

JFK Special School

Careers Policy and Strategy 2026 - 2027



Review date: September 2027

Life with purpose

Foreword by Jim Robinson

JFK's Vision and Values

JFK Special School is committed to enhancing life through learning. Our personalised curriculum begins with individual assessment and the setting and tracking of personal learning goals designed to support each student's development in the areas of physical development, social interaction, cognition, emotional regulation and communication. We believe in the promotion of student voice and independence and work to enable students to make choices and communicate their needs, wishes and feelings. Through stimulating and enjoyable learning in school and in the community, we hope to enable students to participate in society in a meaningful way. We concur with Jenny Connick, (founder of Talentino!) that 'career' may be defined as 'life with purpose'. This policy and strategy have been developed to promote that outcome for all our students.



What is the GATSBY BENCHMARK?

THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS OF GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE in 2014, Lord Sainsbury's Gatsby Charitable Foundation published a report by Professor Sir John Holman, Adviser in Education at the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, titled "Good Career Guidance."

WHY THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS ARE IMPORTANT

The Gatsby Benchmarks are important because it plays a key role in:

- raising young people's aspirations and promoting access to all career pathways
- enabling all young people to develop the skills and outlook they need to achieve career wellbeing, including adaptability and resilience
- underpinning the Department for Education guidance to schools on meeting their statutory responsibility for careers guidance.

The Gatsby Benchmark Areas

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each young person
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

BENCHMARK 1: A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME

Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by pupils, teachers, governors and employers.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

Every school should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the governing body, headteacher and senior leadership team, with an identified and appropriately trained Careers Leader responsible for it.

The careers programme should be tailored to the needs of young people, appropriately sequenced and underpinned by clear learning outcomes. It should be published on the school's website in a way that enables young people, parents and carers, staff and employers to access and understand it.

The programme should be regularly evaluated and improved using feedback and evidence from young people, parents and carers, staff, employers and Careers Advisers. The school should also use relevant data, including destinations data, to assess its impact and inform future planning.

JFK has a structured Careers Guidance programme that provides young people with opportunities across the curriculum to develop transferable life and social skills; this has been agreed by Jim Robinson, Post 16 Lead and Governors and is published on the school website.

JFK senior management team will review and evaluate the policy and strategy with stakeholders on an annual basis to ensure it still meets the requirements of our students.

All staff are expected to contribute to the career learning and development of students in their different roles.

Future areas for development

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Careers Lead.
- Further development of links with local employers.
- Designated Careers and 16+ tab on school website.

BENCHMARK 2: LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Every pupil should have access to good-quality, up-to-date information about future pathways, study options and labour market opportunities, and be supported to use this information to make informed decisions about their future. Parents, carers and staff should also have access to relevant information so they can effectively support pupils in their career decision-making.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

All learners should access and use good-quality, up-to-date information about careers, future pathways, study options and the labour market to inform their decisions about study options and next steps.

Parents/carers and staff who support learners should also have access to relevant information so they can provide consistent and effective support with career decision-making. Learners should have access to an informed adviser to help them make effective use of the information available.

Current Progress:

- Person-centred Individual annual reviews from Y9 onwards consider preparation for adulthood.
- Next Steps event in autumn term when students/families can meet representatives from local FE/community providers, including supported internships.

Future areas for development

- Information shared with students/families about the labour market (local opportunities).
- Further development of links with local employers or organisations that develop volunteering opportunities.
- CPD of Careers Leader.
- Information about the labour market, future study options, the local offer and careers resources available on Careers and 16+ tab on the school website.

BENCHMARK 3: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH YOUNG PERSON

Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support should be tailored to the needs of each young person, with particular attention given to vulnerable, disadvantaged and SEND pupils.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

A school's careers programme should actively challenge misconceptions and stereotypical thinking, showcase a diverse range of role models and raise aspirations.

Schools should keep systematic records of each pupil's participation in the careers programme, including individual advice, decisions and career aspirations. Pupils should be able to access and use these records, particularly at key transition points, to support their career development.

Schools should collect, maintain and use accurate data on each pupil's aspirations, intended and immediate education, training or employment destinations to provide personalised support.

Schools should use sustained and longer-term destinations data to evaluate and improve their careers programme.

Current progress against the criteria:

- The progress of all students is assessed, tracked and evaluated according to personal learning goals.
- Quantitative and qualitative data of progress and learning experiences are recorded, maintained and shared with students/families through Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP) and Learning Journeys, using Evidence for Learning.
- Students' destinations are tracked and shared with the LA.
- School's expectations of achievement proactively challenge expectations and stereotyping.

Future areas for development

- Collection of Individual records of students' work-related learning.

