

Understanding and Evaluating Impact in Career-related Learning

**Guidance to Support Theme 2 of the Careers
Impact Maturity Model for Primary Schools**



Purpose of this Guidance

Career-related learning (CRL) in primary schools is most effective when schools understand not only what they are delivering, but also the difference it is making to pupils. While primary CRL is not intended to influence immediate career decisions, it can have a significant impact on pupils' confidence, aspirations, skills, awareness of opportunities and understanding of the wider world.

Understanding impact helps schools reflect on the effectiveness of their provision and make informed decisions about future development. By gathering evidence, listening to pupils and reviewing practice over time, schools can build a clearer picture of how CRL is supporting pupil development and contributing to wider school priorities.

This guidance has been developed to support schools in strengthening the evaluation, recording and quality assurance of career-related learning. It complements Theme 2 of the Careers Impact Maturity Model for Primary Schools by providing practical examples, reflective prompts and supportive approaches that schools may wish to explore as they continue to develop provision.

This guidance explores how schools may begin to:

- › Develop approaches to evaluating the impact of career-related learning.
- › Gather and use evidence to inform planning and improvement.
- › Capture pupil voice and stakeholder feedback meaningfully.
- › Record and monitor career-related learning activity and outcomes.
- › Strengthen quality assurance processes for career-related learning.
- › Use reflection and evaluation to inform future provision.
- › Demonstrate the contribution of career-related learning to wider school priorities and pupil development.

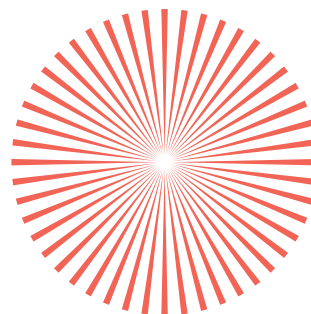
Build sustainable approaches to understanding and evidencing impact over time.

Schools will be at different stages in their journey. Some may already have established systems for monitoring and evaluating CRL, while others may be beginning to consider how they gather evidence and understand impact. This guidance is intended to support reflection, discussion and continuous improvement rather than function as a formal assessment tool.

References to tools, frameworks and supporting materials have been brought together in the **Tools and Resources** section at the end of this guide so that schools can easily access further information and support when needed.

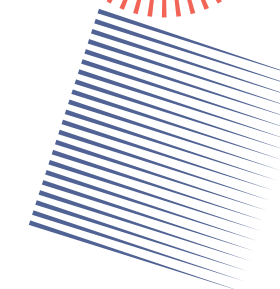
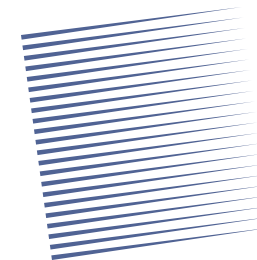
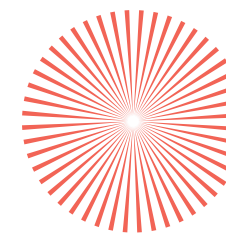
How to Use This Guide

This guidance is intended to support discussion and reflection rather than prescribe a particular approach. Schools may wish to read the document in full or focus on the sections most relevant to their current priorities and stage of development.



Contents

Purpose of this Guidance	2
How to Use This Guide	2
Understanding Impact	4
What Might Impact Look Like?	5
Recording Career-related Learning	6
Pupil Voice	7
Evaluation and Observation of Impact on Pupils	8
Quality Assurance	9
Using Impact Information to Improve Provision	10
Reflection	10
Getting Started	11
Next Steps	11
Understanding Impact	12
Recording Career-related Learning	12
Review and Action Planning Tool	12
Tools and Resources	14



Understanding Impact

One of the challenges schools often face is knowing what impact looks like in primary career-related learning. Unlike secondary careers programmes, primary CRL is not focused on destinations or immediate career choices. Instead, it seeks to help pupils develop confidence, curiosity, aspiration, self-awareness and an understanding of future possibilities.

As a result, schools may find it helpful to focus on changes in pupils' knowledge, understanding, attitudes and experiences rather than long-term career outcomes. Evidence of impact may be seen in the way pupils talk about jobs, workplaces and pathways, the confidence they show when discussing their futures, and their growing awareness of their own interests, strengths and skills. Schools may also notice pupils becoming more willing to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, making stronger connections between their learning and the wider world, and demonstrating a more positive and open-minded attitude towards future opportunities.

