



Provider Access Policy

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Approved By	Joe Creswick
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This policy applies to all stakeholders within Ridgeway School

Introduction and Aims

This policy statement outlines Ridgeways arrangements for managing access of providers to pupils for the purpose of sharing information about education, training, and employment opportunities. It complies with Section 42B of the Education Act 1997, the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and the Department for Education's (DfE) Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers (updated January 2023, or latest version as of May 2025).

This policy supports Gatsby:

Benchmark 7 (Encounters with Further and Higher Education) and Benchmark 8 (Personal Guidance) to ensure high-quality careers provision tailored to our pupils' needs.

Pupil Entitlement

All pupils in Years 8–14 are entitled to:

- Explore technical education qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, supported internships, and other opportunities appropriate to their abilities and skills, as part of a careers programme, providing information on the full range of options at each transition point.
- Engage with local providers to learn about their offerings through link provision courses, taster events, work experience, and bespoke sessions aligned with EHCP outcomes.
- Understand application processes for academic and technical courses.

Recognising the vital role of parents/carers in supporting decision-making, we ensure they receive information about education, training, and employment options at each transition point, including post-19 pathways where relevant, at least annually in the young person's EHCP annual review.

For pupils of compulsory school age, two mandatory provider encounters are offered during the 'first key phase' (Years 8–9) and two during the 'second key phase' (Years 10–11). For students in the 'third key phase' (Years 12–14), particularly those who are undecided on their next steps, two optional encounters are available. These encounters may include providers offering post-19 options such as supported internships or employment pathways.

Provider encounters occur during school/college hours, with providers given sufficient time to:

- Share details about their offerings and appropriate courses.
- Explain potential career routes, including emerging areas like green and digital skills.
- Offer insights into learning or training with them, including staff/pupil interactions.
- Answer pupil questions.

The school maintains a log of provider encounters to ensure compliance and evaluate impact via Compass +.

Management of Provider Access Requests

An encounter is defined as one meeting/session between pupils and one provider. We use the "Making it Meaningful" checklist to ensure quality. Meaningful online engagement (e.g., webinars, virtual tours) is an option, adapted for accessibility (e.g., captioned content, interactive formats) to meet pupils' needs.

Destinations of our Learners In 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021 Includes learners transitioning to:

- Bedford College
- Sense College, Bedford
- Heywood House
- Youth Inspired
- Beehive, Rushden,
- Central Bedfordshire College, Dunstable
- Home Schooling
- Travelling Europe
- Potential residential placement

Multi-year trends are reviewed annually to inform provider invitations.

Management of Provider Access Requests

Providers should contact Lynn Hawkins (Assistant Headteacher Wooden Hill Post 16 Lead) at: 01234 402402 lynn.hawkins@ridgeway.beds.sch.uk

Opportunities for Access

Provider encounters are integrated into pupils' individualised curricula (per EHCPs) and the school's careers programme, which is woven into the school curriculum. We meet the six legally required encounters during visits to our Wooden Hill Federation annual careers fair, Bedford Borough Careers Fair and curriculum teaching, which is also supplemented by:

- Bespoke sessions on further education, training, and employment options (e.g., green/digital skills providers where relevant).
- Small group or 1:1 sessions tailored to EHCP outcomes.
- Annual information, advice, and guidance (IAG) sessions for parents/carers and pupils.
- Needs assessments by providers, with parental/student consent.

Contact our Careers Leader to identify suitable opportunities. Feedback from pupils, parents, and providers is collected post-encounter to refine future provision.

Granting and Refusing Access

We aim to grant access where possible, but may refuse based on:

- Nature of the request
- Student needs and curriculum priorities
- Number/frequency of requests per provider/cohort
- Timing, availability, or prior interaction quality
- Safeguarding check failures

Each request is assessed case-by-case.

Premises and Facilities

The main hall, classrooms, or meeting rooms are available, with specialist equipment provided where feasible (arranged with the school administration team and Senior Leadership Team).

Online engagement is supported with accessibility adaptations. Providers may leave prospectuses with the Wooden Hill Federation Post 16 Lead for distribution to pupils, staff, and parents/carers.

Complaints

Follow the school's complaints procedure on our website.

Legal Framework & Statutory Guidance

This policy adheres to Careers Guidance and Access for Education and Training Providers (DfE, updated January 2023).

Links with Other Policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Online Safety Policy

Equalities and Inclusion

Under the Equality Act 2010, no pupil, staff member, or volunteer is excluded due to protected characteristics. Activities are evaluated for accessibility, with reasonable adjustments made to ensure all pupils can participate.

Safeguarding Implications

Safeguarding is paramount. Providers are accompanied per our safeguarding procedures, and off-site visits are supervised, risk-assessed, and conducted per our Educational Visits Policy.

Sustainability Implications

Ridgeway School is committed to promoting sustainable futures for our pupils. Provider encounters will prioritise opportunities that align with environmental sustainability, such as training in

green skills (e.g., renewable energy, conservation) or employment with eco-conscious organisations, where relevant to pupils' EHCP outcomes and abilities. When planning encounters, we consider the environmental impact of travel and resource use, favouring local providers and digital engagement where practical. This reflects our broader commitment to preparing pupils for a sustainable world while supporting their individual aspiration.