

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

Introduction

In 2024, the government launched the [Curriculum and Assessment review](#) to evaluate England's national curriculum and statutory assessment system, to ensure it meets the needs of children and young people. Employers were invited to share views on what works, what doesn't, and suggest improvements. The review panel's recommendations will be published in 2025.

Bridging the gap between academic preparation and employer expectations has never been more critical. In a rapidly evolving world that is already bringing about systemic changes, businesses need to plan for the net zero transition and navigate the opportunities and challenges of technological advancements, all while ensuring that they are preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

As a Responsible Business Network dedicated to creating pathways into work for young people, Business in the

Community (BITC) engaged members to explore how the curriculum can better support young people, from the classroom right through to their future careers. This factsheet summarises the key insights and recommendations from BITC's submission to the review focusing on skills, inclusion, and partnerships between schools and businesses.

The case for business engagement in education

Businesses benefit directly from an educated and skilled workforce. This is how:

- **Workforce readiness** – By engaging in education, employers ensure that future employees possess the necessary skills and knowledge to enter and excel in the workplace. By investing in talent from a young age, businesses can unlock the talent pool available to them and access the job market more widely, including potential employees, clients, and their supply chains.
- **Targeting the skills gap** – Collaborating with schools allows employers to align the curriculum with industry needs, ensuring that students acquire the

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

relevant skills and are introduced to workplace contexts, bridging the gap between education and employment.

- **The economic case** – By supporting education, businesses contribute to the development of a more skilled workforce, fostering a landscape of productivity and innovation, in turn boosting the overall economy.
- **Community impact and corporate responsibility** – A growing number of employees, investors, and customers expect businesses to help improve social mobility. Long-term engagement with education showcases a commitment to addressing inequalities, enhancing public perception, and strengthening relationships with customers, employees, and the community.

Classroom to Career Readiness

In its response to the review, BITC aimed to provide input informed by business needs, business-school engagement experiences, and insights drawn from BITC's research and programmes in education, employment, and skills. The inputs centre around six categories:

Skills

- **Essential Skills Development:** BITC and its member businesses' experiences show that embedding the [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) into the curriculum and assessment helps develop the skills necessary to transition into work. The Universal Framework's eight essential, transferable skills – Listening, Speaking, Problem Solving, Creativity, Staying Positive, Aiming High, Leadership, and Teamwork – are critical for workplace readiness and should be explicitly taught, assessed, and integrated across subjects. The new curriculum must teach these essential skills and ensure that young people feel confident in their ability to demonstrate them to employers.
- **Green Skills and Sustainability:** To mitigate the impact of a net zero transition on communities and enable the development of differing innovative solutions, BITC underscores that sustainability and green skills must be in the curriculum, including topics like the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#),

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

climate change and the Just Transition.

- **Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship:** BITC and its members have seen first-hand the impact that specific modules on budgeting, financial dilemmas, borrowing, saving, and entrepreneurship have on work readiness. These should be taught at all education levels to equip students with practical life skills they can hone throughout school years.

With the support from business members, [BITC's programme in Teesside](#) exemplifies how to integrate enterprise aptitudes with environmental education to nurture the skills needed for a changing world. By supporting primary school pupils to set up and run refill shops, BITC is creating hands-on, enterprise-focused learning and building critical green skills, whilst cutting single use plastic and meeting a real community need for affordable cleaning and toiletry products.

Work Experience

- **Mandatory Work Experience:** Work encounters help improve career readiness, reduce NEET rates, and increase the uptake of apprenticeships and other career opportunities by disadvantaged students. BITC calls for the reintroduction of statutory work experience placements for students aged 14–16. To ensure success, this should incorporate flexible structures (e.g. spread over a year or reduced placement durations) to avoid rigid requirements that create difficulties for both employers and schools, ultimately leading to inconsistencies.
- **Employer Engagement:** Having seen the positive effect of early and regular employer encounters, BITC underscores mandatory work encounters starting from age 11, as per the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#). Examples of meaningful work encounters include workplace visits, career days, mentoring and job coaching, experiential learning projects and interview workshops.

Partnerships Between Schools and Businesses

BITC's evidence shows that school partnerships with businesses that link learning to workplace application can improve consistency across the country. These partnerships can be particularly effective in supporting:

- **Social Mobility:** BITC and its members have seen how long-term collaborations between schools and businesses are crucial for integrating real-world learning into the curriculum. These partnerships are particularly beneficial for disadvantaged students. Leveraging business-school collaborations can effectively address the attainment gap, enhance social mobility, and build a diverse talent pipeline.
- **Experiential Learning:** These partnerships can be particularly fruitful in delivering experiential learning. One approach is the Coventry Building Society's engagement with local primary schools, delivering [programmes](#) largely focused on maths, including

examples of real-world application of maths for children.

