

Northampton School



Y10 Work Experience

Information Guide for
Students

At Northampton School we have a planned programme of Careers Education and Guidance at each Key Stage and as you move into Y10 you will undertake a Work experience placement during Personal Development (PD) Week which will always be the penultimate week of Term 1. You will be on your placement every day of the week, including when other year groups are off for the Teachers' Training Day.

In this guide you will find information about why we do work experience, steps to help you find and choose a placement, guidance on how to write a CV, key things to remember whilst on placement and the expectations that school has of you on placement, as well as key deadlines between now and Enterprise Week.

Why do we do a Work experience placement?

A Work experience placement is crucial to the successful development of your Employability Skills and will compliment your academic curriculum; it's a fantastic opportunity to spend a week with an employer of your choice and can help you decide what you want to do in the future. You will be treated like an employee for a week (although you won't get paid!) and it will make you stand out in the future when you apply for a real job as it's great experience to list on a CV. Not only that but a work placement can even lead to the offer of part-time, paid job!

Lots of students think that a work placement is about having a week out of school or simply testing a job they fancy doing in the future, but it is about so much more than that. It helps you to develop real skills that will allow you to be successful in today's competitive and fast-paced world of work. Some of the benefits of a work placement are listed below:

- Develop communication and time keeping skills
- Increase in confidence and independence
- Gain a real insight into the world of work
- Develop employability skills (therefore you're more likely to be offered a job in the future)
- Gain a true sense of achievement
- Know and understand better what job you want to do in the future (and what qualifications you need from School to be able to do this)
- Meet new people
- Understand the importance of school work
- Could lead to a part-time job (28% of people of students on work experience placements are offered part-time roles following their placement – *Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion 2014*)

What to choose

Although PD Week of Y10 might seem a long way off, the reality is it will arrive much sooner than you think and preparation is key to a finding and securing a successful Work experience placement. The Government has now made it compulsory for all students under 16 to do one placement before they leave Y11 and so think about how many other students in Northamptonshire are applying for a placement – if you don't act now, you'll miss out!

If you're reading this and panicking, thinking I don't know what I want to do, then this guide is here to help. If you're completely unsure then think about things you enjoy and try to find a company/role that might incorporate some of those things; you can also discuss ideas with parents/carers, older siblings who have already done a work placement, your Form Tutor, Head of Year, Mrs Barnett-Vincent or Mrs Hinton.

If you have a really clear idea of what you want to do when you're older then fantastic! Use this guide to help you produce your CV and find and secure a placement.

Work Placement Ideas:

Where you choose to do your Work Placement all depends on the career you think you're interested in long term. If you don't know yet, then the list below might help you to think of ideas based on the subjects you enjoy at school.

- **Art:** museums, galleries, art magazine, auction house, charity, community centre/initiative, fashion organisation, photography company
- **Drama:** school, local theatre, theatre companies, theatre schools, fashion organisation
- **DT:** manufacturing company, construction firm, energy companies, engineering consultancy firm, graphic design company
- **Finance:** bank, accountancy firm, consultancy firm, finance department of a large company
- **English:** newspaper, magazine, publishing company, library, schools
- **Geography:** council, environmental agencies, transport company, estate agent
- **History:** schools, library, museum, conservation and heritage management company
- **Languages:** schools, travel company, foreign language institutions/teaching schools, translation company
- **Law:** lawyer/solicitors firm, legal advice companies, charity, the police, legal department of a large company
- **Maths:** accountancy firm, software developer, banks, engineering company, construction firm, finance department of a large business
- **Music:** school, theatre, music schools, recording studios
- **Politics:** local council, charity, newspaper/magazine, marketing and PR company
- **Science:** schools, scientific research/development company, vet, pharmacy, GP surgery, hospital
- **Sport:** fitness centres, schools, sports marketing/event management companies, professional sports teams, sports charities, sports clubs, community centres/initiatives, physiotherapy clinics (private or NHS)

How to find and apply for a Work experience placement

Key steps to follow:

1. Decide on an industry or type of company you want to work for
2. Conduct internet research to find local such companies
3. Make contact via phone and/or email

The first place to start is deciding on an industry or type of company you want to work for, e.g. an accountancy firm. Second is to do internet research to find local such businesses that you can shortlist as target firms. Next is to make contact! The best way to do this is to make a phone call; now this can seem like a scary task, so if you're nervous about doing this write down a script of what you want to say and questions you want to ask. Start by politely introducing yourself – give your name, tell them you are an NS student and that the purpose of your phone call is to enquire about a work experience placement. It may well be that some companies are not able to take students on work experience placements, if this is the case and they tell you so over the phone, remain calm, politely thank them for taking your call, say goodbye and hang up.

Another way to get in touch with a target company is with an email; if your first contact with a company is going to be via email then make sure the communication is formal and polite (just like a letter). You could choose to send it from your school email account, or from a personal email account; be very careful with personal email accounts, you must make sure the email address is appropriate. Start your email with 'Dear Sir/Madam', again lay out that the purpose of your email is to enquire about a work placement, and sign your email off with 'Yours faithfully', followed by your full name and your contact details (email and phone). If you send off several emails at once, it's important that you follow up until you hear a response either way.

In years gone by, people have applied for work placements by posting a lot of letters – in the modern world of work this is a wasted effort. Most companies will not reply to letters so it's much better to get in touch via phone or email.

Once you have made the initial contact with a company and they have agreed to have a further conversation with you there a few things that need to happen, and a couple of others that it would be advisable to do.

Need - you need to get their confirmation in writing (via an email) and you need the name of the main person you should keep in contact with between now and starting your placement. You must also let them know that they will receive a pack from school with an Employers Guide and Work Experience Forms (agreements/insurance/ review and feedback), some of which they will need to return to us at school before you can start your placement.

