

# KING EDWARD VII SCHOOL



## Careers Employability Policy

Date: September 2025

Approved: GB

Leadership Team Responsibility: LAW

## **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 employability based 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 to developing both employment and employability is providing students with meaningful employer engagements. The emphasis of the policy is on making events meaningful for students and to their lives.
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 this policy will be the increased number of students that can identify and describe the skills they have., as a class or even as a small group of students that attended a single event.
6. Students can use School online resources to capture the learning from an event, such as Satchel and Unifrog.

### **Why is employability important?**

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

- Prepare and support student reliance by preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, including the world of work and their role as citizens in a democratic society
- Support student integrity by enabling them to recognise and reach their full potential
- Support curiosity by ensuring and equality for all students

### **Why is it important now?**

Statutory guidance 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: <sup>1</sup>

- careers events such as careers talks, carousel activities and fairs
- transitions skills workshops such as CV workshops and mock interviews
- 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 (Integrity)
- plan to develop these transferable skills further (Curiosity)
- present their transferable skills to others (Resilience)

We recognise and value 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 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. 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

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<sup>1</sup> **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. Children 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
- Skills transferred from classroom to extracurricular activities
- Skills transferred from classroom to School related activities that take place outside school
- Skills transferred between years of study

There is no definitive list of what transferable skills include but a group of them appear frequently in relevant literature<sup>2</sup>. 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 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."<sup>3</sup>

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 Meaningful Employer Engagement?**

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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

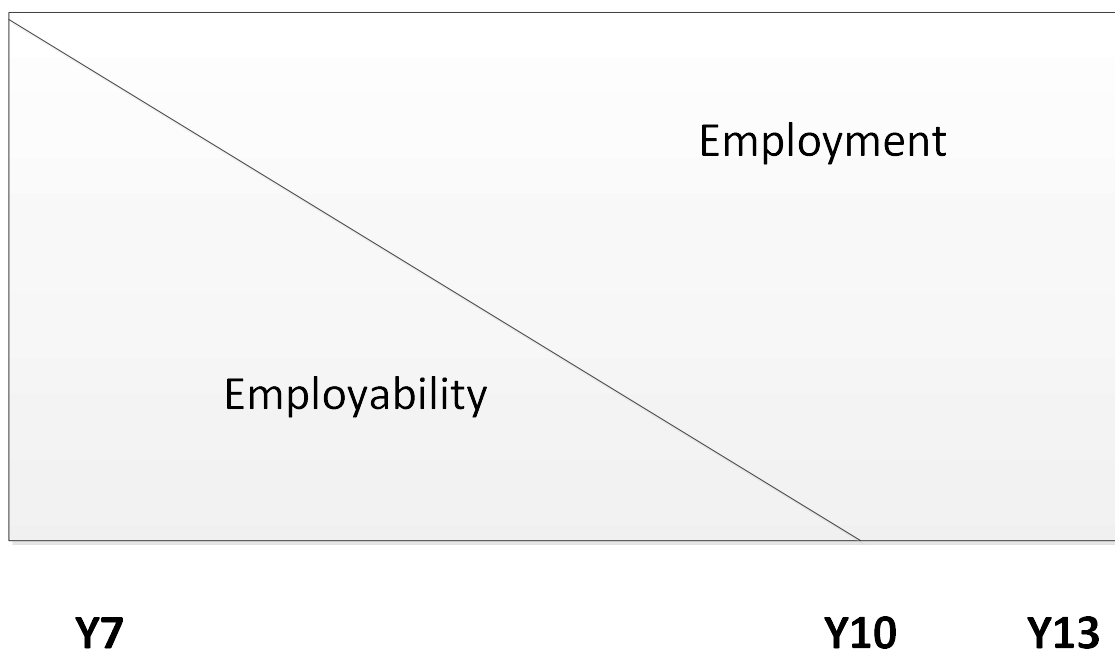
reflection used to turn an experience into a meaningful experience. Guided reflection should form a key part of our approach to developing employability.