BENCHMARK 4: LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS

All teachers should link curriculum learning to careers. Subject teachers should highlight how the knowledge and skills developed in their subject relate to a wide range of career pathways and progression routes. Careers should also form part of ongoing staff development.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

Every year, in every subject, every pupil should have opportunities to learn how the knowledge and skills developed in that subject help people to gain entry to, and be more effective workers within, a wide range of careers.

Current progress:

- Through Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP) students' learning is assessed, planned, tracked and evaluated to enable the greatest fulfilment of their potential.
- Functional skills learning includes communication; mini-enterprise activities; promotion of independence; ICT; creative arts; food technology; life skills (e.g. clearing away after lunch); handling money; telling the time.
- Students' learning is evaluated according to the continuum of skills development, working towards the generalisation of skills
- Eduqas units include Maths, English, Science and ICT.
- Careers Week to develop the students' knowledge and skills on careers.

Future areas for development

- Individual records of students' work-related learning.
- For students in KS3, time-tabled employer/employee presentations about careers to which STEM subjects are relevant, at least annually.

BENCHMARK 5: ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Every pupil should have at least one meaningful encounter with an employer each year from age 11, alongside multiple opportunities to learn about work, employment and the skills valued in the workplace. These can include visiting speakers, mentoring, enterprise activities and other employer encounters.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

Every year, from the age of 11, pupils should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer.

** A 'meaningful' encounter should have a clear purpose and appropriate learning outcomes, provide opportunities for two-way interaction between the young person and employer, and be followed by time for the young person to reflect on what they have learned.*

Current progress:

- Students experience school as employees through e.g. horticulture or mini-enterprise opportunities.
- Life Skills Challenge - Work Experience
- Workshops/sessions delivered by employers/employees from a range of organisations such as DLR, Hill Group and BEING.

Future areas for development

- Time-tabled encounters with employers for secondary-aged students, at least annually.

BENCHMARK 6: EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

Every pupil should have meaningful first-hand experiences of workplaces to help them explore career opportunities and expand their networks.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

By the age of 16, every pupil should have had at least one meaningful experience of a workplace, in addition to any part-time employment they may have.

By the age of 18, every pupil should have had at least one further meaningful workplace experience, in addition to any part-time employment they may have.

** A meaningful workplace experience should have clear learning outcomes, provide genuine exposure to the workplace and include opportunities for preparation and reflection.*

Current progress:

- Work experience in local businesses and resources, e.g. cafes and libraries.
- Experiencing school as a workplace, e.g. through horticulture and administrative tasks.
- Work experience in school: tuck shop.

Future areas for development

- Time-tabled work experience or vocational opportunities for students in Y10-14, at twice annually.

BENCHMARK 7: ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities available to them, including academic, technical and vocational routes. This should include learning in schools, colleges, independent training providers, universities and the workplace.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

By the age of 16, every pupil should have had meaningful encounters with providers of the full range of learning opportunities, including sixth forms, colleges, universities and independent training providers (ITPs).

By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying to higher education should have had at least two visits to higher education providers to meet staff and learners.

Current progress:

- Annual Next Steps event for students/families.
- Transition visits prior to admission to college or other provider.
- Sharing information about FE and the local offer informally and during students' annual reviews from Y9.

Future areas for development

- Timetabled encounters with representatives of local FE colleges for students in KS4, at least annually.

BENCHMARK 8: PERSONAL GUIDANCE

Every pupil should have access to personal guidance interviews with a suitably trained careers adviser, who may be a member of school staff or an external adviser. Guidance should be available when pupils are making significant study or career decisions and should be tailored to meet their individual needs.

Gatsby Benchmark Criteria:

Every pupil should have opportunities for personal guidance meetings with a careers adviser, who may be an internal member of school staff or an external adviser, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. Meetings should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made and scheduled to meet each pupil's individual needs. The Careers Leader should work closely with the careers adviser, SENDCO and other key staff to ensure personal guidance is effective and embedded within the careers programme.

Current progress:

Careers guidance at JFK is based on developing a comprehensive understanding of each young person, including their interests, strengths, skills and experiences. This information is used to help pupils identify and explore suitable education, training and employment pathways, while challenging pre-existing assumptions held by pupils, parents and carers about their potential.

At the end of Year 9, each pupil has an EHCP meeting, providing an opportunity to discuss their aspirations and future pathways and to establish appropriate support. These meetings draw on contributions from a range of agencies, and all pupils are supported to make a meaningful contribution to their EHCP meeting.

Future areas for development

- Support staff may be supported to complete a Level 6 Career Guidance qualification to develop the skills and knowledge required to provide high-quality careers guidance to pupils.