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School Workbook for Work Experience in the Creative Industries

This workbook is for careers leaders, work experience leads, pastoral and safeguarding staff, and other school colleagues involved in planning and supporting work experience for young people. It is designed to help schools organise placements within the creative industries that are safe, meaningful, well-supported and manageable, while also contributing to wider careers education, personal development, partnership work and school improvement priorities.

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Work experience is increasingly being delivered more flexibly across the academic year, rather than always in one fixed block. This workbook is designed to support everyone involved in placements and help make each work experience placement safe, meaningful and manageable for the young person taking part.

Although this workbook has been developed through learning from Work Experience in the Creative Industries, much of this guidance can be applied to placements in other sectors as well. The core principles remain the same: young people should feel prepared, welcomed, supported, safe and able to recognise what they have learned.

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High-quality work experience can support several school priorities at once. It can strengthen CEIAG and support Gatsby Benchmark delivery, particularly around experiences of workplaces, personal guidance and readiness for next steps. It can also support wider school priorities, including personal development, careers guidance and helping pupils make informed next steps.

Creative industries are a particularly important part of this picture. They offer a wide range of real and growing career opportunities, while also helping young people develop transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative, organisation and creativity. These are valuable across many future pathways, including further study and employment, and can also support progress in school.
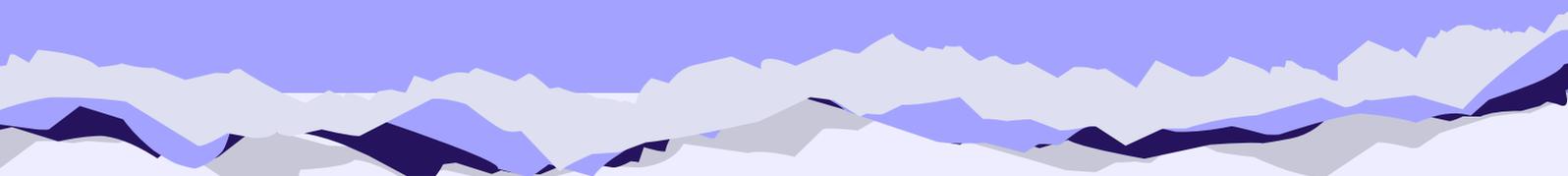
This workbook is also underpinned by the Five Pillars of high-quality work experience: Belonging, Meaning, Support, Safety and Experience. Together, these offer schools a simple framework for planning, reviewing and improving placements. For school staff, the Five Pillars can be used as a practical tool alongside existing work experience, safeguarding, CEIAG and school improvement processes to help assess whether a placement is likely to be safe, meaningful and worthwhile for a young person.

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the five pillars

BELONGING

The young person feels welcomed, included and expected. They know who to go to and do not feel like they are in the way.

MEANING

The young person understands what they are doing and why it matters. Even small tasks should make sense and connect to real work.

SUPPORT

The young person knows who is helping them. They have guidance, supervision and someone they can ask if they are unsure.

SAFETY

The young person understands the rules, the boundaries, the basic hazards, and what to do in an emergency or if something does not feel right.

EXPERIENCE

The young person gains a real insight into how work happens in this setting. They see how ideas, people, roles, processes and decisions come together in a real workplace.

The intention is to help make planning and coordination easier, not add to the workload. The workbook sits alongside existing quality, safeguarding, health and safety, educational visits, work experience and employer engagement systems. The checklists and prompts are designed to reduce administration, improve consistency and help staff focus on the things that matter most.

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To help prepare students efficiently, careers leaders can signpost young people directly to the student workbook and the toolkit film, which set out what work experience is for, how to get ready, how to reflect on the experience and what to do if something does not feel right. This can help careers leaders and other staff prepare students more efficiently, while helping students arrive better prepared and more confident.

