

East Sussex County Council

Primary Careers Hub pilot

Evaluation Report

July 2020



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Cover photos: 'Leaves' on an 'aspirations tree' at Shinewater Primary School
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Outline

The Primary Careers Hub is a year-long pilot, funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company and East Sussex County Council, to design, test and evaluate a range of approaches to bring about system change in careers related learning in primary schools. A group of 23 primary schools participated, with experienced members of staff acting as Careers Champions, to lead the delivery across the pilot schools. The Primary Careers Hub is a scale-up of the existing East Sussex Careers Hub, working predominantly with secondary schools and colleges. The project has been managed and coordinated by a Primary Careers Hub Lead and a Project Assistant.

Aims

The East Sussex Primary Careers Hub aimed to:

- Raise aspirations for primary age pupils and create 'whole system change' in the county, creating a careers strategy which spans the full age range from 5-19 (and 24 for SEND) by aligning with the secondary Careers Hub.
- Develop best practice in embedding careers related learning and employability skills in the primary curriculum.
- Develop best practice in working with employers to broaden horizons and raise aspirations
- Create inspirational STEM activities.
- Test approaches to parental engagement to support understanding of future career options and the employability skills required.

Outcomes

The Hub worked to a set of clear intended outcomes. These were to:

- Improve teacher confidence in testing approaches to embedding careers related learning and employability skills in the curriculum, including raising aspirations and challenging gender stereotypes.
- Facilitate schools in adopting the Skills Builder Framework.
- Develop high quality employer encounters providing opportunities for large numbers of pupils to learn about the world of work and have a broader view of possible future careers.
- Create a series of short films linking skills and the curriculum to the real world of work to create better understanding of how the skills pupils learn in school can be applied to the workplace.
- Test and evaluate a wide range of approaches to involve parents in supporting careers related learning so that they feel better prepared to help their pupils think broadly about future career options and the skills they will need.
- Create a set of resources, tested and evaluated for classrooms, assemblies and digital media.
- Enable year 5 and 6 pupils to develop a range of employability skills through taking part in a STEM competition.

Context

A growing amount of research ([What Works? Careers related learning in Primary 2018](#)) has indicated that careers related learning should be introduced to pupils as early as possible, in order to challenge traditional gender stereotypes, broaden horizons and raise aspirations. For this to be successful, schools need strong leadership to drive progress and develop long term relationships with employers, supported by age-appropriate learning materials and a significant level of support from parents.

A large proportion of businesses in East Sussex are small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Prior to the project a strong network of employers was engaged in working with predominantly, secondary schools and colleges to support workplace opportunities. In early 2019, the Careers and Enterprise Company launched the [Primary Fund](#) to address the need to develop careers related learning in primary schools. East Sussex County Council applied for a grant from the Primary Fund to scale up the existing Secondary Careers Hub to provide support to primary schools through a one year pilot.

The network of employers indicated they were keen to work with primary schools, to extend their reach, especially from a 'social value' perspective. There were many examples of existing good practice. One employer, Marshall Tufflex, was already offering visits to its Hastings-based plastics mouldings site to a local primary school, and felt the business benefitted from these interactions.

Planned activities were interrupted by the Covid19 outbreak mid-way through the programme. This meant that the pilot was required to curtail a number of activities, including those organised between schools and employers, and meant rethinking how skills films linked to the curriculum, and the STEM Leaders' Competition were to be delivered virtually.



Broadening horizons through learning about the world of work

A one year pilot to raise aspirations and inspire students in learning about the world of work, embedding careers learning in to the curriculum alongside STEM activities and employer encounters.

The project will seek to:

- Work with 24 lead schools to share best practice
- Expose pupils to career-related learning from an early age
- Review the curriculum with support from the Primary Skills Builder programme
- Engage businesses to provide high-quality experiences for pupils
- Create videos to link the curriculum with the workplace and employability skills
- Develop a STEM competition promoting leadership in young people
- Support schools with engagement with parents
- Produce case studies contributing to a national toolkit for schools

For further information or to get involved in the project, contact:
primarycareershub@eastsussex.gov.uk

Primary Careers Hub

Logos: East Sussex County Council, CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY, Skills East Sussex

Establishing relationships with schools

The 23 pilot schools were spread across the county's rural and urban areas, and represented a range of socio-economic settings, levels of staffing and pupil numbers. Each school received an introductory visit in September 2019. In most cases, meetings were held with the headteacher and nominated 'Careers Champion' and provided an opportunity to 'get to know' the school and its priorities. A proforma was used to capture basic school data such as male/female balance, percentage of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant, percentage of ethnic minority pupils and number on roll.