Inclusion

- **Diversity in the Curriculum, Staff and Careers Visitors:** In its inclusion and employment surveys, BITC repeatedly finds the absence of role models as a barrier to entry and progression into careers. Schools must showcase diverse role models across careers, to inspire under-represented groups and challenge stereotypes from a young age.
- **Businesses Inclusive Practices:** BITC members find value in schools adopting practices such as diversity champions, networks or mentoring, mirroring workplace inclusion strategies.

Technology

- **Virtual Engagement and Experience:** Technology should be used to broaden reach into schools with limited opportunities for in-person employer engagement, thus reducing the inconsistency of

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

experience. Some BITC members use virtual reality in scenario-based learning experiences for workplace simulations, which could be used to prepare young people for inclusive behaviours in the workplace.

- **Digital Literacy:** Education on the critical evaluation of online content, social media, and the responsible use of AI is key for safeguarding young people from harm and preparing them for technological advancements.

- **Teacher Engagement with Employers:** With the same purpose, businesses must engage in teacher encounters to better align teaching with workforce needs and promote non-traditional career paths.

These recommendations highlight key areas where businesses can significantly enhance the educational experience. They emphasise a need to prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities needed for life in a rapidly evolving world.

Post-16 Pathways

- **Baker Clause Enforcement:** BITC has witnessed how the lack of awareness by pupils, parents and teachers around opportunities available through [post-16 pathways](#) can limit students' career path choices after school. We would like to see improved application of the Baker Clause to ensure students and parents are better informed about diverse post-16 pathways, including apprenticeships and technical education.

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

Spotlight on leading practice

Barclays LifeSkills. Barclays LifeSkills is an employability and financial skills programme for all ages, offering curriculum-linked lessons and adult modules to build confidence and career pathways. In partnership with organisations like BITC, it supports students in under-represented communities to thrive in the digital age and manage finances effectively. The programme covers entrepreneurial skills, budgeting, and financial management. With over 90% of UK secondary schools registered and 87% of participants reporting greater self-awareness, LifeSkills demonstrates the value of business-led partnerships in preparing students for future careers and entrepreneurial success.

Heathrow & Skills Builder. Heathrow Airport's Employment and Skills Academy uses the Skills Builder essential skills framework to prepare students for the workforce. One of the core aspects of Heathrow's approach is the emphasis on real-world application of skills. The Skills Builder framework provides a structured way for students to develop and demonstrate their abilities in various contexts, from classroom activities to workplace simulations. Since 2023, over 6,000 young people have developed essential skills, and 120 students from four colleges have benefited from Essential Skills Masterclasses, reporting increased confidence and understanding of their strengths.

Lloyds Banking Group. Lloyds Banking Group's Teacher Encounter Days, supported by [Careers Hubs](#), bridge education and the workplace by equipping teachers with insights into job market skills. This enables them to integrate real-world skills into lessons, enhancing student engagement and preparedness. Teachers report a stronger ability to link classroom learning with workplace needs, benefiting thousands of students and contributing to a skilled future

From Classroom to Career: How Businesses Can Support Schools Today

Actions for business

What can businesses do to enhance the curriculum and prepare students for work?

1. **Place-based partnerships**– Develop targeted and long-term placed-based [partnerships](#) with schools and education organisations.
2. **Skills**– Integrate essential skills throughout engagement with schools using the [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#).
3. **Careers Education outreach** – Help students from age 11 get ready for work by supporting schools in delivering quality work encounters. Employers can use the Careers & Enterprise Company's Employer [Standards](#) tool to benchmark their careers education outreach.

Many thanks to the following businesses who provided input into this factsheet.

Aldermore, Barclays, BNP Paribas, bp, City & Guilds, Heathrow, Lloyds

Banking Group, Northumbria University, Ryder Architecture.

Enjoyed this Content?

You might also like to:

- Find out more on the topic with [Time to Act: addressing inequalities in education - Business in the Community](#).
- Sign up to BITC's [Opening Doors](#) inclusive recruitment framework to discover how you can unlock opportunities for young employees.
- Talk to one of our expert teams today to learn how BITC membership can help you take your responsible business journey further and drive lasting global change.