In this workbook you will find:

- what schools need to put in place before the work experience placement
- how to support communication, safety and learning during the placement
- how to use reflection and feedback afterwards to strengthen impact and improve future delivery

Further guidance

This workbook is a short practical guide. Additional information about roles and responsibilities, safeguarding, planning, templates, references and wider strategic alignment is available in the main Work Experience in the Creative Industries Toolkit. A short appendix is also available to help schools connect this work to CEIAG, Gatsby, personal development and wider school improvement priorities, and to access more detailed guidance on quality assurance, evidence and strategic alignment.

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PART 1. BEFORE THE PLACEMENT

Careful preparation can make a significant difference to the quality of a young person's work experience placement. Schools play an important role in helping make sure that placements are suitable, that key information and support arrangements are in place, and that students feel safe, prepared and ready to take part. The Five Pillars are a useful reference point, helping schools ensure that good preparation lays the foundations for belonging, support and safety from the start. The checklist below helps schools turn these principles into practical action.

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

Placement arrangements are known

- ☐ the host organisation, placement address, dates and times have been confirmed
- ☐ a named contact at the host organisation has been identified
- ☐ the young person knows where they are going, when they need to arrive and who to report to
- ☐ travel arrangements have been considered and communicated clearly
- ☐ arrangements for food, breaks, clothing, equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) have been shared where relevant
- ☐ the proposed activities and working environment have been checked as suitable for the young person's age, stage and needs
- ☐ arrangements for induction, day-to-day supervision and any relevant training have been clarified with the host
- ☐ insurance has been confirmed for the placement period

Safeguarding and communication arrangements are in place

- ☐ the school knows who to contact at the host organisation if needed
- ☐ the host knows who to contact at school if a concern or change arises
- ☐ the student knows who to contact if they feel worried, unsure or unwell
- ☐ the student and parent/carer know what to do if the student is delayed or unable to attend
- ☐ relevant school procedures relating to work experience, safeguarding, health and safety and risk management have been followed
- ☐ any safeguarding concern during the placement will be reported through the school's normal safeguarding route, including to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) where appropriate

Students are prepared

☐ the student has been briefed on the purpose of the placement and
what to expect
☐ the student has been encouraged to ask questions and speak up if
unsure
☐ expectations around behaviour, communication, attendance and
professionalism have been covered
☐ any relevant guidance about mobile phones, photographs, filming,
recording, confidentiality, social media or conduct has been shared
☐ the student has been signposted to the student workbook and toolkit
film to support preparation and reflection
☐ students have been prepared for the fact that work experience in the
creative industries may involve project-based working, events, public-
facing activity, creative content, flexible timings or less routine working
patterns

Support and inclusion have been considered

☐ any support, access, medical, or wellbeing needs have been identified
and communicated and shared through the agreed process
☐ any additional support arrangements and barriers to participation have
been discussed early and reasonable adjustments agreed where
needed
☐ the student's confidence and readiness for the placement have been
discussed
☐ parents/carers have been given the information they need to help the
young person prepare well
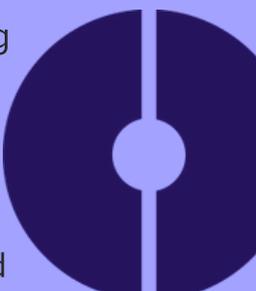
Schools do not need to do everything alone. The toolkit film and
student workbook are designed to prepare young people in advance,
reduce repeated explanation from staff, and support a more consistent
experience across placements.

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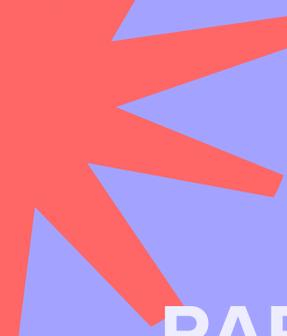
PART 2. DURING THE PLACEMENT

During the placement, schools play an important role making sure that students, parents/carers and hosts know how to raise questions or concerns if needed. A clear and proportionate support route can help small issues be resolved early and help the placement remain safe, supportive and worthwhile.

