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Work Experience Policy

Wenlock School



**THE
WENLOCK
SCHOOL**

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The Wenlock School: Work Experience Policy

Ownership: The Wenlock School

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Purpose and Statutory Context

This policy sets out The Wenlock School's approach to planning, delivering and safeguarding work experience for students aged 11–19 with autism and ADHD, in line with government guidance taking effect from September 2026.

From September 2026, all schools are expected to reform their work experience offer so that every student completes a minimum of two weeks' worth of work experience by the end of Year 11 – at least one week across Key Stage 3 (Years 7–9) and a further week across Key Stage 4. This is known as the Work Experience Guarantee.

At The Wenlock School, this is delivered through a Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) lens: multi-year, progressive and individualised, using flexible formats – on-site enterprise activity, employer visits into school, taster days, supported placements and external placements – so that every student, regardless of the complexity of their needs, has access to meaningful workplace learning. This policy should be read alongside the school's Careers Education and Guidance Policy, Provider Access Policy, Preparation for Adulthood Framework, Safeguarding Policy, Health & Safety Policy, and Educational Visits Policy.

Aims

The school's aims for work experience are:

- Ensure every student accesses a minimum of two weeks' worth of work experience across their secondary education, in line with the DfE Work Experience Guarantee.
- Deliver work experience that is meaningful, progressive and individualised, using the CEC equalex framework as the underpinning quality standard (see Appendix A).
- Ensure all workplace experiences are safe, appropriately risk-assessed and safeguarded, with proportionate adjustments for students' additional needs.
- Build sustainable, well-supported relationships with employers who are confident and equipped to host autistic and ADHD students.
- Evidence impact against Gatsby Benchmark 6 and the equalex learning outcomes for every student.

Scope and Entitlement

This policy applies to all students in Years 7–14, including those on 6th form study programmes and supported internship pathways. Entitlement is differentiated by key stage:

- Years 7–9: at least one week's worth of work experience activity across Key Stage 3 (equalex core theme: Introduce & Inspire).
- Years 10–11: at least one further week's worth of activity, completed by the end of Year 11 (equalex core theme: Investigate & Explore).
- Years 12–14 (PfA / Post-16): extended and, where appropriate, supported or paid placements aligned to EHCP outcomes and destination pathway (equalex core theme: Apply & Demonstrate).

"A week's worth" may be delivered flexibly – as a single block, a series of half-days, a rolling programme of shorter sessions, or a blend of on-site and off-site activity – provided the cumulative time and quality of experience meets the equalex and Gatsby Benchmark 6 definition of

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“meaningful”. This flexibility is essential for students who are not yet ready for a full week away from familiar routines and support.

The equalex Quality Framework

Wenlock uses the Careers & Enterprise Company’s (CEC) equalex framework as the quality standard underpinning all work experience planning, delivery and evidencing. equalex is a national framework of progressive learning outcomes, structured around three tiers – Introduce & Inspire, Investigate & Explore, and Apply & Demonstrate – that ensure work experience is meaningful, multiple and equitable for every learner, including those with SEND.

The Careers Lead maps all work experience activity against the equalex learning outcomes and objectives (see Appendix A) to identify gaps in provision, plan progression across key stages, and evidence impact at learner level using Evidence for Learning (EfL). Activities are only badged as “equalex-aligned” where they meet the Gatsby Benchmark 6 definition of meaningful: a clear purpose, the chance to meet a range of people, the performance of workplace-relevant tasks, feedback from the employer, and time for preparation and reflection.

Roles and Responsibilities

Careers Lead / Assistant Headteacher for Personal Development & Careers:

- Owns this policy, the whole-school work experience strategy, and the equalex mapping.
- Sources, vets and coordinates employer partnerships and placements.
- Ensures risk assessments, DBS checks and consent are in place before any placement proceeds.
- Reports annually to governors on Work Experience Guarantee compliance and Gatsby Benchmark 6 evidence.

Form Tutors and Key Workers:

- Support students to prepare for, and reflect on, workplace experiences as part of the pastoral and PfA curriculum.
- Flag additional support, communication or medical needs relevant to a specific placement.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Confirms safer recruitment and DBS requirements are met for any adult supervising students off-site.

Employers and Placement Hosts:

- Provide a safe, supervised, meaningful experience in line with the Employer Charter (Appendix B) and equalex principles.
- Complete or contribute to the placement risk assessment and confirm suitable adult-to-student supervision ratios.

Parents and Carers:

- Provide consent and relevant medical/support information, and support students in preparing for placements.

Support Offered to Employers

Recognising that many employers have limited experience of hosting autistic or ADHD students, the school provides structured support to make placements accessible and low-risk for host organisations:

- A named point of contact (Careers Lead) for every placement, available throughout the placement window.
- A pre-placement briefing covering autism/ADHD awareness, communication strategies, sensory considerations and de-escalation approaches.

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- A Student Passport for each placement, summarising strengths, communication preferences, sensory needs and reasonable adjustments.
- A clear task and outcomes brief co-produced with the employer, mapped to the relevant equalex learning outcomes.
- Template documentation: risk assessment, consent form, insurance confirmation checklist and feedback/evaluation form.
- An offer of an initial site visit before any student is placed.
- Ongoing contact during the placement, including a mid-placement check-in for longer or off-site blocks, and rapid escalation contact for any concerns.
- Post-placement feedback and thanks, including an invitation to the Equalex Employer Charter and future Wenlock employer engagement events.

