

KING EDWARD VII SCHOOL POLICY



Careers Employability

Document Adopted by Governing Body

Date: September 2021

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King Edward VII School - Student Employability Policy

Summary of the KES Employability Policy

The KES Employability Policy aims to provide a practical framework for those planning an event. The key features of the policy are as follows.

1. There is a difference between employment (job getting) and employability (development of skills for job doing).
2. There should be a different focus in the earlier years of the school journey, when the focus should be on employability and skills development, to the later years when the focus should be on employment and opportunities.
3. The key aid to developing both employment and employability is providing students with meaningful employer engagements. The emphasis of the policy is on making events meaningful.
4. Some types of event are likely to be more meaningful than others e.g an interactive demonstration will be more meaningful than an assembly but regardless of the event it is vital that a 'learning wrap around' be applied. The wrap around invites student to anticipate and plan for the event, reflect on what happened and consider how they might use the skills they have gained in other contexts.
5. It is vital that students not only have skills but that they are able to accurately identify and articulate them. A key measure of the success of the KES Employability Policy will be the increased number of students that can identify and describe the skills they have. This can be done as a whole school population, as a year cohort, as a class or even as a small group of students that attended a single event.
6. Students will be invited to use School online resources to capture the learning from the event. At the moment it is anticipated that this resource will be Unifrog.

Why is employability important?

It supports the School values and mission. For students the School aims to

- Prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, including the world of work and their role as citizens in a democratic society
- Enable them to reach their full potential
- Ensure equality of opportunity to all students

Why is it important now?

Statutory guidance has been issued to schools which contains the following requirement.

"Every year from the age of 11, pupils should participate in at least one meaningful encounter with an employer – this means at least one encounter each year from years 7 to 13. Different encounters will work for different schools and pupils, but it could mean in practice: ¹

- careers events such as careers talks, careers carousels and careers fairs;
- transitions skills workshops such as CV workshops and mock interview
- mentoring and e-mentoring;
- employer delivered employability workshops;
- business games and enterprise competitions."

What is the School's aim with regards to employability?

Our aim is to increase students' employability by helping them

- identify the current transferable skills they have
- plan to develop these transferable skills further
- present their transferable skills to others

In doing this we recognise the role played by employers, skills development organisations and volunteers.

We accept that different experiences are more appropriate for some years of study than others.

We value the part played by planning and reflection in making the experience a meaningful.

What is employability and how is it different from employment?

Employment skills are often seen as those skills which help someone to gain employment. Typically they cover things such as application letter writing, preparing a CV and interviewing well. Additionally these might extend to gaining an awareness of vacancies and opportunities. The measure of success in this case is having a job and gaining work experience

Employability skills are transferable skills. They are the skills needed to do a job well and therefore keep a job. Increasingly they have come to be seen as more important than some technical skills. These skills include team working, communicating and

¹ **Careers guidance and access for education and training providers.** Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff. **January 2018 pp 22-23**

problem solving. Additionally, development in this area may include raising aspirations and considering careers that previously had been unimagined. The measure of success is developing a career and gaining work learning. There may be consideration of the wider impact of the job done to include societal, environmental or ethical issues.

Which are the most important?

Both sets of skills are equally important but the focus at school needs to change throughout the school experience.

At the start of the School experience in Y7 it is more important to focus on employability skills. Young adults see the world of work as a long way away and it may be hard to connect an employer engagement experience to their immediate context. However, any skills development activity, whether with an employer or a skills development agency, will reap benefits that have a value in a student's current context. It is also harder to engage employers offering Employment opportunities because they will have to wait five or six years for the students they are engaging with to join the workforce. Some research suggests that many jobs currently promoted to Y11s may not exist by the time current Y7s get to Y11. Y11s will benefit most from a focus on employment skills because they will need awareness of opportunities that they can apply for and be supported in making their applications.

If we develop transferable skills then we are developing employability. There is no need to make the explicit connection between these two ideas in the minds of students. Indeed there are some dangers associated with introducing the employment agenda to young people, or rather to people who are not yet ready to focus on employment. There is a temptation to start this process by asking 'what transferable skills do employers want?' but it's much better to start with students and ask 'what are the skills that students can transfer?'. These might include,

- Skills transferred between different classes/subjects within a year of study.
- Skills transferred from classroom to extracurricular activities.
- Skills transferred from the classroom to school related activities that take place outside school but are still related to school.
- Skills transferred between years of study.

Transferable skills are separate from attributes of a person such as, diligence and resilience or virtues such as kindness, honesty, loyalty. Virtues and attributes are all very important but it is unclear how these might be taught and provision made for their development. Values and attributes are in part shaped by the culture of the School through policies such as the Consistent Conduct Policy. It is possible that this transfer may go the other way with skills learned playing sport for the School getting used in the classroom.

