

Careers Strategy

Aspire's vision is to support young people, whatever their background and circumstances, to:

Build strong foundations, and open new doors

We therefore believe that equitable access to high quality careers, enterprise and learning opportunities is a priority for all of our students, and our careers strategy sits at the heart of this, contributing to one of the three unifying principals that underpin our curriculum: **preparation for adulthood and developing independence**.

We see access to high quality careers provision for excluded learners as an issue of social justice, with the evidence showing us that those young people who would benefit from effective careers guidance opportunities the most, are often the least likely to be able to access them. We therefore place a great deal of emphasis on our students' right to high quality careers education and we go 'above and beyond' to deliver exciting and transformational careers learning opportunities for all of our students.

Aspire are working towards Nurture School Status through NurtureUK. As an Alternative Provision (AP) provider we are acutely aware of the impact that 'transitions' can have on our students, and the many forms that they may take: from mainstream school to AP; AP back to mainstream; AP to FE; AP to the workplace; alongside the many other transitions that may be going on in our young people's lives at any particular point. This careers strategy has therefore been developed in response to the 6th Principle of Nurture: **The importance on transitions in children's lives**.

At Aspire we focus on broadening our student's horizons in an environment of high challenge and low threat, and providing them with experiences that they may not have had access to in their previous schools. All of our staff are committed to supporting our students to succeed, and enabling them to live lives of choice and opportunity.

The overarching Aspire Curriculum (that this careers strategy forms part of) is based around the key questions of:

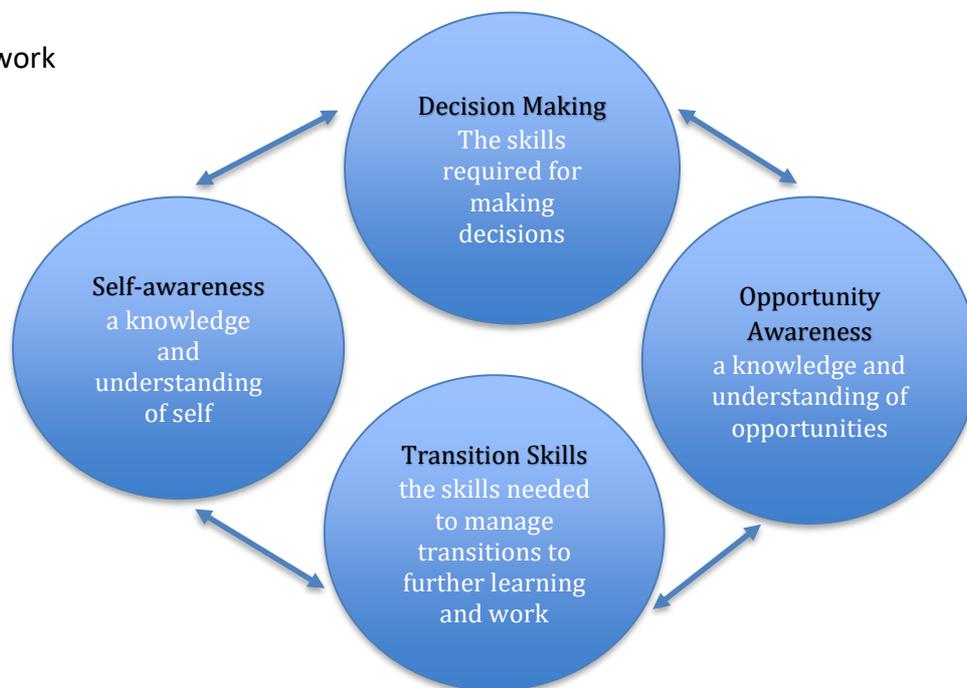
"What is best for the child?"
and
"How can we make that happen?"

In practice, this means that our young people experience genuine personalisation and agency over their curriculum decisions, and engaging with careers education is no exception. We have many well established and meaningful relationships with local colleges, employers, training providers and community leaders, and we work closely with our students and providers to explore all of the options that are available to them, so that they can understand how to make the most of opportunities whilst also learning how to make good decisions.

Our cohort includes some of the most disadvantaged young people in Buckinghamshire. The majority of our students arrive having previously had negative experiences of school, and often having had little access to a broad and balanced curriculum. One of the first things we seek to do at Aspire is to get them “back on track”, and to change the narrative for them from one that focuses on what may have gone wrong in the past, to one that focuses on the myriad of bright and exciting opportunities they have ahead of them, in the future.

