BIG CREATIVE EDUCATION
APPRENTICESHIPS
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ACADEMY

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

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CAREERS EDUCATION
INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

Updated September 2026
Approved by the Principal

This policy refers to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- Provider Access Policy
- Work Experience Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Big Creative Academy shares the Department for Education ambition for careers education, information and guidance and its importance for young people. A high quality, progressive careers programme will support all students to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to fulfil their potential.

1.2 In order to achieve this, Big Creative Academy intends to implement Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, the Gatsby benchmarks and duties regarding career guidance and skills development, and recognises the importance of employer engagement.

1.3 Big Creative Academy recognises that the careers programme for learners forms a condition of grant funding.

2. Big Creative Academy Mission

2.1 Big Creative Academy's mission is Develop Talent, Transform Lives, Create Careers. Careers provision, therefore, is central to the Academy's mission and has a vision to bring industry into the classroom.

2.2 We are committed to implementing a careers programme that reflects the Academy culture of collaboration and wishes learners to leave with the skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes to start their careers.

2.3 This policy addresses the strategic objectives for Big Creative Academy related to careers provision.

3. Statutory Requirements and Expectations

3.1 Colleges have a legal requirement to provide all college learners with guidance materials and a wide range of up-to-date reference materials relating to careers education and career opportunities, in accordance with the Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act (2022).

3.2 The Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act (2022) requires schools to provide a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

3.3 Colleges have a public sector duty to promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations across all people, eliminate harassment and discriminatory practices and support children with protected characteristics (2010 Equality Act). The Academy's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy promotes this duty.

3.4 The statutory career guidance duty requires schools to ensure that all students are provided with independent careers guidance which is presented in an impartial manner, provides information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and other vocational pathways and is guidance that the person giving it considers will promote the best interests of the students to whom it is given. The statutory guidance is

Careers guidance and access for education and training providers (DfE, 2026)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools

3.5 All 16- to 18-year-olds (and 19- to 25-year-olds with a current EHC Plan) in college must have access to independent careers guidance (as set out in their funding agreement).

3.6 All young people in England are required to continue in education or training between the ages of 16 and 18. They can do this in three ways: 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.

3.7 All maintained schools and academies are required to provide opportunities for a range of education and training providers to have access to learners in accordance with Provider Access Legislation (see the Academy's Provider Access Policy).

3.8 ESFA funded education for 16 to 19-year-olds should be delivered as a study programme which combines qualifications and other activities, tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals. Every school and college is expected to publish information about their careers programme, including the name of their Careers Leader.

Big Creative Academy's Careers Leader is:

Victoria Spence, Director of Careers, Research and Partnerships
victoria.spence@bigcreative.education

3.9 Colleges are expected to be accountable to Ofsted for their performance. In full inspections, inspectors are required to make judgements about careers. Inspectors are

legally required to comment on the careers guidance provided to learners at colleges. The Further education and skills inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information (2026) provides clear evidence of what inspectors expect. Included in the Quality of Education judgement on impact, for example, they are looking for evidence that "learners are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. Where relevant, they gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, aspirations and the intention of their course of study". The Personal Development judgement has much that is implicitly related to personal career development and an explicit statement that inspectors will evaluate the extent to which "at each stage of education, the provider prepares learners for future success in their next steps". Similarly, the Leadership and Management judgement and local skills sub-judgement has much that is implicitly related to careers including the statement that inspectors will evaluate the extent to which "leaders engage effectively with learners and others in their community, including – where relevant – parents, carers, employers and local services".

3.10 The DfE's guidance to schools and colleges states that all schools and colleges must meet the Gatsby Foundation's Benchmarks of "Good Career Guidance" (see Appendix A).

https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/1073_thegatsbybenchmarktoolkit_colleges_online3.pdf

3.11 The DfE guidance strongly recommends that all schools should aim to achieve accreditation under the Quality in Careers Standard. Big Creative Academy achieved this kitemark in May 2023 and works to maintain this standard.

3.12 The Academy also recognises its duty to secure access to independent, transparent careers advice for its learners, and to ensure that learners are supplied with guidance materials relating to careers education and progression opportunities.