There is no definitive list of what transferable skills include but a group of them appear frequently in the relevant literature². These include, but are not restricted to, Problem solving, Team working, Communicating, Planning and Creativity. It is recommended that when talking about employability or transferable skills at King Edward VII's School the following be included as a minimum; Team Work, Communication and Problem Solving.

How is the employability of school students developed?

The report 'How are schools developing real employability skills?' contains the following two quotes.

"Statistically significant positive relationships exist between the number of employer contacts (such as careers talks or work experience) that a young person experiences in school (between the ages of 14 and 19) and their confidence (at 19-24) in progression towards ultimate career goals, the likelihood of whether (at 19-24) they are NEET or non-NEET, and earnings if salaried."

"The 7% of young adults surveyed who recalled four or more activities while at school were five times less likely to be NEET and earned, on average, 16% more than peers who recalled no such activities. The findings are not linked to highest level of qualification."³

This is interesting because while the Report talks about employability NEET is a measure of employment. It is important not to conflate these two very different ideas. However, reference to 'progression towards ultimate career goals' or achieving a higher salary suggests the students had developed the employability skills needed to undertake more demanding roles.

What is a Meaningful Employer Engagement?

² REHILL, J. HASKINS, M. LACZIK, A. EMMS, K. TAYLOR, J. *How are schools developing real employability skills?* Education and Employers November 2018 p16

³ MANN, A. and PERCY, C. 2014. Employer engagement in British secondary education: wage earning outcomes experienced by young adults. *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(5), pp. 1-28.

It is important to take some time unpick what is meant by this term and also what it isn't.

What do we mean by meaningful?

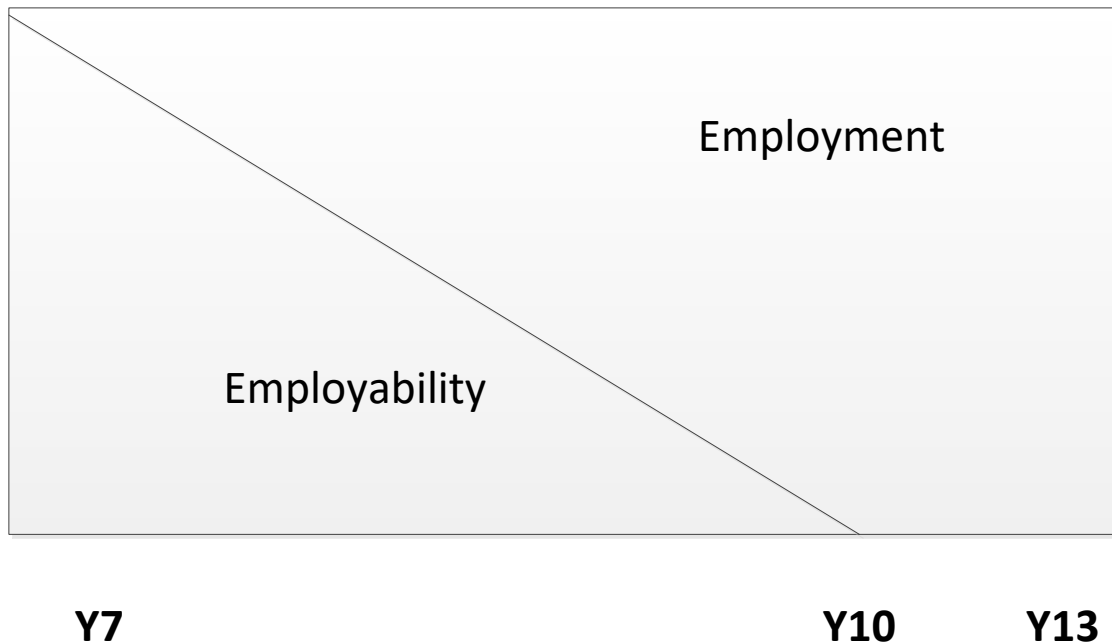
When we look at the research above it says that 7% of the young adults surveyed recalled an employer engagement. What does the 7% represent? Is it the group of students that had the opportunity to take part in an event that wasn't offered universally or was it the case that 100% of the students had the experience but 93% couldn't recall the event. If it is the latter then why do some students recall an experience and some don't? In any learning environment it is common to see reflection used to turn an experience into a meaningful experience. Guided reflection should form a key part of our approach to developing employability.

What is an employer?

An employer is a body that offers employment in return for payment. It may be an individual offering a short period of employment or a large multinational offering a permanent position. Employers are seen in the context of this paper as having a superior knowledge of the world of work because they exist in it. However, it is accepted that employers are not the only resource for students to develop their employability skills.

What is an engagement?

An engagement suggests involvement and contact. This contact may take place through promotional literature, a website, a talk in person, a stall at a fair, a demonstration, an interactive session and mentoring. The impact of these engagements varies according to the level of interactivity and the learning process built around it. It may be that some engagements are not appropriate for all Years of school. The diagram below shows the shifting focus between employability and employment during a student's experience.



