across as demanding. However, it's important as it can jog an employer's memory if your application has fallen off their radar.

It is worth getting your child to plan when and how they will follow up the initial request if it doesn't receive a response within one or two weeks (allowing for busy schedules especially in small companies). Again some practice on telephone calls or drafting emails would be helpful.

You can help prepare your child for the yes and no responses. If they receive a yes response, particularly over the phone, remaining calm and grateful for the opportunity when thanking the employer is business like. If it's a no, help your child to try to bear in mind that not all organisations have the time or resources to accept speculative work experience requests, so not to take a rejection too hard. It's worth practising getting them to ask for some constructive feedback on their application. This could help fine tune future speculative applications.

What to do when the placement has been found

If you want to organise the work placement for your child, the school still needs to work with you to assure itself that all of the necessary arrangements are in place before a pupil goes on placement.

Once you have found the potential placement, you can download the placement details and consent form from the parents section of the school website at <https://www.nunnykirk.school/website>. Please complete the form and return it to us at secretary.nunnykirk@gmail.com. This will include your parental consent form that you are agreeing to the work experience placement. If the school finds the potential placement, we will complete the form and send it to you for your parental consent.

The school will then carry out the necessary assurances with the employer before the placement commences. Where the school cannot confirm that the employer is complying with the requirements for providing a safe work experience placement, we will let you know and together we will need to find an alternative placement.

During the placement

As a parent or guardian you will want to make sure that your child will get the most out of their work experience. The following tips will help you to support them:

- make sure they arrive on time
- as work days are longer than school days, make sure they have a good night's sleep
- students often feel reluctant to say if they are hungry or thirsty when in a new placement. It's worth giving them some food or drink to take with them, in case they aren't familiar with the local area
- talk to them on a daily basis about their experiences
- remind them to keep a written, photographic, video diary or blog of what they did on work experience
- if your child isn't enjoying aspects of their placement, help them to stay positive by focusing on the new skills they are developing
- contact the school immediately if you feel your child is having problems at the placement

After the placement

Once the placement has finished, it's important for your child to think about what they have learned. You can:

- discuss what they learned from the experience

- ask if they've changed their career plans or want to stick with what they did on their work experience
- encourage them to write and thank the work experience provider

What Employers should aim to do

Employers should aim to:

- keep your child safe and explain health and safety requirements for the company
- insure themselves and your child. Where the company's existing employers' liability insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers or Lloyds, there is no need for them or you to obtain any additional employer's liability insurance for work experience students.
- the employer is fully responsible for the student's health and safety once their work experience placement starts. However, schools should take sensible steps to confirm that the workplace they're sending a student to has sufficient safety measures and insurance in place. The school will include information in the student's work experience form about how they've confirmed this.
- carry out a risk assessment for young people undertaking the activities on the work placement, if their current risk assessments don't already outline risks for young or inexperienced workers or those with additional needs
- explain what will be expected of them during their work placement
- give your child an induction to help them understand the nature of the business
- apply their normal standards for attendance, behaviour, timekeeping, reliability and honesty to your child and give them a real view of employer expectations
- identify a supervisor / contact to oversee your child's work during the placement
- give them meaningful activities to do whilst in the placement
- avoid activities that they are not qualified or sufficiently experienced to undertake, but can give them activities that are new to them
- give feedback to the student at the end of the placement

School Duties for Work Experience

The placement provider (employer) has primary responsibility for the health and safety of the student and should be managing any significant risks. The school needs to take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the employer is doing this.

For employers who are new to taking students on work experience, the school will talk through what the student will do and any relevant precautions and will take note of the conversation in the placement records.

The school will also use past or pooled experience, for example from its track records with employers and within the local authority area.

The school will work with parents to ensure employers know in advance about students who might be at greater risk, for example due to health conditions or learning difficulties, so they can take these properly into account

The school will keep checks in proportion to the environment:

- for a low-risk environment, such as an office or shop, with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to the student, simply speaking with any new employer to confirm this should be enough. This can be part of the wider conversation on placement arrangements.
- For environments with less familiar risks (eg in light assembly or packing facilities), the school will talk to the employer to find out what the student will be doing and confirm the employer has arrangements for managing risks. This will need to include induction, training, supervision, site familiarisation, and any protective equipment that might be needed.
- For a placement in a higher-risk environment such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing the school will discuss with the employer what work the student will be doing or observing, the risks involved and how these are managed. Remember that although the placement might be in a higher-risk environment, the work the student is doing and the surroundings they are working in may not be, for example it could be in a separate office area

The school will check that students know how to raise any health and safety concerns

The school won't repeat the assurance process for a new student, or visit unnecessarily, where an employer is known to you and has a good track record, and the student's needs are no different to those on past placements

The school won't seek additional paperwork for assurance purposes, or seek to second-guess the employer's risk assessment or their risk control measures.

When the school call an employer to discuss work experience placement the conversation should include:

- Will the student receive sufficient induction training? Training should teach them about the risks they may face in the premises and about good health and safety practices.
- Any practical instruction they need to use equipment. For example, how to safely operate certain machinery.
- Information on how to report health and safety concerns.
- An understanding of the worksite. They should know which areas are higher risk than others and how to adhere to any requirements in these areas. For example, those that require PPE.
- Is the employer controlling risks to young people? If they have employed young people before, their risk assessment documents should confirm that they are doing what is necessary to protect them. If they haven't, they'll need to review their risk assessment and should confirm this with you.
- Will the student be suitably supervised? The student doesn't need constant supervision, but rather the same level that any new worker would receive. The supervisor should ensure that the student completes their training, follows it, and works in a safe manner.
- Will the student receive any necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)? Certain areas will require staff to wear PPE. In particular, the law requires all construction

workers to wear hard hats and those who work with onsite vehicles to wear high visibility clothing.

- If a student has certain medical or behavioural conditions that could affect their safety during work experience, schools need to communicate this to the employer. For example, if a student has a physical disability or learning difficulty. This enables the employer to revisit their risk assessment, so they can check whether their workplace has sufficient safety measures to accommodate the student's needs.

In most cases, it's not necessary to visit the premises where a student will be doing their placement. Schools should simply make a note of any discussions they have with the employer, whether it's over the phone or by email. Schools should then include a summary of their discussion in the work experience form. This is sufficient evidence to confirm that the student will be safe. Schools should also communicate with the student's parents or carers about your discussion with the employer. You should do this for all students, but it's particularly important for those with vulnerabilities. It reassures the parents/carers that their child will have sufficient support during their placement.