Schools may find it helpful to consider the intended outcomes of their career-related learning provision. Here are some examples schools may identify as intended outcomes:

- Greater awareness of jobs, workplaces and pathways.
- Increased confidence.
- Stronger understanding of interests and strengths.
- Improved awareness of skills development.
- Broader aspirations and horizons.
- Greater openness to opportunities.
- Stronger connections between learning and the wider world.

The Career-related Learning Outcomes and Objectives for Primary Pupils can provide a useful starting point when considering impact. By identifying intended outcomes first, schools can think more clearly about what evidence they may wish to gather and how they will know whether career-related learning is making a difference over time.

Understanding impact is not about proving that an activity has led directly to a future career choice. Instead, it is about considering how career-related learning is helping pupils develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness that provide a strong foundation for future learning, transitions and success.

Considering intended outcomes can help schools identify what impact may look like in practice and what evidence they may wish to gather over time.



What Might Impact Look Like?

The impact of career-related learning (CRL) is not always seen through large or immediate changes. In primary schools, impact often develops gradually over time through pupils' awareness, confidence, interests, aspirations, skills and understanding of the wider world.

Schools may notice impact in different ways depending on their context and provision. For example, pupils might:

- Demonstrate increased awareness of a wider range of jobs, careers, workplaces and pathways beyond those they encounter through family and carers.
- Show increased interest in a diverse range of careers, sectors and opportunities.
- Demonstrate greater understanding of the world of work, including the skills people use in different jobs and how work may change over time.
- Make stronger connections between their learning in school, the skills they are developing and future careers and opportunities.
- Recognise and value the essential skills they are developing, such as creativity, problem solving, teamwork, communication, resilience and self-motivation.
- Feel more confident when talking about their interests, strengths, achievements and future possibilities.
- Show greater confidence, resilience and positivity when approaching challenges and new experiences.

- Challenge stereotypes and assumptions about who can do certain jobs or careers.
- Feel hopeful about their future and believe that opportunities are open to them.
- Feel represented within the careers, role models and pathways they encounter.

Schools may also observe impact through increased participation, engagement and feedback. Pupils may contribute more confidently to discussions, engage positively in encounters and enrichment activities, express curiosity about unfamiliar careers and sectors, or talk more positively about their future aspirations and opportunities. Feedback from pupils, families and staff, together with evidence gathered through existing school review processes, can help schools understand how career-related learning is contributing to pupils' confidence, awareness of opportunities, essential skills development and understanding of the wider world.

Importantly, impact is not about encouraging pupils to make career choices at an early age. Rather, it is about helping pupils broaden their horizons, develop confidence and curiosity, build awareness of opportunities and pathways, and acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that will support future learning, transitions and success.



Recording Career-related Learning

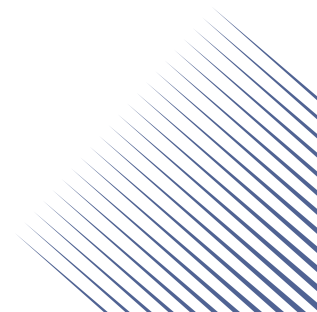
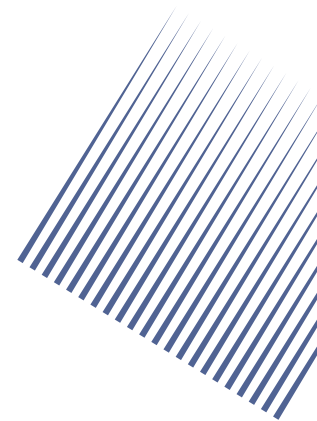
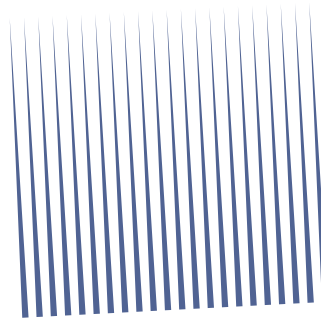
Recording systems can help schools build a clearer picture of pupils' experiences, learning and development over time. Recording does not need to be complex, but it should support reflection, progression and future planning. Approaches will vary between schools. Some may use class floor books, pupil journals or simple reflection activities, while others may use digital portfolios or existing assessment systems. Schools may find that the most effective recording approaches are those that build on existing systems and processes, providing meaningful information that can be used to support reflection, future planning and provision development.

Schools may choose to record:

- Activities and experiences pupils have participated in.
- Employer encounters and workplace experiences.
- Pupil reflections and feedback.
- Skills development.
- Aspirations and interests.
- Examples of curriculum-linked learning.