Diagram

1

If we remind ourselves of the definitions of Employment and Employability established earlier, with the former focused on skills development and the latter on job getting, then it raises two questions.

Does all employer contact count as Employer Engagement? and can contact with non-employer organisations count as Employer Engagement?

Some Employer Engagements will be via promotional material or assembly talks which will be a good method of making students aware of employment opportunities (within that company or sector) but they won't develop skills. Some Employer Engagements will include team building or problem-solving tasks that provide an excellent foundation for students to learn and will not focus on job getting or opportunities.

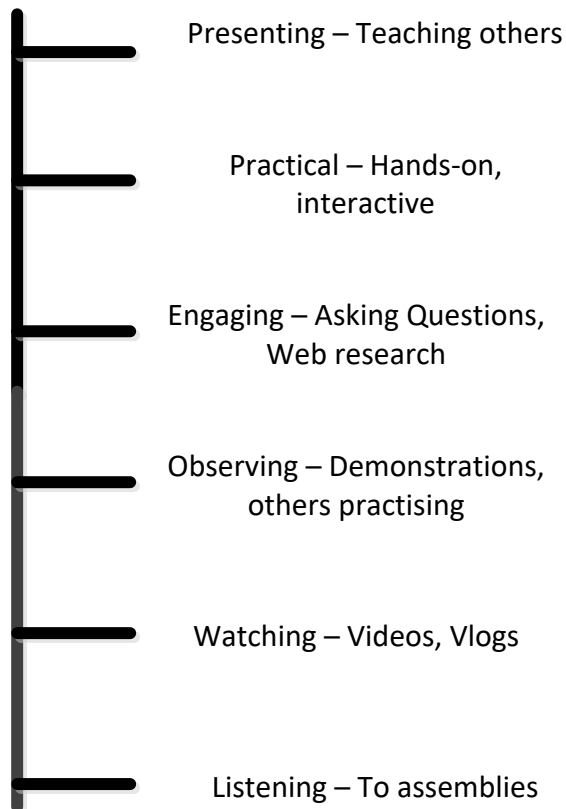
However, it may be that there are some organisations, funded by the Government through agencies such as the Careers and Employment Fund, that provide excellent opportunities to develop transferable skills but they are not employers.

This leads to the conclusion that not all Employer Contacts are Employer Engagements and non-employers can provide Employer Engagements. It also means that an Employer contact can be relevant for Y10s but be considered non-relevant if it was delivered to Y7s.

Hierarchy of Engagement

In terms of making an engagement meaningful some experiences will be more powerful than others. Some experiences may involve the students in a passive way,

such as watching or listening and others may offer more active involvement such as participating or presenting. Below is a diagram showing the most powerful experiences at the upper end and the less powerful at the lower. A description of possible employer engagements is at Appendix B.



What does this mean in practical terms for the School?

Requirements

There is a need for a mapping exercise between the needs of the School and the possible providers. Once this map has been created it will allow the School to make plans sufficiently far enough in advance to book the resources necessary. The needs of the School must take into account which year of study a student is in and what is appropriate for them.

Making the most of an experience

It is vital that we don't lose sight of the fact that the actual experience is only one part of the whole process of developing employability. If we recall our aim it is to help students identify the employability skills they have and to be confident in sharing them with others. Plans must be put in place before any experience to invite students to document where they are currently with their employability skills and afterwards to

reflect on how they have changed as a result of the experience. A possible model for this is at Appendix A.

When planning an Employer Engagement it will be useful to consider the following

Has the desired outcome of the engagement been clearly stated?

What type of engagement is it and is it appropriate for that year of study?

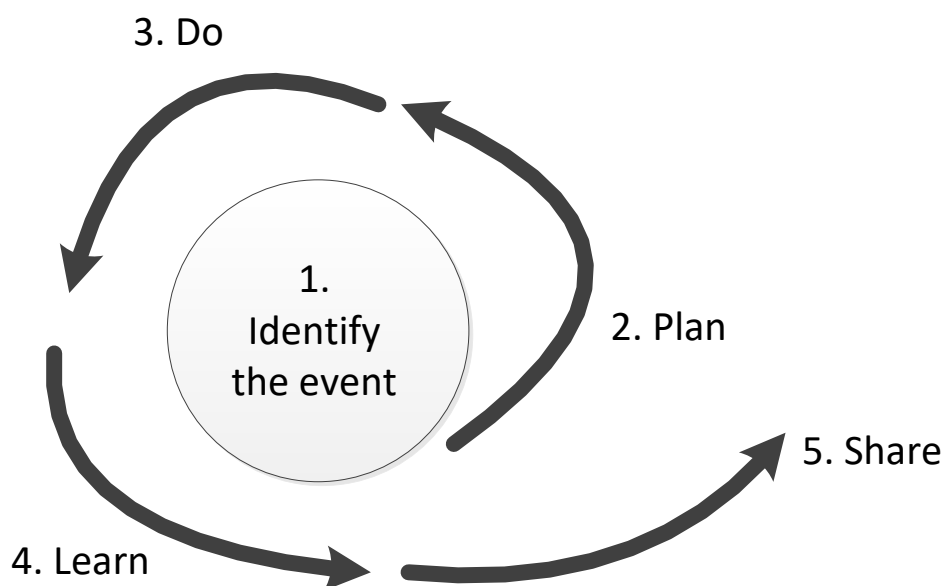
Is there scheduled time for students to carry out planning in advance and reflection afterwards?

