



# Careers Impact: National System Review 1

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Gatsby Benchmark 1:

## A Stable Careers Programme – Summary

# What is the Careers Impact System, National System Review and how was it done?

The Careers Impact System is a process that drives continuous improvement in the quality of careers education in schools and colleges. It's a systematic approach to raising standards, provides confidence in and an assurance of quality to the education policy community and is directly linked to wider school improvement.

**Internal leadership reviews take place in individual schools and colleges using a standard framework. These are challenged and verified through peer-to-peer and expert review. National System Reviews offer independent system-wide insight and thought leadership, take a cross-cutting, thematic approach.**

Chrysalis - an independent research agency – conducted the first National System Review in 43 schools and special schools in 2023/24 with above-average Gatsby Benchmark performance. The review included visits to the setting and taking part in an online research forum. Documents were also reviewed. This short summary gives the key points from the review.



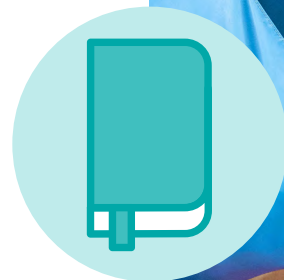
## Why is Gatsby Benchmark 1 important?

The [8 Gatsby Benchmarks](#) are measures of “world class” careers education<sup>1</sup>.

Benchmark 1: A Stable Careers Programme states “every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.”

In 2022/23 66% of schools and colleges in England reporting to CEC told us that they fully achieved this benchmark; 34% said they achieved it partially.

Achieving all aspects of Benchmark 1 sets the right strategic context for a school or college’s careers programme. It is therefore the foundation of good careers guidance and is a natural starting point to shine a light on progress with the careers system and identify best practice.



# 66%

of schools and colleges in England reporting to CEC told us that they fully achieved this benchmark

<sup>1</sup> The Benchmarks are currently being reviewed by Gatsby Foundation, reporting in 2024 (and findings from this review have been considered). See Good Career Guidance: the next ten years.

## National System review Insight 1

# Challenges with achieving a stable careers programme

1. **Insufficient prioritisation of careers by stakeholders**, visible in the amount of time given to it and engagement in it – by students, their parents and staff, including senior school leaders.
2. **Limited resources** posing risks to implementing their vision, including pressures on curriculum time and academic priorities, leadership and management, and financial.
3. **Parental and community expectations and stereotypes** affecting, and sometimes limiting, students' careers aspirations and choices.
4. **Difficulties in putting in place effective mechanisms for evaluating careers provision**, its impact in particular.
5. **Issues related to resource planning, staff training and development**, including that of Careers Leaders and succession planning for careers leadership in schools.

## National System Review Insight 2

# Best practice schools and colleges do this:

1. **Careers learning journeys:** Achieve clarity about the intended learning outcomes for careers, enabling a progressive and measurable programme, focused on impact and using data
2. **Vision:** Look beyond their students' next transition point when defining their vision for careers
3. **Impact:** Directly involve senior leaders and governors in careers, ensuring clarity of vision and making implementation and impact evaluation easier
4. **Strategic planning:** Have mechanisms and systems which ensure careers provision is embedded within the school and approached strategically
5. **Distributed leadership:** Actively involve stakeholders in careers, achieving quality and ownership, and mitigating some of the most persistent challenges, such as stereotyping



## National System Review Insight 3

# Snapshot of best practice



“I was asked to lead [careers] because it was such an important priority for the school. We believed this was the best way to drive careers forward and ensure our students had high aspirations. The fact that I sit on the SLT and have such a senior position means that I am able to make decisions without further consultation, allowing us to take advantage of opportunities which arise.”

**Deputy headteacher and Careers leader,  
11-16 secondary school**



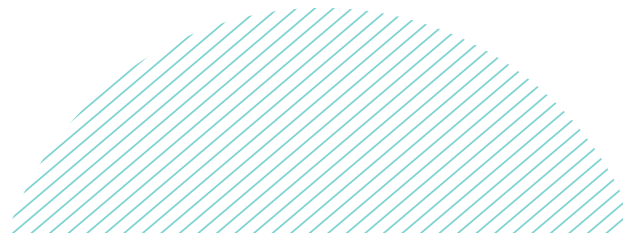
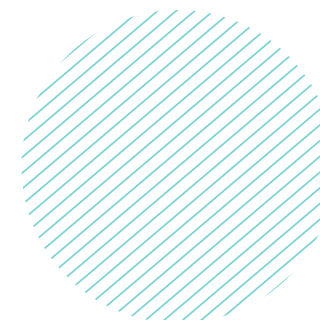
“The headteacher was clear that ‘what students need to know, understand and be able to do’ is what shapes the curriculum at [the school]. This is shaped by a focus on students being able to be functional members of their community, be independent in life and make informed choices post 16. The school have set aims for the careers programme for pupils in each year group that scaffold this intent. These aims give structure to learning outcomes for each year group that shape the careers provision and align to education and careers leader vision for learners.”

**National System Review Visit Summary: Special school**



“Careers is a thread in the academy improvement plan and influences all other strategic priorities. This has evolved over time as previously careers and employability was a standalone area within the [academy improvement plan] but now supports the delivery of other whole school improvement priorities.”

**National System Review Visit Summary: 11-18 school**



## What next and where can I find out more?

For further information on the first  
National System Review, please contact  
[research@careersandenterprise.co.uk](mailto:research@careersandenterprise.co.uk)

The second National Service Review  
will take place in 2024/25 and focus  
on equitable access, disadvantage and  
learners facing additional barriers.