Schools may also wish to consider what evidence can help them understand the impact of these experiences over time. This evidence does not need to be complex or burdensome to collect and may already exist within wider school systems. Schools may draw on a range of sources including pupil reflections, floor books, learning journals, examples of work, photographs, staff observations, aspiration surveys and feedback gathered through discussions with pupils. Some schools may also choose to collect feedback from parents, carers, employers or visitors. Together, these sources can help schools build a richer picture of how CRL is supporting pupils over time.

Schools may also consider whether existing evidence helps them understand how different groups of pupils are participating in and benefiting from career-related learning. This may include considering whether all pupils feel represented, included and able to engage meaningfully in opportunities and experiences.



Pupil Voice

Pupil voice provides valuable insight into how pupils experience career-related learning and what they are learning from it. Regular opportunities for discussion and reflection can help schools understand whether provision is meeting its intended aims.

Schools may gather insight from questions such as:

What jobs or careers have you learned about recently?

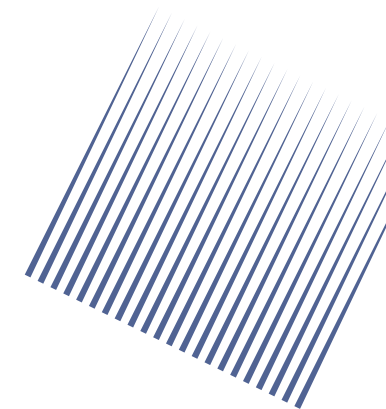
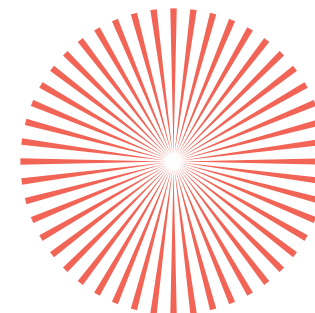
Which experiences have you enjoyed most?

Have you learned about any jobs that surprised you?

What skills do you think you are developing?

What would you like to learn more about?

Responses can help schools identify strengths, challenge assumptions and explore how pupils' understanding is developing over time. Pupil voice can also support quality assurance by helping schools understand which activities are most meaningful and where provision might be strengthened.



Evaluation and Observation of Impact on Pupils

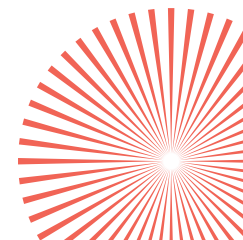
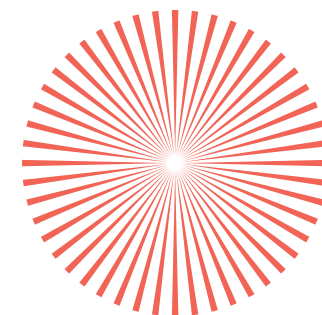
Evaluation helps schools consider whether career-related learning is achieving its intended aims. Effective evaluation looks beyond attendance or participation alone and considers what pupils have learned, experienced and gained from provision.

Schools may wish to consider:

- **Participation** – Who is engaging in activities and experiences?
- **Coverage** – Are pupils receiving a broad range of opportunities?
- **Progression** – Does learning build over time?
- **Outcomes** – What difference is provision making to pupils?

Schools may find it useful to consider both outcomes and evidence when evaluating impact. For example, increased confidence might be demonstrated through pupil discussions and reflection activities, while broader awareness of jobs, workplaces and pathways may be evidenced through pupil voice, curriculum work or staff observations. Developing a range of evidence sources can help schools build a more complete understanding of how career-related learning is influencing pupil development.

Evaluation may draw upon the evidence sources already gathered through recording, reflection and review processes. Considering evidence from multiple sources can help schools build a more complete picture of how career-related learning is supporting pupil development.



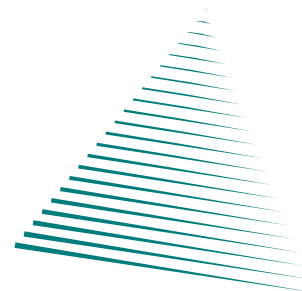
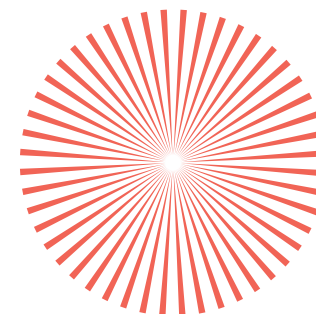
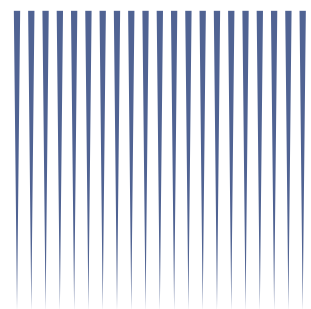
Quality Assurance

Quality assurance helps ensure that career-related learning remains purposeful, relevant and aligned with school priorities. It involves reviewing provision regularly and using evidence to inform future development.