Have students had the opportunity to link back to previous engagements where they have identified transferable skills?

Will there be the opportunity for students to share/articulate/present the skills they have used or developed in this experience?

Appendix A - A possible model for ensuring employer engagement is meaningful for students

A model might look something like the one below or any simple variant of a Learning Cycle such as Kolb or Schon.



Step 1 - Students identify an event that they are going to focus on. This may include activities like taking part in a School drama production, going on the School ski trip, taking part in the Big Challenge. It's important that initially this is outside of the curriculum

Step 2 - Plan for the event by anticipating what it will be like, comparing & contrasting it to previous similar events, taking action to improve the fun/utility/learning gained from the experience

Step 3 - Do the event and record what happened with a descriptive account of the choices, actions and decisions they took during the event. Also attempt to understand what they did in relation to others involved in the event.

Step 4 Learn from the event by trying to understand why things happened the way they did, whether what happened was good and why it was good, what they would do differently next time.

Step 5 Share their learning - present to peers, teachers, parents.... via face to face, one to one, via video recording or audio or in a written report.

In each phase a student should be asked questions. Questions are good because they prompt an answer and open questions are better because they prompt open answers. The following table contains some questions that might be relevant at different stages.

PLAN - Before the event or experience	DO - Straight after the event or experience	LEARN - Thinking about the event or experience
<p>What do I think it will be like?</p> <p>What have I done before that is like this?</p> <p>What can I do to get the most out of it?</p> <p>What might stop me getting a lot out of it?</p> <p>Which skills do I need for this?</p>	<p>What was it like?</p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>What did I do/decide/chose?</p> <p>What did others do that affected the experience?</p> <p>What skills did I use?</p>	<p>What went well?</p> <p>What was good about this?</p> <p>What did I do that made this a success?</p> <p>What new skills do I have or what existing skills are improved?</p> <p>How do I know I have new skills or improved my existing ones?</p>

Appendix B Examples of Employers, Skills Development Organisations and Volunteers

A. Employer contacts offering employment opportunities

An employer may talk about the sector it is in and the many opportunities available, some of which may not be with them eg a law firm talking about opportunities in the legal field.

An employer presents numerous opportunities at its workplace eg a national organisation such as the Armed Forces that promoting a variety of careers.

An employer presents an opportunity at its workplace. This might be a local company that has a specific vacancy eg a local company that have employment opportunities for a school leaver such as a modern apprenticeship.

B. Employer Engagements offering employability opportunities

Sheffield Hallam University - Celebrity Hospital

Aecom - Bridge building

Army - Team building

Irwin Mitchell - Mock courts

C. Non-employing Employer Engagements offering employability opportunities

1. Pre-Paid Products and Services such as The Careers and Employability Fund with a value of £5m. We can't access the money but the £5m has been spent buying products and services from a small range of providers. Each region has a provider for a particular product or service. A school applies to access the paid for products and services. For example in the academic year 17/18 we could have accessed at no cost the following

a. Volunteer it yourself - This is a product aimed at Y9s and involves working with local tradesmen but in school. The scheme helps identify projects in school, a new garden, a room that needs painting or path that needs repair and assigns a local tradesman to work with a project team of Y9s. It develops planning, team working and problem-solving skills. The materials are provided for free by Wickes.

b. Young Enterprise - This product is again delivered in school and consists of employability workshops which help develop interview technique and CV writing.

c. Ahead Partnership - This is a series of events made up of activities such as enterprise challenges (there wasn't much appetite for this because it was too similar to The Big Challenge) and panels of industry speakers who present on a wide range of subjects and answer questions.

The application process for access to these products is not too onerous and they are given out on a first come, first served basis rather than through a competitive or conditional process.

2. Virtual Wallets where the school is given a budget but never sees the actual money. The School can consume this budget on a wider variety of authorised providers. It has more range than the Pre-Paid services above but again we never see any actual money.

D. Volunteer led activities offering employability opportunities

Mock interviews offered by parents, governors, members of partner organisations or even members of the public with a connection to the School.