To formalise the relationship, schools and the Local Authority who were leading the pilot, signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This provided clarity on expectations and responsibilities for both parties. Schools undertook a capacity audit, which provided baseline data of staff opinions on their ability to deliver careers related learning and the number of events that had taken place in the previous academic year.

Careers Champion Training Meetings

In order to facilitate a significant and sustainable change in practice, participating schools were asked to nominate a 'Careers Champion'. It was requested that these colleagues were of considerable experience, with an overview of the whole school curriculum, an interest in developing careers related learning and the capacity to drive this forward in schools. Schools identified a range of staff including the Headteacher, Head of School, Deputy Head, Assistant Head, Phase Leader and Class teacher. As the schools represented a wide range of contexts, Careers Champions brought a wide range of experiences to the group. Ten meetings were scheduled, and a tailored training programme was developed to enable outcomes to be achieved.

Challenging gender stereotypes

An underlying theme within the entire project was to find approaches to enable schools to challenge gender stereotypes in relation to the workplace. It is evident from workforce information that a gender imbalance still exists, despite legislation, especially in top management positions and in STEM sectors. A significant amount of evidence (Gottfredson 2001 in [What Works? Careers related learning in Primary 2018](#)) suggests that children allocate gender to jobs and careers from a very early age. Many of their experiences in society further reinforce these stereotypes, potentially placing an unconscious limitation on their aspirations.

Careers Champions were provided with information, resources and time to consider approaches to gender bias in their schools. The main vehicle for this was a full training session dedicated to these approaches, with schools given the opportunity to plan how they would relay their findings to colleagues, assess staff approaches to challenging gender stereotypes and to design and make their own resources.

Skills Builder Framework

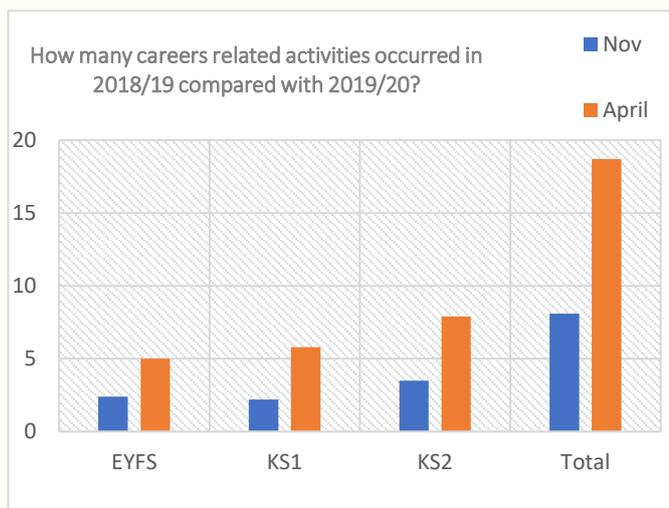
Schools taking part in the pilot had the opportunity to work with the [Skills Builder Framework](#). The Framework provides a comprehensive library of activities to support development of essential employability skills: listening, presenting, creativity, problem solving, aiming high, staying positive, leadership and teamwork. The first Careers Champions meeting in October provided an opportunity for a representative from Skills Builder to deliver a training session on how to maximise the potential of the Framework. Twenty schools participated in two twilight training sessions and ten schools at the end of the project, opted to continue for a second year.

Curriculum change

One of the key milestones in the pilot was to effect and facilitate development of the curriculum within the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework that was introduced in September 2019, and to embed stronger careers related learning within the curriculum. Most schools delivered a broad and balanced curriculum supported by rich and diverse opportunities for trips, visitors and events both within and outside of school. The intention here was to identify where these enrichment and extra-curricular activities could be tweaked to link them more specifically to careers related learning, employability and skills. It was important that careers related learning was fully integrated into the curriculum and not seen as a 'bolt on'. To this end, schools were invited to discuss and share the range of events taking place in their schools and how these might be linked to careers related learning. Schools were also provided with a template to enable them to identify the strength of the link to careers related learning and 'rag rate' it red-amber-green.

