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COMPASS – HELPING SCHOOLS FIND THEIR WAY TO GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE



PROFESSOR TRISTRAM HOOLEY INTRODUCES THIS TOOL TO HELP IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CAREER GUIDANCE

Good careers guidance plays a critical role in improving social mobility and securing future economic prosperity. Where schools deliver high-quality career guidance, young people are more engaged in schooling, less likely to be absent and more likely to make the best possible start in the world of work.

Despite the growing evidence around the effectiveness of career guidance, we know that its quality and quantity vary across the country. A 2013 Ofsted report, for example, found that three quarters of schools they visited were not delivering effective careers advice to students.

In my research, I've found that a 'careers postcode lottery' has emerged while more recent research by Professor Louise Archer and her colleagues at King's College London, suggests that disadvantaged young people are less likely to get access to good career guidance.

Where schools do not provide good-quality career guidance, young people have access to less help and support with their careers, less opportunity to meet with employers and access work experience and less information about the opportunities that are available to them.

Research conducted by The Careers & Enterprise Company tells us that less than half of schools are providing all students with even one encounter with the world of work. This is concerning as research by Dr Anthony Mann of the Education and Employers Taskforce charity suggests that young people need at least four encounters with employers to be effective.

What's clear is that young people need a high standard of career guidance more than ever. Youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment and this ratio has increased in the last 10 years as the jobs market has become more complex. The journey from school to work is also getting longer and the education system is constantly shifting with the addition of new qualifications and pathways. In addition, the rapid pace of technological change has left many young people overwhelmed by the career choices in front of them, making it increasingly hard to get a foothold in the labour market.

That is why we have partnered with the Gatsby Foundation to create and launch *Compass*, a new free online tool to help schools to address some of these challenges.

Every secondary school and sixth form college in the country can now access *Compass* to measure the effectiveness of their career guidance against a series of nationally recognised benchmarks.

The benchmarks were developed by Sir John Holman, Emeritus Professor at the University of York and former headteacher, for the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. The eight benchmarks are the result of rigorous national and international research, analysis of good practice in English schools and a comprehensive review of current literature. They have been widely accepted across government, schools and education organisations and have helped to shape thinking amongst politicians, policy officials and commentators in the careers world.

The benchmarks include stressing the importance of offering young people opportunities to meet employers and undertake work experience, addressing the needs of each pupil, bringing careers into the curriculum, learning from career and labour market information and providing one-to-one personal career guidance.

The tool, which is supported by Teach First, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Association of School and College Leaders and the Career Development Institute, enables schools to see how they measure up against the benchmarks.

Schools that use *Compass* are asked a series of questions which breakdown each of the benchmarks. For example, the tool will ask whether a school has a written careers policy, how often it is evaluated and by whom, what careers provision is provided to young people and how many students receive work experience in what year groups. Only the school is able to view its own data. All of the data is password protected and held securely on our behalf by our research partners, IFF Research.

Compass gives schools an immediate read-out on how they compare to the benchmarks and sets out areas for potential improvement so they can celebrate successes



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and focus resources on the areas of their careers programmes which need the most development.

We started rolling out *Compass* to schools in November last year and to date more than 400 have signed up. Early analysis shows that only a small number of schools are meeting all of the benchmarks although many are partially meeting them. Schools find meeting the benchmarks around labour market information, personal guidance, work experience and embedding career learning in the curriculum the most difficult to meet. *Compass* helps schools to clarify where their weaknesses are and to address them.

Over time, a school can use their unique login to return to the tool, see previous results, repeat the evaluation and assess if their provision has changed. The results are confidential, but schools can choose to share them with whoever they think would support the development of their careers plans. A school may, for example, choose to share the results with governors, students, parents, colleagues or Ofsted.

At The Careers & Enterprise Company, we are using *Compass* to gain an understanding of what careers provision looks like in schools across the country. With the Gatsby Foundation, we are analysing the anonymised data gathered to produce an annual report on our findings to help us better understand how best to support schools to improve their career guidance.

We are always interested in hearing from schools about how *Compass* could be refined and improved. The tool will be reviewed at regular intervals through focus groups with teachers and by an advisory group made up of key stakeholders.

Ultimately, we believe that *Compass* offers the sector a major opportunity. For the first time, we have a national audit tool that will allow us and our partners to gain greater insight into how the system is working while also helping schools improve their careers provision, to inspire young people and help them make informed choices about their future.

Schools can access *Compass* by following this link www.compass-careers.org.uk

For more information on The Careers & Enterprise Company visit www.careersandenterprise.co.uk and for more information on The Gatsby Foundation visit www.gatsby.org.uk

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