



QUALITY IN CAREERS WEBSITE ©

CEIAG Case Study: Soham Village College, Soham, Cambridgeshire

The School

Soham Village College is an extremely popular, academically successful, 11-16 school in Soham, East Cambridgeshire. It forms part of the Staploe Education Trust, along with three local primary schools, and has approximately 1400 students on role.

The college is *“a delightful place to learn and to work”*. It has skilled, committed teams of teachers and associate staff who help create a supportive working atmosphere. Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the college, and students have highly positive attitudes to learning. Students clearly enjoy their learning and good teaching motivates students well. As a result, behaviour is good in classrooms and during social time.

The college prides itself on the wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities which it offers to students. It strives for excellence in and out of the classroom and the staff are delighted by the successes of their students of all abilities and interests.

GCSE results have been consistently strong with excellent progress being made across English, maths, science and the wider curriculum. Ofsted highlighted the school’s *“academic excellence”* in its most recent report.

The vision is to be *“a truly outstanding Village College at the heart of its community”*:

- Aiming to provide an education in which outcomes for students are outstanding
- Committed to the provision of a curriculum which gives every student the opportunity to achieve highly and to enjoy learning
- Encouraging students to develop the skills they will need for working life
- Committed to the well-being of all of their students and help them adopt a lifestyle which is safe, healthy and constructive within the local community
- Seeking to enable their students to reflect on their own experiences and those of others to develop a clear set of personal values in which respect for self, others and the environment is central

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

The CEIAG team consists of Mary Wilcox (Assistant Headteacher, overall responsibility for CEIAG and Transitions), Nick Oakhill (Careers Manager), and Julie Anderson (Careers Adviser). The team is supported in various ways by Alvina Morey (Enterprise Coordinator), Rebecca Forster (Enterprise Adviser), Governors, Teaching Staff and Support Staff.

The college's careers policy, strategy and programme align with the Gatsby Benchmarks as directed through the government's careers strategy; by raising students' aspirations, broadening their horizons, and empowering them to make informed realistic decisions at all key transition points in learning and work.

This enables the college to maintain their excellent record of ensuring students progress onto their chosen pathway of further education or employment with training.

The college has a careers programme in place that aims to prepare students for life after GCSEs and beyond. From college and course choices, to investigating career pathways, and organising employer engagement experiences to develop students' employability skills - communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, planning, organisation - the programme provides all students with impartial advice and guidance aligned to their specific needs.

The programme is delivered by the CEIAG team with support from a range of stakeholders, to provide students with guidance on their options - tutors, external CEIAG providers, local employers, local colleges and universities, parents and the local authority. CEIAG is included within the PSHE program for Years 7-11 as well as careers being embedded within the curriculum:

- **In Years 7 and 8** the subject of careers and the future is introduced, helping students think about what jobs are out there and investigate employability skills such as communication and teamwork
- **Year 9** focuses deeper on employability skills through the World of Work project where students take part in activities such as marketing, teamwork and problem solving, and how they can link their favourite subjects to certain jobs. Students are introduced to Further and Higher Education options
- **Year 10** sees students introduced to their Post 16 college options and the college application process. All students attend the Ely Careers Fair. Targeted students take part in Work Experience in the local area. Careers guidance meetings with their Level 6 qualified advisor begin in the Spring term
- **Year 11** students are supported through their college applications before Christmas. They take part in a College Application Day, where they have a Personal Statement workshop and are given time to work on their applications. They also prepare for and take part in a mock interview. Students most at risk of becoming NEET are identified and provided with extra, sustained support and guidance with every aspect of applying to college, including careers guidance meetings. These meetings for all students also continue through the Autumn term.

Students are entitled to independent Careers Advice and Guidance that is impartial and confidential. It is integrated into their experience of the whole curriculum, based on a partnership with students and their parents or carers. The Programme promotes equality of opportunity and inclusion.

The college's careers programme offers students a wide range of activities, events and opportunities:

- Careers guidance interviews with the school Careers Adviser who is a Registered Professional with the Careers Development Institute. All students can arrange appointments directly with the adviser, or referrals can be made by staff or from parental request
- Access for students to research books, prospectuses, websites, and additional careers information in the Careers Library
- External visitors, including alumni, to provide assemblies on different careers, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities to all year groups
- Opportunities to learn about careers and the world of work
- Visits from local colleges and apprenticeship providers
- Developing careers planning and employability skills
- Support with Option choices in Year 9 through assemblies, meeting with careers team if required, and World of Work day
- Promotion of virtual work experience opportunities through "Springpod" and "Speakers for Schools", and encouragement to students to find their own work experience during school holidays
- Support in completing a simple job application form and the provision of interview guidance, leading to Year 11 students taking part in a Mock Interview
- Students in Years 7, 9 and 10 are invited to complete a Skills Questionnaire to help gauge the level of knowledge and understanding to help continually shape and evolve the careers programme
- Year 11 students and parents are invited to complete a Post 16 application process survey to understand the level and quality of support provided
- Year 11 students and their parents are invited to the Post 16 Careers Information Evening that takes place every October, also attended by colleges and apprenticeship providers
- Students have the opportunity to find out about FE through a Year 9 event, as well as Year 10 and Year 11 engagement with Caius College and St Johns College, Cambridge
- Compass+ is used continually to record all students' careers and work-related activity.

Vulnerable and SEND students are provided with bespoke careers guidance, advice and support, dependent on their specific needs. The Careers Team works very closely with the college's SENCO, and staff from the ISLE and HUB (specialist support areas of the college) to ensure all needs are met.

CEIAG is evaluated and reviewed by the Careers Manager, with regular input from students, parents, staff, employers, and governors. This takes place through the completion of questionnaires and also written and oral feedback after specific events and activities.

Recommendations are acted upon to provide continual improvement.

Quality Assurance – The Quality in Careers Standard

In April 2022, Soham Village College achieved the national **Quality in Careers Standard** assessed by the awarding body, Cambridgeshire County Council – ‘Investing in Quality’.

The college was commended by the external assessor for the CEIAG programme:

‘Overall, the CEIAG provision is good at Soham Village College. The staff at the school are informed and ‘buy in’ to what the careers programme is there to achieve. The teaching staff I spoke to were able to express very clearly the impact of being part of the ARC project had had in their curriculum areas.

It was clear that careers work isn’t seen as just the preserve of Nick (Careers Manager) and Julie (Careers Adviser) but that it’s a whole school issue, and well supported by the head teacher and governor, which adds to the effectiveness of the careers programme’

The Senior Leadership Team and the careers governor value the work of the Careers Team and can see a clear link between the programme content and how prepared students are when they come to leave Soham Village College. They are very receptive to new ideas and opportunities proposed by the Careers team, which demonstrates how well embedded careers is within the culture of the school.

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