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

Support routes are clear

☐ the student knows who to speak to at the host organisation if they need help or feel unsure
☐ the student knows who to contact at school or within the programme if they have a concern
☐ parents/carers know who to contact if a concern arises during the placement
☐ the host organisation knows who to contact at school if there is a problem, concern or change to the plan

Communication is maintained

☐ there is a clear route for important information to be shared quickly if needed
☐ agreed check-in arrangements are in place
☐ any changes to timings, attendance or activities can be communicated clearly between the host, the school and home
☐ staff remain contactable in line with normal school or programme arrangements

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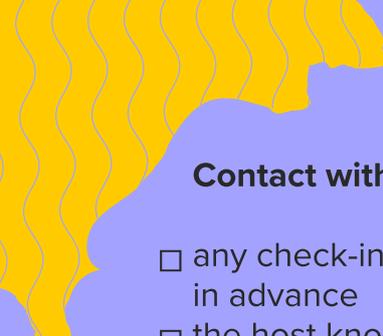
Contact with the host is planned respectfully

☐ any check-in or contact from school during the placement has been considered in advance
☐ the host knows if and how the school may make contact during the placement
☐ any call, visit or check-in is proportionate and does not unnecessarily interrupt the host, the student or the flow of work
☐ where a visit or check-in is needed, this is arranged respectfully and through the agreed contact route

Students are supported to speak up

☐ students have been reminded that it is fine to ask questions if they are unsure
☐ students know that they should not manage a worry or concern on their own
☐ students have been encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if something does not feel right
☐ students understand that feeling nervous is normal, but feeling unsafe or unsupported should always be taken seriously

Concerns are responded to early

☐ any issue affecting safety, wellbeing, supervision or suitability is followed up promptly
☐ small concerns are addressed early before they become bigger problems
☐ any necessary communication with parents/carers takes place in a timely and appropriate way
☐ school safeguarding and reporting procedures are followed promptly where relevant, including referral to the DSL where appropriate

Schools may wish to check in with the host or the student during the placement, especially where this forms part of their normal work experience process or where a student may need additional reassurance or support. This can be helpful, but it should be planned carefully and carried out in a way that supports the young person without disrupting the host or the placement itself.

Not every part of a placement will feel straightforward or comfortable at first. Young people may feel tired, stretched or uncertain in a new environment, and some adjustment is normal. However, they should still feel welcomed, treated with care and respect, and know where to turn if they need help.

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PART 3. AFTER THE PLACEMENT

A short review after the placement can help schools make the most of the experience for the student and improve future placements over time. It can also help connect the placement back to wider careers learning, personal development and future planning.

Schools may also find it helpful to review placements through the Five Pillars: did the young person feel welcomed, understand the work, feel supported, feel safe, and gain a realistic insight into working life?

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

Students have an opportunity to reflect

☐ the student has had an opportunity to talk or write about what they did, saw or learned
☐ the student has been encouraged to reflect on what they enjoyed, found challenging or found surprising
☐ the student has had an opportunity to identify skills, strengths or interests they developed or noticed
☐ the student has been supported to think about how the experience connects to future study, work or possible pathways in the creative industries

Feedback is gathered

☐ the student has had an opportunity to give feedback on the placement
☐ any useful feedback from the host has been gathered where possible
☐ any issue affecting quality, suitability or support has been noted
☐ any success, strength or particularly positive practice has been recognised

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Learning is used well

☐ relevant learning from the placement is linked back to CEIAG, Gatsby, school improvement goals or wider personal development activity where appropriate
the placement has helped strengthen the student's understanding
☐ of work and pathways in the creative industries, where appropriate

☐ useful insights are used to improve the school's future preparation and support for students
☐ any important follow-up actions or next steps for the student have
☐ been identified
strong host relationships are noted and built on where appropriate any learning about host suitability, support, supervision or accessibility is noted to inform future placement decisions

Why this matters

A debrief can make a significant difference. It helps students recognise the value of what they have experienced and can help schools turn work experience from a one-off activity into something that more clearly supports careers education, confidence, aspiration and future planning.

Used well, this kind of reflection and feedback can also strengthen employer relationships, improve future placements and support a more joined-up approach to work experience across the school. It can also give schools light-touch evidence of impact in relation to careers education, personal development, inclusion and wider school improvement priorities.

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