Many schools already review curriculum provision, personal development and wider pupil outcomes. Quality assurance of CRL can often be incorporated within these existing processes through approaches such as reviewing curriculum plans and learner journeys, learning walks, curriculum reviews and discussions with pupils to understand how CRL is being experienced across the school. You may choose to include external validation or recognised quality marks as part of your quality assurance process.

Reviewing provision against intended learning outcomes can help schools consider whether activities and experiences are contributing to the knowledge, skills and understanding they hope pupils will develop. Some schools may also find it helpful to use the Careers Impact Maturity Model for Primary Schools and a Careers Impact internal leadership review to support reflection, identify strengths and inform future planning.

Quality assurance is most effective when it becomes part of wider school improvement processes rather than being treated as a separate activity. Regular review can help schools build confidence in the quality and consistency of their provision, while providing valuable insight into where further development may be needed.



Using Impact Information to Improve Provision

The purpose of recording, evaluation and quality assurance is not simply to collect information. It is to support improvement.

Information gathered through evaluation can help schools develop a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas for development within their CRL provision. For example, schools may identify gaps in provision, review how learning and experiences progress across year groups, or consider whether curriculum links could be strengthened further. Evaluation findings may also help schools refine intended learning outcomes, improve employer engagement activity and ensure provision responds to the interests, experiences and needs of pupils.

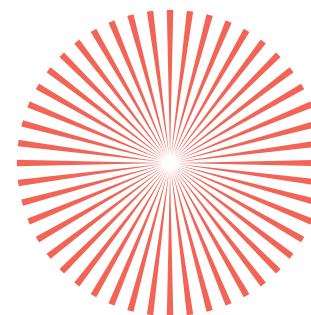
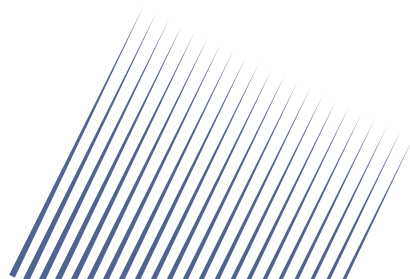
Evidence gathered over time can support more informed decision-making, helping schools prioritise resources, plan future activity and identify opportunities for development. By using impact information in this way, schools can help ensure that career-related learning remains relevant, responsive and meaningful for pupils.

Reflection

Developing a strong understanding of impact is an ongoing process of review and reflection. Schools may find it helpful to consider questions such as:

- How do we currently know that CRL is making a difference to pupils?
- What evidence do we collect and why?
- How do we gather and use pupil voice?
- How do we identify progression over time?
- How do we use evaluation findings to improve provision?
- How do we know pupils are broadening their aspirations and understanding of future possibilities?
- How do we review the quality of career-related learning and use findings to support continuous improvement?

These reflections can support schools in identifying strengths, priorities and future areas for development. Schools looking for a more structured way to review provision and identify priorities may find Appendix 1: Review and Action Planning Tool a helpful starting point for discussion and planning.



Getting Started

Schools do not need sophisticated systems before beginning to evaluate impact. In many cases, effective approaches start with a small number of consistent and manageable actions.

For some schools, this may begin with gathering regular pupil voice to better understand how pupils are experiencing career-related learning and what they are taking from it. Schools may also choose to record key experiences and encounters, helping to build a clearer picture of the opportunities available to pupils across the school. Reviewing provision against intended learning outcomes can provide a useful starting point for considering whether activities are contributing to the knowledge, skills and understanding schools hope pupils will develop.

Many schools find it helpful to identify simple ways for pupils to reflect on their learning, whether through discussion, written reflection or other age-appropriate approaches. Existing staff meetings can also provide opportunities to discuss impact, share observations and consider what evidence is beginning to emerge from provision.

These approaches can help schools develop a stronger understanding of how career-related learning is influencing pupil development and where provision can be strengthened further.

Next Steps

Schools may wish to consider the following actions as they continue to develop their approach:

- Establish a consistent approach to recording CRL.
- Introduce regular opportunities for pupil reflection.
- Gather evidence from a wider range of stakeholders.
- Review provision against intended pupil outcomes.
- Strengthen quality assurance processes.
- Build evaluation into existing school improvement systems.
- Use evidence more strategically to inform future planning.



