



Quality in Careers >>>>

QUALITY IN CAREERS WEBSITE ©

CEIAG Case Study:

West Hill School, Stalybridge, Tameside

The School

West Hill School is an average-sized, single-sex (male) 11-16 Comprehensive School (840) serving an urban community in the town of Stalybridge on the eastern edge of Greater Manchester. The school is a single academy trust.

The school first opened its doors in 1927, with total of 21 students on roll in a former mill-owners home. The main building is in the former residence with a blend of buildings on the site around it. West Hill School is proud of its history but always looking forwards. The school keeps some traditions of the past whilst constantly looking for ways to improve. The school motto of 'Aim High' reflects the culture of high aspirations for individual pupils.

West Hill is a school with a core set of values of: *Respect, Responsibility and Readiness* which constantly influence positive actions and behaviour.

It's an inclusive school in which all of its students access challenging and engaging lessons, delivered by a passionate and committed team of specialist teachers. It promotes a positive mind-set in which young men develop into independent, lifelong learners, underpinned by a community in which students show the desire and resilience to learn and flourish.

In July 2022, the average number of students in each year group 7 – 11 was 170. The majority of students currently - 77% falling from 85% in 2016 - are White British. The proportion from ethnic minorities has risen to 23% which is below the national average of 32.1%. The number of students with English as an additional language is rising (currently it's 9%) but is still below the national average. The % of students with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan is 2%. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals at any time during the past 6 years (FSM6) has risen in recent years and is now 30%.

The school's leadership team and its trustees, value, support and recognise the importance of careers education and guidance. The school's vision includes the statement: "West Hill School aims to develop confident and ambitious young men, equipped with the skills and qualifications to thrive in a changing world". The school improvement plan includes the aim that: "Every boy

who leaves West Hill will make an informed and ambitious transition to the next stage of his learning”.

Coping with the impact of COVID-19: during the first national school lockdown, school staff contacted “Speakers for Schools” to discuss the possibility of them setting up live online talks. These were quickly established and have now become a key part of the school’s careers delivery. Form tutors made telephone contact with every student every week, registrations were held online to ensure a sense that the school community was still together. The school ensured that all students, at key transition stages in particular, continued to receive quality careers information, advice and guidance by the careers team contacting them by phone. Every student who did not have use of a computer at home was provided with a laptop and Vodafone provided SIM cards to remove the barrier of mobile data use. The Year 11 leavers were registered on the free “Eton X” programme so they could complete units to enhance their skills ready for post-16 study. An online careers week was held for Years 7-9 using Oak Academy resources. The visit scheduled to Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge University was replaced with an online Summer school.

Careers education and guidance

West Hill School is especially proud to have achieved a further successful reaccreditation (through the Awarding Body, Positive Steps) under the national **Quality in Careers Standard** in December 2021, particularly as this was during a period of transition out of the pandemic with restrictions on visitors to site still in place in Tameside.

The Standard provides the school with recognition of the high quality of its careers education, and a framework for continual monitoring, self-reflection and improvement.

The school has always invited in local colleges, employers and training providers to speak to students about possible Post 16 and Post 18 pathways. When visitors were not permitted, college talks were held virtually, ensuring 100% attendance of Year 10 students. Employer engagement is good, with local and national organisations providing up-to-date information about the labour market and opportunities within their sector. All subject areas have been involved in employer talks in the last 12 months, some have taken this further and sourced further links of their own.

The school is developing longer-term, sustainable partnerships - for example - a senior lead at Vodafone is the school’s Enterprise Advisor who has met with subject leads to review the school curriculum to identify relevant areas to work on. The school’s aim is for every subject area to have a long-term link with an employer.

West Hill School provides a comprehensive careers education and guidance programme for students in all year groups. This incorporates aspects of work-related learning, enterprise education, option choices and LMI (labour market information). All students take part in 10 hours of lessons per year which are fully mapped against the CDI framework.

The KS4 careers lessons are delivered using the “Xello” platform. The next stage will be to use this to replace the current SIM’s based systems for recording careers activities and engagement. The school worked with Positive Steps to ensure that pupils could take part in work experience programmes in Summer 2021 and 2022. 97% of pupils took part in 2022 with the majority completing a two-week placement.

The Service Level Agreement with the external careers guidance provider is annually reviewed and the termly Operational Plan with this external partner provides further scope for impact measurement and evaluation.

Measuring the impact

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the careers programme takes place regularly and the very low number of NEETs and positive transitions for students to outstanding local post-16 provision illustrate the positive impact the programme is making.

Views are sought from all students, parents and linked employer regularly. The School Council is active and has benefitted from meeting the local MP who described his own career journey. Student Voice surveys inform the careers team about which job families are better understood and drive changes to the programme.

The school regularly uses the Compass Plus self-assessment tool and completes regular reviews with the Enterprise Coordinator from Greater Manchester Combined Authority. This ensures that the views of those in school are challenged by a critical friend with a detailed awareness of the standards required.

Careers Quality

The school previously held the Inspiring IAG quality award at the Gold level and has been guided through the transition to the national **Quality in Careers Standard** by the Positive Steps team. Annual reviews lead to action plans. This ensures the school responds to changes in requirements and is always well-prepared for the full reaccreditation review every 3 years by the Awarding Body.

The school's Assistant Head (Self Evaluation and Curriculum) - a member of the Senior Leadership Team - concludes:

"Achieving reaccreditation under the national Standard in December 2021 was something we are all truly proud of. It recognises our true commitment to ensuring quality for all of our students during the pandemic and beyond".

CONTACT DETAILS:

Suzanne Appleby, Careers Leader, West Hill School

careers@westhillschool.co.uk

Tel: 0161 338 2193

October 2022

© Quality in Careers 2022