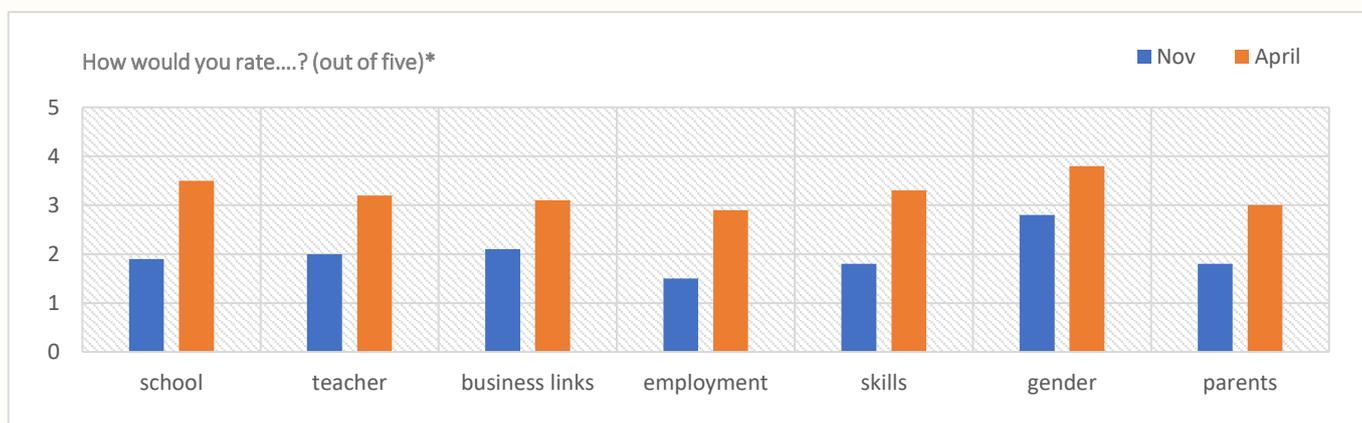
Careers Champions capacity audit

To assess the impact of the pilot on delivery of careers related learning, schools were asked to undertake a 'capacity audit' to identify how many careers related learning activities took place in the previous academic year, and to consider the school's capacity to deliver careers related learning. An initial audit was undertaken in October 2019; followed by a comparative survey in late March/early April 2020, three months earlier than planned. The responses evidence a significant increase in delivery of careers related learning activities across all key stages between November and April, and an increase in the assumed capacity of schools, staff and parents to support careers related learning in schools.



Types of careers related activities

- Careers fairs (traditional style)
- Careers cafés (informal, same level, seated)
- 'What's my line?' assemblies
- STEM Challenges linked to careers and skills
- External visitors with activities and workshops
- Classroom activities
- Visits to workplaces
- Parent workshops and information events
- Parent surveys
- Challenging gender stereotypes activities



School – How would you rate your school's delivery of careers related learning?

Teacher – How would you rate your teachers' confidence with careers related learning?

Business – How would you rate your school's links with local businesses?

Employment – How would you rate your pupils' understanding of the variety of employment opportunities in your area?

Skills – How would rate your pupils' understanding of skills necessary to achieve their work or career aspirations?

Gender – How would you rate your school's capacity to address gender stereotypes in the world of work?

Parents – How would you rate parental engagement with careers related learning at your school?

Working with employers

There were four main approaches to developing links with employers, each with different levels of sustainability beyond the life of the pilot.

1. Existing networks working with the secondary Careers Hub as 'Industry Champions' and 'Cornerstone Employers'
2. County Council contractors who are required to provide 'social value', including employment and skills related activities
3. Schools approaching employers directly through parents and the wider community
4. Primary Careers Hub contacts and development of new leads through networks such as Chambers of Commerce

The most successful and sustainable method was schools approaching parents directly through social media, contact apps, parents' groups, parent letters and parent events such as consultation evenings or seasonal events. It is a reasonable assumption that parents have a naturally vested interest in supporting their children at school, particularly in primary. Even in areas of low employment and high numbers of households with long term unemployment, schools were able to generate links with a wide variety of working parents both within immediate families and extended families..

In total, 52 businesses across 7 different industry sectors were contacted by the Primary Careers Hub, through routes 1 to 4 above. Of these 15 became actively engaged with Primary Careers Hub work, either directly with schools, an offer of visits from or to schools, or involvement with the series of short films (see below).

"Working with such enthusiastic young people today has made it such a worthwhile and enjoyable experience."

