



# The Quality in Careers Standard >>>>

**CEIAG Case Study: Birches Head Academy, Stoke on Trent**

**November 2017**

## **About the Academy**

Birches Head Academy is an 11-16 secondary school in the heart of the community of Birches Head and surrounding area within the City of Stoke on Trent. It is currently in the process of joining the Alpha Academies Trust. It does not have Sixth Form provision, but has forged excellent links with all local post-16 providers over a number of years and has a consistently low NEET figure of below 2%.

## **Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance**

Although the Careers Co-ordinator had been at the school for numerous years, she was given more responsibility when a recent restructure took place. The Senior Leadership Team structure significantly changed, and a new SLT Lead for Careers was appointed, along with a new position of Transition Lead.

The Academy signed up to work towards the Quality in Careers Standard, as a way of bringing together all the new members of the team, identifying the strengths and the gaps in the careers provision, and planning a coherent Careers programme.

The school commissions under contract the Local Authority Careers Service provision, a Matrix accredited provider, which provides a Level 7 Qualified Careers Adviser for student guidance, and a Senior Adviser as a 'critical friend' for the process of gaining the national CEIAG quality award. Both advisers felt that there was already extensive Careers provision taking place in the school, but gaining the national award would both recognise this and, importantly, improve monitoring and overall strategy.

The Careers Co-ordinator, along with the critical friend, carried out a self-evaluation process and felt confident that the school should be able to achieve the Standard.

Collating all of the evidence prior to the external assessment took approximately eighteen months. During this time, the critical friend offered support to the Careers Co-ordinator, offering advice regarding which evidence best met the national criteria.

She also met with SLT and Governors to promote careers at a higher level in school and to make them aware of the national award. A Lead Governor for Careers was appointed, who helped the Careers Co-ordinator write a new Careers Guidance Policy. Over the course of the eighteen months, existing practice was sharpened and developed with a more formal evaluation process being implemented.

The Quality in Careers Assessment Panel found that there was a much-improved approach to Careers education in school, and complimented the Careers Co-ordinator on the amount of detailed

evidence provided. They judged that the day-to-day running of the Careers Curriculum was good, as was strategic direction. They advised that the overall mapping of Careers needed to be a development point and, going forward, offered the CDI Framework as a tool for this.

### **The Quality in Careers Standard Experience**

The Careers Co-ordinator found that she was able to use working toward the award as a development tool for improvement and a vehicle for raising the profile of Careers Education within the school.

Working towards the award meant that good practice already in place was highlighted, such as educational visits and the yearly Careers Convention, and the fact that impartiality is ensured throughout all guidance offered. It also gave direction to the areas which needed some extra development, including reflection and evaluation. The school has now become more proactive in seeking evaluations from students, parents and external colleagues to be able to reflect upon provision, and take others' opinions into consideration for each event.

Gaining the national award has given students and parents the assurance that a good quality careers education is delivered at the school, which meets statutory guidance and will give them the very best CEIAG regarding their post-16 education and futures.

### **Monitoring and Review of CEIAG**

Careers Provision is monitored and regularly reviewed, to ensure that all students receive a quality-assured programme of Careers Education and Guidance.

The Service Agreement with the Local Authority Careers Service is reviewed yearly to ensure that all parties meet the needs of the school and the students. Support is offered by the LA Careers Team at school events and the Careers Co-ordinator and LA Careers Advisers work together to keep guidance relevant, and take into account recent developments in careers and the local offers for post-16 choices.

The school has also signed up to be a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) school and has started to work with the Staffordshire LEP Co-ordinator. Through this the school has forged even closer links to Emma Bridgewater (<https://www.emmabridgewater.co.uk/>) whose Head of HR has agreed to be the school's Enterprise and Employment Mentor.

Birches Head Academy is committed to maintain the national award, and work towards an even better Careers Education and Guidance package for its students through continuous quality improvement.

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