Advisable – it might be nice to follow up your confirmation with a letter of acknowledgement and thanks – tell them you're really looking forward to starting your placement and what you're hoping to gain from it. You should also think about sending a CV in for their review and trying to arrange a face-to-face meeting before you start your placement to make initial introductions; be aware that some companies will want to conduct some sort of interview before they agree to offer you a placement. If this is the case, you **must** let your Form Tutor and Mrs Barnett-Vincent know **before** you go.

Throughout the process of finding and applying for your Work experience placement it is vital that you remain polite and formal; you are representing Northampton School at all times during this process, and you must maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitude that we expect of you in school, out of school. Any student that does not do this will face significant consequences upon their return to school.

CVs

Many of you might not have written a CV before and might be daunted at the prospect, but companies will be really impressed if you can follow up an enquiry with an informative CV to give them a bit more information about you as an individual. Key things to include on a CV are:

- Name
- Contact Details
- A small paragraph about yourself, including hobbies and interests
- What subjects you are studying, and ideas about what job you would like when you're older (if you know)
- Information about extracurricular activities
- Any additional qualifications/awards you have, e.g. first aid, school subject awards, sports awards
- Skills you have
- Information about references (these are people the company can get in touch with to verify your suitability for the placement – you could use parents/carers, a teacher from school or someone who knows you outside school (you must ask them first if they are happy to act as your referee)

There is an example of a CV at the back of this guide that you can use as a template.

Key things to remember on a work placement

Being out of school on a work experience placement can be exciting and/or scary and so there are a few key things to remember whilst you're out of school:

- **Behaviour:** your behaviour whilst on your work placement must be impeccable! You must behave exactly as if you were in school - be polite at all times, be a good listener, and remember the school's core standards: *Be Considerate, Courteous, Co-operative, Friendly, Hardworking, Honest, Trusting, Generous of spirit.*
 - **Dress:** you should dress smartly at all times. Ideally you should be wearing a suit in a professional environment (you could use your school trousers/skirt and shirt with a plain blazer and tie) and your shirt must be tucked in at all times.
 - **Mobile phones:** whilst on placement you might need your phone to be able to arrange transport or other personal admin but other than that you have no need for your phone during the working day. Your phone should remain away and switched off at all times – you need to concentrate and work hard during your placement and this does not involve messaging your friends or checking social media!
 - **Social media:** You must be extremely careful about any comments you make online particularly if it is about your Work Experience placement. It is very easy to forget how accessible social media accounts are for everyone to see, and it's also very easy for people to read something and get the wrong impression. It would be highly advisable not to post anything about the company on your social media, and also to think about whether other posts/comments you make during the time you are on placement are in keeping with a professional working environment.
 - **Time keeping:** it is imperative that you are on time for everything during your work placement. You need to be on time, if not slightly ahead of schedule in the morning – if you are starting at 9am, be there at 8.58, not 9.02. You also need to make sure you are back at your pre-arranged meeting point at the end of your lunch break. Working professionals are very busy people and poor time keeping will create a negative impression; you will need to be independent in your time keeping and keep an eye your watch or a clock as there won't be any warning bells or teachers reminding you to start making a move.
 - **Safety:** the company that offers you a work placement has a duty to make sure you are safe during your time with and they should go through Health and Safety procedures with you during induction. We as a school also have a duty of care to make sure you are safe on placement and so you must let us know if you do not feel safe or if anything makes you feel uncomfortable during your work experience.
 - **Working with young children:** if you're going to do your placement in a primary school or a nursery there are a few things to be aware of. You shouldn't pick them up, should never be left alone with them and you shouldn't sit them on your lap. If you arrange to do your placement in school/nursery you will have a specific meeting with Mrs Barnett-Vincent before you go.
 - **Transport:** it is crucial that you plan your transport to get to and from your placement before you go. If you're planning to get a bus, then it might be an idea to do a trial run of the route to see how long it is going to take you. Even if your parents/carers are planning to take you to your placement each day, doing a test drive of the route would be beneficial. Remember that school will not pay for any transport costs.
 - **Sickness:** if you are unwell during your work placement you must phone the company **and** school as soon as possible. Do not wait until 9am when you should already be there, you must remain professional and let the placement provider know as early as you are able.
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What if I don't like it?

This is without doubt the most frequently asked question during the lead up to any work experience placement – the nerves start to kick in, and you will start to worry about things. Remember you can **phone school** at any time during your placement and tell us what you are not enjoying about it; Mrs Barnett-Vincent will also be coming round to visit people whilst they're on placement so it might be that you receive a visit to help boost your confidence. The most important thing to remember is that if you don't like it on day one then you need to give it more time, go back for day two and try again – **don't just give up**.

Paperwork/Deadlines

Before you leave school to start your work experience placement there are a few pieces of paperwork that you will need to get signed. This is all completed through Unifrog.

- Parental Agreement Form
- Placement Provider Agreement Form
- Insurance Form (needs to be filled out by your placement provider)

When you come back from your placement you will need to bring the following with you:

- Work Experience Employer Feedback Form

Work experience placement – Checklist

- Decide on an industry/company type
- Internet Research
- Shortlist of companies to get in touch with
- Make initial contact – via phone
or
- Make initial contact – via email
- Follow up communication to confirm placement
- Confirmation of placement in writing handed into school
- Face to face meeting with the company before you start
- Student agreement signed and handed into school
- Parent agreement signed and handed into school
- Employer agreement signed and handed into school
- Insurance information completed (by company) and handed into school
- Organise travel plans
- Travel route practice run before placement starts