*- Rachel Groves, Community and Sustainability Manager,
Volker Fitzpatrick*



A number of factors affecting the success and sustainability of the relationship with employers. These included:

- Knowledge of the aims of the Primary Careers Hub
- Understanding the role of employers in careers related learning
- Time available to discuss plans and follow up
- Capacity of staff to follow up, especially in small businesses
- Health and safety of staff and pupils
- Commercial sensitivity
- Existing commitments to secondary schools, including work experience for example

A significant factor in the effectiveness of and the sustainability of the connections between schools and employers was the willingness and capacity of schools to take up these offers. These included:

- Time available in the week
- Relevance to the curriculum at the time of delivery
- Information about the nature of the visit or workshop
- Correct contact details
- Time available for staff to make contact to arrange the visit
- Procedures for setting up trips including risk assessments and contact with parents
- Cost of travel

Employer Guidance

To support employers' engagement with schools, a comprehensive booklet was designed to inform both employers, and schools seeking to engage employers, of important safeguarding information, advice on best practice for workshops and events and ways to engage young people. Planning had begun to deliver a webinar-based training session for employers, but this was postponed due to Covid19.



Skills films

Ten films were commissioned to support careers related learning in primary schools and to challenge gender stereotypes. The films are based on the eight essential skills identified in the Skills Builder Framework, plus English and Maths. All businesses involved were based in East Sussex and drawn from priority industry sectors of the economy: STEM and manufacturing, Construction, Health and Social Care, Creative and Digital and the Visitor Economy. The intention had been to pilot and test the films in the classroom environment, but as a result of Covid19, they were quickly adapted into a resource that could be used flexibly, both as a home learning activity and for pupils in classrooms or assemblies. [Link to the films on the [Careers East Sussex website](#)]

STEM Leaders' Competition

The [STEM Leaders' Competition](#) was intended to encourage pupils to apply a range of skills including problem solving, presenting, creativity, team and leadership. Based on an original model for groups of young people to attend and present their ideas at a conference event, the format was altered to accommodate home learning and school closures due to the Covid19 pandemic.

All East Sussex primary schools were invited to participate by sending information to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils were encouraged to submit a short film to describe their '[Plastics Challenge](#)' products, demonstrating sustainability, imagination and a practical application to modern world challenges and global issues. Schools submitted their best three entries. Competition winners were announced on 10 July 2020. Approximately 750 pupils participated from 27 schools as a home learning activity or at school in classrooms or STEM clubs.

Evaluation framework

Evaluation of the Primary Careers Hub pilot consisted of four main areas:

- Evaluation of the structure and processes within the pilot
- Evaluation of the interactions with employers from pupils, school staff and employers themselves
- Evaluation of the overall impact of the pilot through case studies and capacity audits
- Evaluation of the impact of the pilot as part of the whole Primary Fund, carried out by an external organisation, Research Base, on behalf of the Careers and Enterprise Company.

The structure and processes were under constant evaluation through regular leadership and steering group meetings, through Careers Champions meetings, and with updates to an evolving and responsive implementation plan. Within six months of the start of the pilot, it was evident that the Primary Hub was a successful model for improving careers related learning in schools, that would be scalable and easy to replicate elsewhere in the UK. The scope of the pilot was wide-ranging and encompassed a number of significant milestones to bring about system change and support the development of careers related learning in primary schools. The vision of school senior leadership teams to incorporate the pilot into their school development plans was a significant driver of success.

Drawing on learning from the East Sussex experience, key characteristics of a successful group of Careers Champions might be:

- A mix of age, gender and experience (not limited to teaching experiences)
- A good knowledge of the primary curriculum
- An ability to influence other staff
- A readiness to learn and develop ideas in collaboration with others
- A team player able to listen, empathise and be confident enough to share ideas
- High levels of resilience and optimism
- Able to meet deadlines and communicate issues effectively

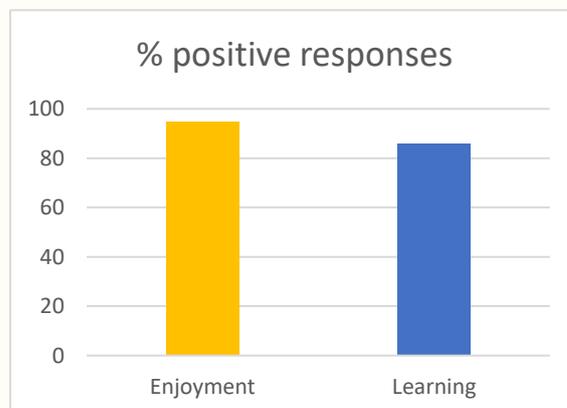
As part of the evaluation process, schools were asked to consider how they plan to incorporate the successes of the pilot into their development plans for the following academic year. Encouragingly, many confirmed it was already part of their plan, including links to governors, reporting to senior leadership and in some cases a 'responsibility' post.

