

This leaflet has been compiled by the Runnymede Business Partnership Work Experience Group and is intended mainly as a guide for employers. The Schools Section combines current best practice procedures of local schools.

What Is Work Experience?

It is an opportunity for young people in full-time education to gain an insight into the world of work, its disciplines and challenges. Placements typically last one or two weeks.

What Is To Be Gained From Work Experience?

There is much to be gained by both the students and the employer from a well planned programme of work experience.

It can help students:

- To gain insight into varied areas of business
- Understand how businesses function
- Gain self-confidence
- Develop skills and knowledge needed for adult life
- Appreciate the expectations of employers
- Develop their career planning

- Make links between their studies and the world of work

It provides employers with an opportunity to:

- Contribute to the development of young people
- Raise the company profile in the community
- Provide a fresh approach to staff development
- Strengthen links with local schools
- Identify future employees

From The Employers' Point of View...

What Is The Benefit To My Company?

Whilst work experience provides students with an insight into business practice it also has benefits for businesses. The local market place enjoys full employment, suffers from skills' shortages and is the subject of strong competition for staff. Work experience offers short and long term recruitment opportunities for employers, and provides scope for refreshing office protocols.

What Are The Responsibilities Of The Employer?

Employers are asked to offer a planned programme and ensure that students receive appropriate instructions about the tasks they perform and company safety regulations.

The Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations came into force in August 1990. These state that, with regard to Health and Safety, young people on work experience are treated as employees.

- Students should be supervised during the placement
- Employers must provide suitable protective clothing where necessary
- Students should not operate any hazardous machinery or work in hazardous environments
- In the event of any accidents or sickness, during the placement, the employer must notify the school/college without delay
- Employers are normally asked to provide feedback on the student's performance

What Is The Position Regarding Insurance?

The Association of British

Insurers, the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association and Lloyd's of London have agreed as a matter of convention that pupils on work experience placements in conformity with the Act and teachers on placements should be treated as employees for the purposes of insurance against personal injury (i.e. they will be covered by the Employer's Liability Policy), provided that the insurer has had notification.

From The Student's Point of View...

Which Students Are Eligible To Take Part?

All students are allowed to undertake work experience during their last twelve months of compulsory schooling. Schools traditionally arrange placements for students of 15 and 16, but work experience placements are also an important element of many post 16 courses in schools and colleges. Parental consent is sought prior to arranging placements.

What Can Students Do?

The emphasis is on 'hands on' experience rather than just watching. It is helpful if the employer's programme can provide a reasonable variety of work tasks. They should also have an opportunity to find out about the background of the industry, the structure of the organisation and information on careers. Clearly any work undertaken should not infringe legislation concerning the employment of young people.

Are Students Paid?

Students should not receive payment for work experience but employers may wish to reimburse local travel and meal costs.

How to Organise Work Experience For Larger Companies

1. Maintain regular contact with a few local schools
2. Indicate the maximum number of students you can accommodate each year
3. Also indicate whether you could only accept those with specific interests or skills

(If so, you may find that only certain schools specialise in these subjects)

4. The school will supply you with details of WEX candidates and the following steps will assist the preparation for their arrival :-
 - Four months in advance the company should receive details of the WEX students, including their C.V.'s
 - The company allocates the students to the work areas, organises supervision and prepares a work programme
 - The schools will seek confirmation about health & safety issues
 - Upon arrival at the company students should ideally have a briefing session that covers the activities of the company, health & safety, office procedures and an outline of the week
 - The students then spend the rest of the week with supervisors working to a programme
 - The supervising staff should be given written guidance on how to deal with students in their care

- Ideally there should be a debriefing session between supervisor and student at the end of the week to mark the formal end of the process. (The school will normally hold a similar session with students on their return to school)

NOTE: The only step that could be added to the process is an interview and advance notice for the students of the type of work that they will undertake. However, the latter might be difficult to achieve, as sometimes last minute re-arrangements have to be made.

What Can Smaller Companies do?

Companies that are unable to offer work experience placements can still make a valuable contribution by offering to:

- Take part in mentoring schemes
- Participate in business days at schools and colleges
- Give brief talks to students about their type of business

For further information contact our local Education Business Partnership on 01784 446249.

Be Realistic About Resource Requirements

For work experience to be effective it is essential that students are adequately prepared. This places the onus on schools, students and businesses to varying degrees. From the schools' perspective adequate resources should be available to ensure that the process runs smoothly and provides support to both students and businesses. WEX is an important part of educational development and should be adequately resourced. Busy companies may be reluctant to participate if they have to commit resources to administering the scheme.

Adequately Prepare Students For Work Experience

It is important for schools to 'manage the expectation gap' by adequately preparing students for WEX and providing a realistic view of the type of activities they will undertake.

Developing Links With Local Companies

Whilst there will be a number of companies which have good links with schools, it is essential, not only to maintain these but to cultivate other businesses to provide WEX and/or monitoring. The Runnymede Business Partnership may be able to assist by providing a link between the local business community and schools. A database of interested companies will be set up and shared with local schools.

Preparing For The Work Experience

It is essential that businesses are kept fully informed of the WEX process and schools may wish to follow the programme set out below which mirrors guidance issued to companies: -

1. Visit company to ensure that you are satisfied with health and safety. It may not be necessary to visit a company every year, but a judgment needs to be formed as to how frequently to visit. (Available resources may determine this but it is an issue requiring a systematic approach)

2. You will need to clarify whether the company requires students with specific interest or skills
 3. The school will allocate students to companies and the following steps will assist the preparation for their visit: -
 - Ideally at least four months in advance the company should receive details of the WEX students, including the CV's (although this will vary to reflect the logistical requirements for WEX taking place in the winter or in the summer term)
 - The company allocates the students to the work areas, organises supervision and prepares a work programme (students may wish to make direct contact to formally introduce themselves prior to commencing the WEX week)
 - Upon arrival at the company students should ideally have a briefing session that covers the activities of the company, health & safety, office procedures and an outline of the week
- The students then spend the rest of the week with supervisors working to a programme
 - The supervising staff should be given written guidance on how to deal with students in their care
 - Ideally there should be a debriefing session between supervisor and student at the end of the week. (The school will normally hold a similar session with students on their return to school)
- NOTE:** The only step that could be added to the process is an interview and advance notice for the students of the type of work that they will undertake. However, the latter might be difficult to achieve, as sometimes last minute re-arrangements have to be made.

Additionally some students may wish to make direct contact with companies, and schools will need to ensure the appropriate protocols are in place to reflect the guidance in this Note

Employers:

To register for the scheme or to receive further information please contact the Runnymede Business Partnership at:

P.O. Box 526
Addlestone
KT15 2BR

Email:

joanna.swatridge@runnymede.gov.uk

Telephone:

01932 425272

To participate in local mentoring schemes plus business events contact the:

Spelthorne & Runnymede
Education Business Partnership

Tel: 01784 446 249

Fax: 01748 446 333

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