The rationale for our pedagogical approach is rooted in the ‘DOTS’ framework for careers education (developed by Bill Law and Tony Watts) which has the following basic principles:

DOTS Framework



We believe that this framework supports Aspire’s wider work, and fits well within the Nurture approach that is embedded across all of our schools.

Underpinning principles

- Our careers strategy is designed with reference to the **Gatsby Benchmarks**. By using the eight Benchmarks we have designed a programme that ensures our students are prepared for the world of work (and other transitions) when they leave the school at the age of 16.
- Our careers strategy supports us to 'change the narrative' for our young people and provides all students with the opportunity to progress onto positive Post 16 placements.
- At Aspire, we provide environments of high-risk low threat, and allow students to make mistakes, and if necessary, support them to restart their journey in different directions.
- We use personalisation of the curriculum to offer a variety of options and experiences to our students, giving them agency over what they are learning and the direction they want their learning to take.
- We encourage students to understand themselves and become self-aware.
- We focus on what our students *want*, as well as what they might *need*, thus raising their expectations as well as their aspirations.
- We provide all of our students with up to date local and national labour market information (LMI) allowing them to make choices that are both informed and realistic.
- All of our staff understand how their subjects support students to make informed decisions about their careers and further study, and have received training on how it links to the 6th Principal of Nurture: ***The importance on transitions in children's lives.***
- All teachers will be given CPD to support them in linking curriculum learning with careers education.
- All Students will have opportunities to experience different work-related learning opportunities with local employers through; mentoring projects; extended work experience placements; Duke of Edinburgh; enterprise; residential trips and Vocational subjects.
- We will continue to develop meaningful and sustainable relationships with employers, and encourage them to support us with enrichment activities, such as: speaking at events, mentoring our students, and supporting with enterprise schemes.
- Aspire's students (and their families) all have access to good quality information about further study and labour market opportunities.

- Our careers strategy has been developed to meet the needs of all of our students, whatever their background and circumstances, and whatever stage of their education they are at.

Meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks

1	A stable careers programme	Aspire places great emphasis on developing meaningful and sustainable relationships with local partners and organisations in the wider sector. This allows us to deliver a stable programme that is refined iteratively and builds on successful partnerships year on year.
2	Learning from careers and labour market information	We believe that every pupil, including those in alternative provision, has the right to up to date labour market and future study information, and we know how important it is for this to be geographically specific. We therefore work with the local Careers and Enterprise networks (advisors/hubs/coordinators etc) to ensure that our students have access to an informed and fully trained advisor to help them make use of this information.
3	Addressing the needs of each pupil	As part of our personalised approach to curriculum, students' career goals and aspirations are taken into account as soon as they join us. This allows us to tailor the support and opportunities offered to them based on their own needs. We also have a commitment to embedding diversity and equity throughout our curriculum, including being aware of the gendered curriculum biases that have often been found to occur in alternative provision settings.
4	Linking curriculum learning to careers	All of the subjects taught as part of the Aspire Curriculum (whether knowledge based or vocational) have strong links to careers and further learning. This approach allows us to engage students with content that they may feel is more relevant to them than what they experienced in mainstream, and also to give them the 'bigger picture' about why school matters and how it influences the next steps available to them.
5	Encounters with employers and employees	Developing strong links with local employers and their employees is fundamental to the success of the Aspire Curriculum. Too often students who enter AP have been excluded from these experiences already, and it is essential that we work with employers to see the value of investing time and resources in our students as well as those in mainstream schools, who may be seen as an easier option.
6	Experiences of the workplace	Developing sustainable relationships with local employers is key for our success as it is essential that we are able to offer meaningful and high-quality experiences of the workplace to our students (who might otherwise have missed out on it).
7	Encounters with further and higher education	At Key Stage 4, all of our students will develop an understanding of the full range of learning opportunities and providers that are available to them alongside visits to local Colleges. At Key Stage 3, this information will be shared with them in terms of planning and aspiration activities.
8	Personal guidance	To ensure equity of opportunity for our young people, every student has the opportunity for a careers guidance interview with a specialist trained to an appropriate level (Level 6).