Evaluation of the interactions with employers was based on visual observations of sessions and a summative evaluation form completed by school staff, pupils and employers. Pupils were given the

opportunity to comment on which skills they had found out about, whether they had learnt something, and if they enjoyed the session. Employers were asked if they would repeat the session and whether the school had been helpful in setting up the activity. Evaluation summary reports were written to support development of the employer workshops.

Through the pilot, over 1,500 evaluation forms were completed and collected prior to school closures due to Covid19. Many other events took place without evaluation forms being completed.

“Our reception children loved meeting the visitors. They particularly enjoyed occupations with more visual aids and equipment for them to explore.”
– staff member Sandown Primary



Over 95% students responded positively to the question, ‘Did you enjoy the session?’ and 86% to ‘Did you learn something?’. Through ongoing feedback to employers based on the evaluations, employers were able to be responsive and alter the focus of their presentations.

100% of employers responded positively to the question, ‘Would you run the session again?’ Feedback from some employers during the ‘careers fairs’ suggested they would like to see less pupils for a longer period of time so they could answer the many questions they received. Employers felt they had worked well with the schools to develop the activities and relate them to the curriculum where appropriate.

Staff were 100% positive about the activities, offering many encouraging comments about the impact on the pupils, raising aspirations and broadening horizons. They felt overwhelmingly, that the activities allowed all the pupils to feel successful and have a sense of achievement.

The overall impact of the pilot was measured through [case studies](#) and the capacity audit surveys. These reflect the dynamic and fluid world of working with pupils. The case studies have set out to identify an ‘issue’ they wished to address through the pilot and reflect on approaches that were tested and evaluated to solve the issue.

Schools in the most challenging and deprived areas have often led the way in realising the impact of the pilot. The greatest level of engagement from schools, pupils and parents came from schools in deprived areas. They were able to see the potential to have significant impact in their communities.

“It was the best day ever as I was able to learn about different jobs. It made me realise that I could do any job I wanted. It didn’t matter whether I was a boy or a girl.”
– Year 5 pupil Langney Primary

“I will always be thankful to you for changing my son’s mindset about education, helping him trust adults again and most importantly believing in himself. Before coming to your school, he wanted to be a ‘pizza delivery guy’ – his words – because he said that he wouldn’t be good at anything else. Now he would like to complete an IT and analytical degree to work in games and graphic testing. He seems more driven with more ambition and that is down to you guys and him.”

– Parent of Year 6 pupil at The Haven VA CE Primary

Conclusion

The Primary Careers Hub model is highly effective at enabling system-wide change across the primary phase. There is significant evidence of high levels of impact across a range of schools in raising aspirations and broadening horizons. Participating schools and local businesses now have greater confidence in working with each other to provide high-quality careers related learning experiences for pupils of all ages. Schools have been able to consider their curriculum through the lens of careers and employability skills, making small adjustments that have resulted in a greater impact on the lives of the pupils in their care. In summary:

- The Primary Careers Hub is a replicable model for other local authorities and multi-academy trusts.
- Primary schools should consider ways to develop their curriculum to incorporate careers related learning.
- Schools already deliver a broad and balanced curriculum with many opportunities for extended learning. These can be tweaked with a slight change of focus to support careers related learning and skills development.
- Schools have limited budgets with a range of unique challenges and priorities. Working collectively with employers and other schools enables them to better provide pupils with key insights into the world of work, raising aspirations and broadening horizons particularly for pupils who may not otherwise have the opportunity.

Recommendations

- Communicate a clear rationale for careers related learning in the primary phase and embed careers education in the curriculum intent.
- Secure the commitment and support of school leaders.
- Ensure ‘Careers Champions’ have capacity to sustain full engagement and are in a position to influence school policy and practices.
- Invest in building relationships with schools, parents and local business.
- Audit what is already in place then identify further opportunities.
- Engage partners in co-construction to instil a shared ownership.
- Work to a clear implementation plan with tight milestones and keep progress under review.
- Communicate, disseminate and plan for sustainability after the project.

Links

All careers related learning resources, skills films and case studies can be found at the Careers East Sussex website: <https://careerseastsussex.co.uk/advice/primary-careers-hub/>

