



BRIEFING

Advice to small and medium size businesses on how and why to engage with schools

Our mission is for business to play its part so that every young person, particularly those facing social disadvantage, achieves in education, leading to a successful working life, thriving in business.

Why should a business engage with schools?

The social case - 4 million children live in poverty in the UK. Children that grow up in poverty are less likely to succeed, at school and then at work. The UK has one of the lowest rates of social mobility in the developed world. This much change.

The business case - The CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2017, highlighted that businesses are concerned about finding enough people with the right skills, with skills gaps seen by nearly two-thirds as a threat to the UK's competitiveness. Business needs to support schools to ensure young people have the skills they need to be successful in the future of work.

After involvement in a school-business partnership, 82% of schools believe that staff and students are better equipped for the future, 72% of businesses report increased staff engagement, opportunities for skills development and improved internal networks while 80% of pupils report their confidence or aspirations were boosted.

The business benefits of engaging with schools are clear and well evidenced:

- Engagement and personal development of current workforce
- Creating a pipeline for future talent
- Developing innovation and thinking differently
- Raising profile in the community
- Attracting new business

I'm convinced – what do I do next?

The hardest part is finding the right school to work with. Before looking for a partnership, figure out what you want to achieve. Are you looking for a rewarding volunteering opportunity for your staff? Do you want to attract young people to work in your business? Clarity on this will help you have a better quality conversation with the school.





- Tap into your existing networks – and make sure you are getting involved where you are really needed.
 - Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses* UK encourages its participants and alumni to make community connections.
 - Contact Business in the Community – we may have a programme running in your area.
 - Contact the Careers and Enterprise Company - <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>
- From September, every school will have a Careers leader – a member of staff in the school who will oversee the schools careers programme, including working with business to provide careers role models. They will be the first point of contact if you do not find a partnership through BITC or CEC.

What are the different options for activities I could undertake with a school?

BITC's Education framework is based on research, and has a number of activities under each of the four pillars; Leadership, Curriculum, Enterprise and Employability, and Wider Issues.

An example of an SME collaborating with a school:

Keeping young people safe online

Secon Cybersecurity, a Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses* UK graduate, has been supported by the John Laing Charitable Trust to work with Paddington Academy for two years. Robert has been a great role model, including speaking at the BITC Education Symposium in 2017, and his story has inspired other Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses* UK alumni to volunteer in schools across England.

School priorities include exposing students to digital opportunities, working with teachers to enhance the curriculum and providing careers information, advice and guidance support with a focus on Apprenticeships. Activities are developed and undertaken to meet the school's needs. Business priorities include staff engagement, personal mission and values, and promoting the cybersecurity industry as a career pathway.

Secon Cyber Security and their partner Paddington Academy worked together to educate 540 young people about protecting themselves online and career opportunities in the technological sector. Students from years 7, 8 and 9 took part in a series of eSafety seminars, the sessions covered privacy and social media as well as the laws concerning cyberbullying and sexting.

'Since partnering with Business in the Community, we have participated in many initiatives from an e-safety seminar





discussing the threats posed to students online and social media and how they can be avoided, to our CEO Robert Gupta facilitating mock interviews with students to coach them in life skills for career and interview situations. We've attended the career fairs at Paddington Academy and found the students engaged and extremely interested in the area of cybersecurity and the challenges posed in the connected digital world. Our staff very much enjoy meeting the students and encouraging the next generation'

Robert Gupta, Secon Cybersecurity CEO

We are developing new ways of working with SMEs within Business Class, kindly supported by the John Laing Charitable Trust. Leathwaite, a recruitment company, have recently got involved:

"Leathwaite jumped at the opportunity to become part of Business Class. As a business that's based in central London we were seeking to become involved within meaningful projects that would impact those who live and work around us. Being given the opportunity to partner with St Marylebone's School in Westminster was the perfect match. Our staff have embraced the opportunity so enthusiastically and can't wait for the new academic year to start so that they can begin helping the students. In terms of being able to find a unique and meaningful initiative that would engage and motivate our staff, as well as being a clear differentiator and USP when

speaking to clients, our partnership with BTIC / St Marylebone's School cannot be matched."

The key characteristics of successful business/school partnerships:

- Clarity of purpose and a shared understanding of the outcomes sought by both the school and the business
- Senior leadership buy in from the school and the business
- Long-term commitment from both sides, with the best results being gained in partnerships that have had time to develop
- Regular communication
- Physical proximity
- A one to one relationship between a school and a business
- Backed up by local clusters that allow schools and businesses to share knowledge, experience and support
- Flexibility in the partnership to match need and develop a genuine partnership
- Business Class partnerships often start focussed on employability skills and career interventions, and evolve over time to support school leadership and curriculum.

For further information visit:
www.bitc.org.uk/education

