

Careers Leader toolkit

Careers evidence audit

A practical checklist for Ofsted conversations and the eight Gatsby Benchmarks.



Check

Evidence

Act

For careers leaders in schools, sixth forms and colleges in England.
Free to copy and share.

Updated October 2026 · sources listed on page 4

shineai.tech/for-careers-leaders

What inspectors and the law expect

Inspection

- Ofsted's renewed education inspection framework applies to inspections from 10 November 2025.
- Report cards replace a single overall judgement. Areas are graded on a five-point scale: urgent improvement, needs attention, expected standard, strong standard and exceptional.
- Updated school inspection toolkits and operating guides came into use from September 2026. Read the toolkit for your setting before an inspection; we do not reproduce its wording here.

The law

- Section 42A, Education Act 1997: schools must secure independent careers guidance for pupils in Years 8 to 13.
- Section 42B, Education Act 1997 (provider access), strengthened by section 14 of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022: schools must give providers of technical education and apprenticeships the chance to talk to pupils, and publish a provider access policy statement.
- From January 2024 this means at least six provider encounters: two in Years 8–9, two in Years 10–11 and two in Years 12–13. See our PAL encounter matrix.
- Statutory guidance "Careers guidance and access for education and training providers" (DfE, updated 23 June 2026): schools and colleges must have regard to it, and it expects careers provision to be based on the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Colleges also have a duty under section 45, Education Act 1997, to give learners up-to-date careers reference materials.

Quick check

- ☐ Is your careers programme published on your website?
- ☐ Is your Careers Leader named, with contact details?
- ☐ Is your provider access policy statement published and current?

Gatsby Benchmarks audit

For each benchmark, note the evidence you hold, where it lives and the next step. Tick one status.

Benchmark	Evidence we hold	Where it is kept	Gap or next step
1 A stable careers programme ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
2 Learning from career and labour market information ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
3 Addressing the needs of each young person ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
4 Linking curriculum learning to careers ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
5 Encounters with employers and employees ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
6 Experiences of workplaces ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
7 Encounters with further and higher education ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			
8 Personal guidance ☐ In place ☐ Partly ☐ Not yet			

Benchmark titles: Gatsby Foundation, Good Career Guidance (benchmarks refreshed 2024). Statutory guidance expects schools and colleges to work towards all eight.

Evidence to have ready

- ☐ Published careers programme, reviewed this year
- ☐ Named Careers Leader and governor link
- ☐ Provider access policy statement, with the six encounters dated
- ☐ Records of each learner's careers activities and guidance
- ☐ Employer and workplace experiences per learner, with gaps identified
- ☐ Personal guidance interviews with a qualified adviser
- ☐ Destination data, including disadvantaged and SEND learners

How Shine can help

- Learners log careers activities; staff verify them in a few clicks.
- Per-learner Gatsby tracking shows who has had what, and the gaps.
- One-click governor summary and inspection evidence pack (PDF).
- Destination check-ins and early-warning follow-ups.
- Learners choose to link; groups under five are hidden.

Free for young people. Partner plans for institutions: shineai.tech/education-partners

Sources

DfE statutory guidance: gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools

Education Act 1997: legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/44 (sections 42A, 42B, 45)

Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022: legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/21/section/14

Ofsted inspection framework: gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework

Ofsted toolkits and operating guides: gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-toolkit-operating-guide-and-information

Gatsby Benchmarks: gatsby.org.uk/education/good-career-guidance

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