4. Learner Entitlement

4.1 Every student is entitled to high quality career education and guidance as part of their overall education which is embedded throughout learners' study programme. All staff are involved in the delivery of careers education.

4.2 Reflecting the Academy's culture, we want to provide bespoke, individualised careers advice and guidance for all students. Our intent is:

- To ensure students understand the creative sector and career pathways, and the skills they have
- To support students to have a positive attitude and work ethic to progress within the creative sector
- To provide motivation and experience for students through industry collaboration

4.3 Learning outcomes for careers are embedded and sequenced from Level 2, through Year 12 and Year 13 based on the Career Development Institute recommendations (2021):

https://www.thecdi.net/New-Career-Development-Framework

4.4 Big Creative Academy fully supports the statutory requirement for students to have direct access to other providers of further education training, technical training and apprenticeships. We will comply with the legal requirement to put on at least two encounters with providers of approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships. Please refer to the Provider

Access Policy for full details.

4.5 The post-16 work experience entitlement for students is intended to provide opportunities for vocational training, job sampling or recruitment. The experience will reflect the make-up of the creative sector and the working practices of creative organisations, to include the role of freelancing and working for SMEs. The placement will be sourced for those progressing into work or apprenticeships.

4.6 Work experience placements are compliant with all safeguarding requirements (please see the Academy's Work Experience Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

4.7 The Academy's Career Programme details implementation of careers education, year by year. There are is also specific mentoring for:

- Learners with educational health care plans as per section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014
- Learners known to the youth offending team
- Learners identified as being at risk

4.8 Learners are entitled to receive impartial careers guidance and have access to information and advice about all pathways. Big Creative Academy is committed to receive careers guidance delivered by a Level 6 or above qualified career development professional, who upholds the professional standards of the Career Development Institute.

4.9 Parents and carers are recognised as co-partners in the career development of their young person and will be supported in developing the confidence and capability to support their child's planning and decision-making.

4.10 Big Creative Academy encourages feedback from all stakeholders (learners, parents, employers, community partners) on the Career Programme to ensure continuous improvement.

4.11 Funding for careers provision will be allocated in the Academy budget to achieve overall aims, and the Careers Leader will also explore sources of external funding.

5. Teaching, learning and assessment

5.1 Big Creative Academy recognises the importance of basing our approach to teaching, learning and assessment on evidence of what works in career education and guidance.

5.2 We emphasise the importance of creating rich learning environments and designing compelling learning experiences for students. This includes dialogic teaching, enquiry-based learning, first-hand experiences and reflective learning are an important part of this. Assessment as and for learning is also important.

6. Student Welfare

6.1 Big Creative Academy provides pastoral support to students and we make great efforts to treat our students with care and respect according to their needs and without discrimination of any kind. Our students face pressures related to careers provision in areas of:

- Adaptation to a changed work and study environment

- Coping with workload/ exams/ work: life balance
- Financial advice and difficulties
- Personal and family circumstances

6.2 The Student Service team provides welfare support for individuals which can be accessed in a variety of ways including self-referral, staff referral, and drop-ins. Student support and welfare is promoted to all students at all stages of their engagement with the Academy.

6.3 Identification of support is the responsibility of all staff. Regular meetings between academic and support staff occur to review all learners at risk, decide on interventions and review impact and progress.

7. Staff Development

7.1 Big Creative Academy recruits teaching staff who are dual practitioners and currently working in the creative arts, providing credibility and up to date knowledge of the sector.

7.2 All staff are expected to contribute to the career learning and development of students in their different roles. To meet the training needs that arise from this, we will provide:

- training on providing impartial and effective careers information, advice and guidance
- refresher training on the Academy's careers strategy each year
- training on the UCAS process and expectations of tutors

7.3 The Careers Leader is expected to maintain up to date knowledge of careers provision, attending training sessions and conferences as required.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 The governing board are responsible for monitoring implementation of Big Creative Academy's strategy, and to ensure it has the intended impact for learners. The link governor for careers is

Sarah Gregory
sarah.gregory@bigcreative.education

8.2 The senior leadership team are responsible for implementing the Academy's careers strategy, supporting each other to fully embed careers education throughout the learners' study programme. Leaders will ensure they and the staff team follow the Career Development Institute Code of Ethics.