Review and Action Planning Tool

The questions below are intended to support reflection and discussion. Schools may wish to use them when reviewing their approach to career-related learning, identifying strengths and considering areas for further development. The prompts are not intended as a checklist or assessment framework, and schools may choose to adapt them to suit their context and priorities.

Understanding Impact

Have we identified the intended outcomes of our career-related learning (CRL) programme?

Do we look for changes in pupils' confidence, aspirations, awareness, skills and understanding rather than future career choices?

- What evidence suggests pupils are:
- Learning about jobs, workplaces and pathways?
- Developing confidence to talk about their future?
- Recognising their interests, strengths and skills?
- Challenging stereotypes?
- Making links between learning and the wider world?

Recording Career-related Learning

Do we have a consistent approach to recording CRL across school?

Are we capturing:

- Activities and experiences?
- Employer encounters and workplace experiences?
- Pupil reflections and feedback?
- Skills development?
- Aspirations and interests?
- Curriculum-linked learning?

Are we making effective use of existing systems and processes?

Pupil Voice

Do pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on their CRL experiences?

How do we gather and use pupil feedback?

Do pupils have opportunities to:

- Discuss what they have learned?
- Reflect on meaningful experiences?
- Identify skills they are developing?
- Suggest areas they would like to explore further?

Evaluating Impact

Are we evaluating more than participation alone?

How do we review:

- Participation?
- Coverage?
- Progression?
- Outcomes?

Do we gather evidence from a range of sources including pupil voice, staff observations, curriculum evidence and reflection activities?

Quality Assurance

How do we review the quality of CRL across the school?

Do we:

- Review curriculum plans and learner journeys?
- Gather feedback from pupils and staff?
- Conduct learning walks or curriculum reviews?
- Review evidence against intended outcomes?
- Use the Careers Impact Maturity Model to support reflection?

Is CRL included within wider school improvement processes?

Using Evidence to Improve Provision

- How do we use evidence to identify strengths, gaps and priorities?
- How do we review progression across year groups?
- How do we adapt provision in response to pupil needs, interests and experiences?
- How does evidence inform future planning and resource allocation?

Tools and Resources

A range of tools and resources are available to support schools in understanding, evaluating and developing career-related learning (CRL) over time. Schools may wish to explore different resources depending on their context, priorities and stage of development.

[The Primary Platform](#) provides guidance, resources and examples of practice to support primary CRL. Schools may find it useful when exploring curriculum links, employer engagement and approaches to broadening aspirations.

[The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#) offers a range of free online courses for primary educators, including:

- 1| [Getting Started with Career-related Learning in Primary](#)
- 2| [Career-related Learning: Embedding Practice in Primary](#)
- 3| [Building and Sustaining Leadership for Career-related Learning in Primary](#)
- 4| [Strengthening Career-related Learning with the Careers Impact Maturity Model for Primary Schools](#)

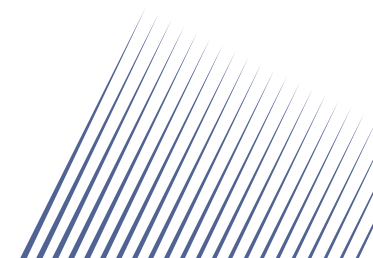
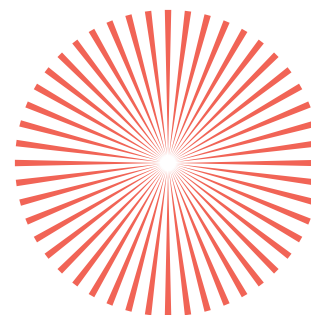
[Career-related learning outcomes and objectives for primary pupils](#) can support schools in thinking about progression and intended impact. Schools may use these outcomes to help shape activities, reflection and curriculum planning over time.

The [Careers Impact Maturity Model for Primary Schools](#) and the Careers Impact internal leadership review can help schools reflect on provision, evaluate impact, identify strengths and priorities, and support continuous improvement over time.

Some schools may also choose to use skills frameworks, such as the [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#), to support a shared language around essential skills including teamwork, communication and problem solving.

The [CDI Framework](#) may be helpful for schools wanting to explore careers learning in greater depth or consider progression into secondary education and beyond.

[Local Careers Hubs](#) can provide opportunities for collaboration, networking and sharing effective practice. Schools may also benefit from engaging with local partners and learning from the approaches being developed across their area.



THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Our Impact

Our evidence