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 company offering a permanent position. Employers are seen as having a superior knowledge of the world of work. 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, 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? Can contact with non-employer organisations count as employer engagement?

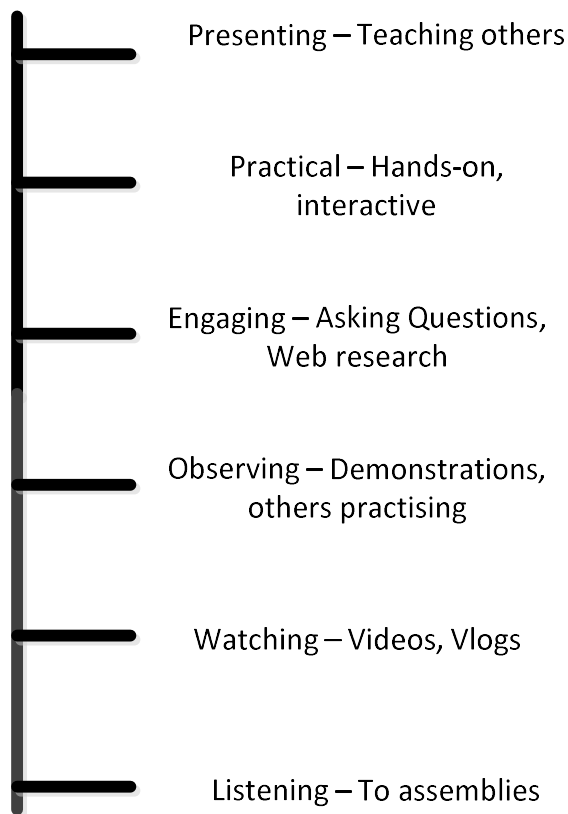
Some employer engagements will be via promotional material or assembly talks which will be a good method of making students aware of employment opportunities (within that company or sector) but they won't develop skills. Some employer engagements will include team-building or problem-solving tasks that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

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 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 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 do not 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?

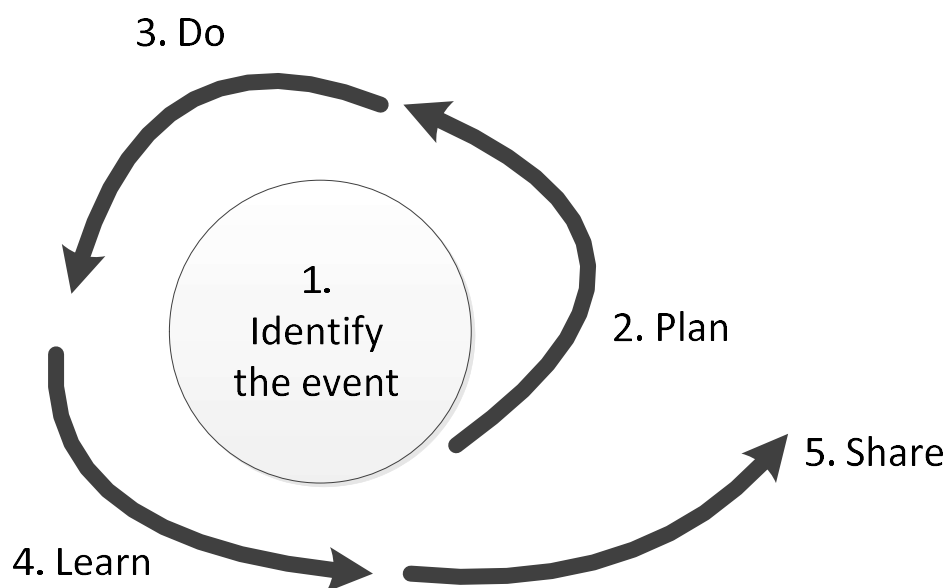
Is there scheduled time for students to carry out planning in advance and reflection afterwards?

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, video recording or audio or in a written report.

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

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

## **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 e.g. 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**

Pre-paid products and services such as The Careers and Employability Fund with a value of £5m. 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

### **D. Volunteer led activities offering employability opportunities**

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