8.3 The Careers Leader is responsible for setting the Academy's strategy for careers, maintaining up to date knowledge of careers provision, managing the careers team and overseeing reporting to SLT and governors.

8.4 The Careers Manager is responsible for managing day to day careers provision and work experience. The Youth Development Officer is responsible for the Academy's enrichment programme and work experience placements.

8.5 Curriculum Managers and the Wellbeing Lead are responsible for embedding careers provision within the vocational and wellbeing curricula in accordance with the Academy's Careers Programme.

9. Employers, community partners and learning providers

9.1 Big Creative Academy is committed to collaborative working with employers, higher education and apprenticeship providers. The Academy has a network of creative arts businesses within Walthamstow and across London.

9.2 As part of the Big Creative Education brand, the Academy has a sister organisation Big Creative Training (BCT) which is an apprenticeship training agency. Learners therefore have on site support into apprenticeships within the creative arts. BCT also offer adult education courses within the creative arts.

9.3 The Academy has good links with the Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure the Academy is meeting local employer needs. The vocational and technical education courses and qualifications offered are labour market led, designing career and employment pathways for students with and for employers, helping students on their employability journey and the college's expectations around respect for equality, diversity and inclusion and access to decent work.

9.4 To enable community work and progression the Academy has formal partnerships with local charities and learning providers, and progression agreements with higher education partners.

10. Policy Review

10.1 This policy is reviewed by Big Creative Academy's SLT and link governor for careers on an annual basis.

Appendix A: The Gatsby Benchmarks

Benchmark 1: A stable careers programme

- Every college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by learners, parents, teachers, employers and other agencies
- Every college should have a stable, structured careers programme that has the explicit backing of the senior management team, and has an identified and appropriately trained person responsible for it.
- The careers programme should be published on the college's website in a way that enables learners, parents, college staff and employers to access and understand it.
- The programme should be regularly evaluated with feedback from learners, parents, college staff and employers as part of the evaluation process

Benchmark 2: Learning from career and labour market information

- Every learner, and their parents (where appropriate), should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
- During their study programme all learners should access and use information about career paths and the labour market to inform their own decisions on study options.
- Parents should be encouraged to access and use information about labour markets and future study options to inform their support to the learners in their care

Benchmark 3: Addressing the needs of each learner

- Learners have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support needs to be tailored to each learner. A provider's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
- A provider's careers programme should actively seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations.
- Providers should keep systematic records of the individual advice given to each learner, and subsequent agreed decisions.
- The records of advice given should be integrated with those given at the previous stages of the learner's education (including their secondary school) where these are made available. Records should begin to be kept from the first point of contact or from the point of transition.
- All learners should have access to these records to support their career development. Colleges should collect and maintain accurate data for each learner on their education, training or employment destinations.

Benchmark 4: Linking curriculum learning to careers

- All subject staff should link curriculum learning with careers, even on courses that are not specifically occupation-led. Study programmes should also reflect the importance of maths and English as a key expectation from employers.
- Throughout their programme of study (and by the end of their course) every learner should have had the opportunity to experience how their subjects help people gain entry to (and be more effective workers within) a wide range of occupations.

Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees

- Every learner should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes, and should include learners' own part time employment where it exists.
- Every year, alongside their study programme, learners should participate in at least two meaningful encounters* with an employer. At least one encounter should be delivered through their curriculum area.

- Colleges should record and take account of learners' own part-time employment and the influence this has had on their development.

Benchmark 6: Every learner should have first-hand experiences of work places

- Through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks. Learners should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.

Benchmark 7: Encounters with further and higher education

- All learners should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
- By the end of their programme of study, every learner should have had a meaningful encounter* with a range of providers of learning and training that may form the next stage of their career. This should include, as appropriate, further education colleges, higher education and apprenticeship and training providers. This should include the opportunity to meet both staff and learners.

Benchmark 8: Personal guidance

- Every learner should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of college staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level**. These should be available for all learners whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all learners but should be timed to meet individual needs.
- Every learner should have at least one such interview by the end of their study programme.

*A 'meaningful encounter' is one in which the learner has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace

** An appropriate level for careers advice is a Level 6 qualified Careers Advisor