Site Visits

Before any new employer hosts a Wenlock student, and periodically thereafter for repeat placements, a site visit is carried out by a member of the careers or pastoral team, to:

- Assess the physical environment for suitability, including sensory factors (noise, lighting, crowding) relevant to autistic students.
- Meet the named on-site supervisor and confirm their understanding of the student's needs.
- Identify welfare facilities, quiet/decompression space, and a clear process for the student to request a break.
- Agree supervision arrangements, working hours, and emergency contact procedures.
- Complete the employer premises section of the placement risk assessment.

For established employer partners with a current, satisfactory site visit on file (renewed at least every two years, or sooner if the role, site or supervisor changes), a full repeat visit is not required for every individual student; a shorter placement-specific check is completed instead. First-time placements, and any placement involving a student assessed as higher-need or requiring 1:1 support, always receive a full site visit.

Risk Assessments

A written risk assessment is completed and signed off by the Careers Lead before any student begins a work experience placement, whether on-site or with an external employer:

- Generic employer/site risk assessment – covers the workplace environment, tasks, equipment and hazards, first aid and fire procedures, and insurance; reviewed at each site visit and refreshed at least every two years.
- Individual student risk assessment – considers communication, sensory sensitivities, medical needs, mobility, and distress indicators; sets out reasonable adjustments, supervision ratio, and a clear plan if the student needs to leave the placement; written collaboratively with the student, family/carers and relevant staff.
- Sign-off and escalation – no placement proceeds without both risk assessments completed and signed by the Careers Lead. Any change in circumstances triggers an immediate review. Higher-risk activities require additional sign-off from the Assistant Headteacher and, where appropriate, the Health & Safety Lead.

DBS and Safer Recruitment Checks

- Any adult who will be alone with, or regularly supervising, a Wenlock student in a one-to-one or small-group capacity must hold an enhanced DBS check with barred list information, verified by the DSL before the placement begins.

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- Where a placement takes place in a normal working environment with several adults present and no regular unsupervised one-to-one contact, an enhanced DBS is not automatically required; the school will still seek written assurance of the employer's own safer recruitment and safeguarding practice.
- For work experience organised through a recognised provider, Careers Hub or Local Authority scheme, the school confirms the level of check already obtained rather than duplicating unnecessary checks.
- DBS certificate numbers (or written employer confirmation) are recorded on the placement file alongside the risk assessment and consent forms.
- Where any doubt exists about the safeguarding status of a placement, the DSL is consulted and the placement does not proceed until resolved.

Consent, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Written parent/carer consent, including relevant medical and support information, is obtained before every off-site placement.
- Students are supported to give informed assent to their placement wherever their level of understanding allows.
- Each placement is logged and mapped against equalex outcomes and Gatsby Benchmark 6, and evidenced on Evidence for Learning.
- Student and employer feedback is gathered after every placement and used to refine the employer directory and future site-visit priorities.
- The Careers Lead reports annually to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body on compliance with the Work Experience Guarantee, incident data, and equalex outcome coverage.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Headteacher for Personal Development & Careers, or sooner in response to changes in DfE statutory guidance, Gatsby Benchmark updates, or revisions to the CEC equalex framework.

Appendix A: The CEC equalex Framework

Adapted for staff reference from the Careers & Enterprise Company's equalex Learning Outcomes and Objectives Framework. equalex is structured around three progressive core themes; no single activity is expected to deliver every objective.

Core Theme 1: Introduce & Inspire (typically Years 7–9)

- Increased Opportunity Awareness – learners understand different workplace and employment types, can recall a range of sectors and jobs, and link the curriculum to workplace skills.
- Improved Self-Awareness – learners self-assess workplace skills, identify passions and interests, and describe their ideal working environment.
- Inspiration – learners recognise and challenge career stereotypes and identify role models and early aspirations.

Core Theme 2: Investigate & Explore (typically Years 10–11)

- Career Readiness – learners evidence essential workplace skills and complete tasks set against an employer brief.
- Exploration of Roles and Responsibilities – learners understand routes into employment and describe organisational roles from real-life examples.

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- Understanding of Growth Sectors and the Changing Economy – learners identify local growth sectors and related job types.

Core Theme 3: Apply & Demonstrate (typically Years 12–14 / Post-16)

- Applying Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace – learners evidence application of skills and behaviour in a workplace, having received employer feedback; demonstrate learning and articulate how it informs future decisions; evidence skills within recruitment processes such as mock interviews; compare workplace experiences and critically assess how they have challenged stereotypes and raised aspirations.

Source: Careers & Enterprise Company, equalex Learning Outcomes and Objectives Framework. The Careers Lead maintains the current version of the full objectives document and the local mapping grid used to track coverage for each student.

Appendix B: Employer Charter Summary

Employers hosting Wenlock students are asked to commit to the following, in the spirit of the CEC equalex Employer Charter:

- Provide a placement with a clear purpose, real workplace tasks, and the chance to meet a range of people.
- Nominate a named on-site supervisor and confirm they have received the school's autism/ADHD briefing.
- Give the student constructive feedback during and at the end of the placement.
- Complete the site risk assessment and confirm insurance cover before the placement begins.
- Contact the school's named Careers Lead immediately with any concerns during the placement.
- Complete a short evaluation form to help the school improve future placements.

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