



Norfolk County Council



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Factsheet 1

Statutory & Ofsted Requirements



1. Statutory & Ofsted Requirements

1. Statutory Requirements for Work Experience in England

1.1 Current Legal Position (as of 2026)

Work experience itself is not yet a statutory requirement for schools, but DfE statutory careers guidance (May 2025) now requires schools to plan towards the Work Experience Guarantee.

Key points from the government direction:

- The Work Experience Guarantee states that every young person should complete two weeks (10 days / 50 hours) of meaningful work-related experience during secondary education. This is expected but not yet mandated in law.

Updated statutory careers guidance requires:

- One week's worth of work-experience-related activities in Years 7–9 (KS3).
- One week of “meaningful” work experience placements in Years 10–11 (KS4).
- National implementation is planned from September 2026, but schools should already be preparing.

1.2 Health & Safety, Safeguarding, and Employer Requirements

Although work experience is not statutory, key legal duties still apply:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and related H&S regulations apply to all learners on placement.
- Employers must provide:
 - o Liability insurance
 - o Risk assessments suitable for young people
 - o Safeguarding considerations (outlined in work experience frameworks such as NSPCC/Youth Employment UK guidance.)
 - o Placements must be unpaid, supervised, and primarily a learning experience, not labour.

2. Ofsted Requirements and Expectations

Ofsted does not publish a standalone policy on work experience, but it evaluates work experience as part of its inspection of careers education, safeguarding, curriculum and personal development, guided by the Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

Under Ofsted's Inspection Framework (EIF), inspectors review work experience as part of:

a) Personal Development

- Schools must show:
 - Learners have access to meaningful encounters with workplaces
 - Provision supports readiness for the next stage of education/training.

b) Quality of Education / Curriculum Intent

- Inspectors judge:
 - How well work-related learning supports the curriculum.
 - Whether placements/encounters contribute to skills development.

c) Leadership & Management

- Leaders must:
 - Ensure compliance with statutory careers guidance.
 - Provide equitable access to workplace experiences (including SEND and disadvantaged pupils).

d) Safeguarding

- Ofsted requires settings to have:
 - Clear safeguarding arrangements for learners on placement.
 - Appropriate risk assessments and safer-recruitment-aligned checks where necessary. (Safeguarding policy guidance) [gov.uk]

2.1. Summary Table

Area Requirement / Expectation Source

- Legal status work experience is not yet statutory, but schools must prepare for the Work Experience Guarantee:
 - KS3 expectation 1 week of work-related activities (Years 7–9).
 - KS4 requirement 1 week of meaningful placement (Years 10–11*)

***Current legal position (Spring 2026) requires all students to have had at least one meaningful workplace experience by the age of 16**

Pre-16

- Ofsted does not directly assess work experience in pre-16 settings.
- Inspectors check whether schools prepare learners well for their next stage (education, training, employment).
- DfE guidance requires schools to ensure students are well-informed about careers and offered high-quality, relevant work experience.
- Schools with a planned programme of work-related learning (including work experience) align with government expectations.

Post-16

- Work experience is compulsory within post-16 study programmes and is inspected under the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework.
- Ofsted checks whether placements are purposeful, planned, and support student work-readiness.
- Evidence expected by Ofsted includes:
 - How the institution prepared the student before the placement.
 - The student's contribution during the placement.
 - The benefit gained by the student.
 - How the experience helped develop employability, vocational, and personal effectiveness skills.
 - Quality and detail of feedback given to the student.
 - Student progression routes; early external placements encouraged when WEX is a major programme component.
- Work experience conducted only in simulated or internal environments is not considered adequate.

Vocational vs Academic

- Ofsted focuses more heavily on work experience for vocational learners.
- Academic students also gain benefits such as improved university applications and better preparation if switching to vocational routes.
- Schools and colleges should offer external work experience to all students where possible.



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- All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the information in this publication was correct at time of going to press (April 2026)
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