



Careers guidance and inspiration in schools: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff (DfE, April 2014)

Introduction

Maintained schools and PRUs have a duty to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for all students in Y8 to Y13. This requirement is extended to academies and free schools through their funding agreements. In April, the Government issued two documents on carrying out the duty: revised statutory guidance and non-statutory departmental advice to schools. The new statutory guidance replaces the previous versions issued in March 2012 and March 2013. In future, the guidance will be reviewed annually but will only be revised if it is no longer fit for purpose.

Download the revised statutory guidance at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/302422/Careers_Statutory_Guidance_-_9_April_2014.pdf

Download the non-statutory advice at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/302424/Careers_Non-Statutory_Departmental_Advice_-_9_April_2014.pdf

What schools 'must' do

The term 'must' is used in the guidance to set out what schools 'must' do by law.

- 'Schools must work with local authorities to support more vulnerable young people including those with special educational needs, and those who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging' (Para.12)
- Governing bodies must ensure that pupils are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 to year 13 and that 'the independent careers guidance provided:
 - is presented in an impartial manner
 - includes information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and other vocational pathways

- is guidance that the person giving it considers will promote the best interests of the pupils to whom it is given' (Paras.15-16).
- 'In-house support for pupils must be combined with advice and guidance from independent and external sources to meet the school's legal requirements' (Para.17).
- 'Schools must secure independent guidance that includes information on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships and vocational pathways' (Para.34).
- 'Schools must ensure that young people are clear about the duty and what it means for them. In particular they must be clear that young people are not required to stay in school; that they can choose how to participate which might be through:
 - Full time study in a school, college or training provider;
 - An apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship;
 - Full time work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with part time accredited study' (Para.42).
- 'Schools must provide relevant information about all pupils to local authority support services. This includes basic information such as the pupil's name, address and date of birth' (Para 45). 'Schools should also provide other information that the local authority needs in order to support the young person to participate in education or training... However, schools must ensure that they do not provide this additional information if a pupil aged 16 or over, or the parent of a pupil aged under 16, has instructed them not to share information of this kind with the local authority' (Para.46).
- 'Where a student has an Education Health and Care Plan, all reviews of that Plan from year 9 at the latest, and onwards, must include a focus on preparing for adulthood, including employment, independent living and participation in society (Para.53).

The term 'should' is used in the statutory guidance in relation to requirements in the statutory guidance to which schools should have regard. If schools decide to depart from it, the guidance states that 'schools will need to have clear reasons for doing so' (Para.1).

What's new?

The guidance has been re-written to reflect important changes in the direction of policy since last year.

- The Ofsted report *Going in the right direction?* (September 2013) showed that the majority of schools need to do much more in carrying out the new duty. Inspectors now take into account how well the school delivers advice and guidance in judging its leadership and management

- The Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise, Matthew Hancock issued an *Inspiration Vision Statement* (September 2013) urging employers, schools and others to work together to inspire young people to develop high aspirations and be motivated to succeed. Inspiring young people to succeed is raised to a new level of importance (See paras.24-26)
- The guidance puts renewed emphasis on providing young people with real-life contacts from the world of work (See paras. 27-31)
- From October 2014, the National Careers Service will extend its offer to schools and colleges. The National contact Centre will provide information and support on engaging with employers (Para.33). The guidance also suggests that schools could work with their local Jobcentre Plus to develop a smoother pathway between education and work (Para.54).
- The guidance states that the school's strategy for advice and guidance 'should be embedded within a clear framework linked to outcomes for pupils rather than an ad hoc set of activities' (Para.17). The strategy should also be based on individualised guidance (Paras.18 and 37)
- More weight has been placed on schools measuring their own effectiveness in carrying out their duty by monitoring quality, taking into account pupils' feedback and examining the attainment and the destinations of their pupils, e.g. by using the Destination Measures data published by the DfE (Paras.55-59).
- The responsibility of the governing body is highlighted for providing clear advice to the headteacher 'on which he/she can base a strategy for advice and guidance, which is appropriately resourced and meets the school's legal requirements' (Para.17).
- The guidance emphasises that schools should ensure that pupils understand that:
 - they will be required to work towards achieving a level 2 in maths and English up to the age of 19 if not achieved at 16 (Para.19)
 - the study of STEM subjects is important for a wide range of career choices. Schools should ensure that girls especially understand the risk of dropping STEM subjects at an early age (Para.20)
 - working for themselves is a viable option. Schools should, therefore, offer pupils the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills for self-employment (Para.21)
 - aiming for the best universities or the best apprenticeships are equally demanding routes for higher attaining pupils (Para.22)
 - the National Citizen Service and other voluntary and community activities offer opportunities that can help young people with their careers (Para.23).

The guidance continues to emphasise:

- providing pupils with access to information on the full range of education and training options (Paras.34-36)
- securing access to face-to-face guidance where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions (Paras.39-40)
- the importance of support for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities (Paras. 52-53) in order to help them 'realise their potential and so increase economic competitiveness and support social mobility' (Para.11)
- the importance of working with local authorities to support participation and vulnerable and disadvantaged young people (Paras.45-49, 59).

Response to the guidance

Critics have expressed their concerns about:

- the perceived marginalisation of careers advisers and the contribution they can make to raising aspirations and directly inspiring young people
- the lack of real support for using quality standards and awards to quality assure careers guidance providers and the work of schools
- the assumption that pre-16 work experience has little or no value
- the lack of funding to enable schools to carry out the duty
- the blurring of the distinction between statutory guidance and non-statutory departmental advice as seen in the way the guidance arbitrarily promotes a number of websites, programmes and initiatives that the Department favours.

Criticism has also come from the Learning and Skills sector that feels that the guidance does not go far enough in challenging schools that are determined to protect their sixth forms. The CBI on behalf of its employers takes the view that the guidance is a step in the right direction but 'it's a long road to mend our broken careers system'.

What next?

Schools need to consider:

- taking action immediately to ensure that they are meeting the statutory duty (See above for what schools must do)
- re-thinking the careers guidance strategy and budget for 2014-15 rather than waiting another year before making a start on any changes they want to see to the model of careers guidance in their school
- using the National Careers Service National Contact Centre when it is launched in October.