

Working with Schools

A brief guide
for employers

Why do it...
How to do it...
Where to start...



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Foreword by Kate Cavelle, Head of Deutsche Bank Citizenship UK

Supporting education at all levels has been a cornerstone of Deutsche Bank's Citizenship programme in the UK for many years.

By working on a range of projects which impact on the full breadth of the curriculum and school life, we are able to bring positive opportunities and business know-how to enhance and enrich the experiences of students and teachers alike.

Employee volunteering in particular is an integral part of the way Deutsche Bank operates and we are aware that volunteering in the community helps to identify 'top talent', build core competencies of our staff and generate a positive and enjoyable environment in which to work.

We are delighted to have been involved in the production of this guide. Teachers are busy people and although they appreciate the support that employers can offer them, developing and maintaining these relationships can eat away at the time they have to spend with their students.

We hope this guide will provide information and support to schools and businesses who wish to work with each other and will broaden the already considerable support employers provide for schools in London.

If you are interested in working with schools, this brief guide will show you how to go about it.

If you'd like to know what to expect, or how your business can benefit, then read on...



Why work with schools?

They may seem worlds apart, but schools and businesses have a lot to offer one another. Businesses – whether in the corporate or public sector, small or multinational – have a wealth of skills and experience that young people can tap into.

Companies benefit too from working with schools. As well as enhancing their reputation in the community, they get a chance to develop the workforce of the future. It's also an opportunity to build staff skills in areas such as communication, leadership and teamwork.



What's in it for you?

Students aren't the only ones to gain when businesses get involved with schools. Your business benefits too. Here are a few examples.

Skills development

Working with schools provides an opportunity to develop your staff, in a way no training course will ever do. Give them the chance to volunteer with young people – through reading schemes or student mentoring, for example – and watch their sense of achievement grow. It's a chance to practice communication, leadership and teamwork skills in a completely new context.

Increasing staff loyalty

Many companies report increased levels of retention and morale as a result of staff volunteer programmes. And it's not just about the 'feel-good factor'. It's also because people enjoy using their skills in different ways.

Getting to know each other

Working with schools can involve a wide range of staff across many departments and at different levels of seniority. It's a great way for staff to get to know each other and work together.

The workforce of tomorrow

As a business you need a skilled, experienced workforce. What better way to ensure a good employable pool of young people than to go direct to the classroom? By establishing a link with your local school, you can help develop the competences you, as an employer, are looking for.

You want new staff to operate on their own initiative as well as effectively in teams? You want them to know what to expect when they start work – how to dress, how to behave, the importance of punctuality? You want them to have computer skills or a GCSE in Biology? Then tell them now, while they're still learning.



Develop your expertise

School business links are rarely a one-way experience. You'll learn a lot too – about the world of education today, about changes in educational courses and qualifications; and how young people are being prepared for working life. Developing a link with a teacher for example, through Professional Development Placements or Headteachers mentoring, will give you the benefits of an educational consultant on hand for free!

The benefits at a glance

What's in it for you depends on what you want to get out of it. Some of the objectives organisations have listed include:

- Developing staff skills in areas such as teamwork, communication and leadership;
- Reducing staff training costs by providing real-life learning experiences;
- Enhancing your company's reputation;
- Recruiting experienced young people;
- Improving retention by fulfilling staff;
- Building staff and customer loyalty by being a good corporate citizen;
- Increasing brand and company awareness in the community;
- Increasing staff morale;
- Creating opportunities for good publicity and public relations;
- Developing expertise – particularly in the education area;
- Investing in your future workforce;
- Enjoying the opportunity to give something back to the community;
- Helping to overcome skills shortages;
- And it's fun!

Remember, working with schools can take as much or as little of your time as you like. Even if you only have one hour to spare every now and then, you can make a real difference.

“I continue to be truly inspired by the growing involvement of Procter & Gamble people in our local communities. We have a record number of P & G people making a genuine impact in our local communities. Our company vision of making everyday life just a little better is paying off, with so many sharing their business skills and P & G resources to help others succeed”.

Gianni Ciserani, Procter & Gamble's Vice President & Managing Director, UK & Ireland

How you can support learning

London is renowned as one of the world's most vibrant and dynamic cities – a leading centre for finance, business, and the arts – and it demands a workforce to match. The future of the capital's economic development depends, at least in part, on the success of its education systems.

London schools face many challenges, including recruiting and retaining teachers, because of the high cost of living in the capital. Some parts of London are also amongst the most deprived areas in the UK.

And while diversity is undoubtedly one of London's strengths, it also presents significant educational challenges. For example:

- 37 per cent of these pupils have English as an additional language
- 300+ languages are spoken in London.

Business involvement in education can make a real difference, enabling a school to offer opportunities and insights to students that would be impossible otherwise.

Your involvement with a school can directly support teaching of the National Curriculum in areas such as enterprise skills and citizenship. Teachers can also use business involvement to support the teaching of numeracy, literacy or other core subjects.

In other words, your involvement supports learning in measurable ways and gives young people an invaluable insight into the world of work. Just showing students how business works and giving them direct experience of the world of work, can raise their aspirations.



How can you get involved?

Becoming a business partner to a local school could make all the difference. By getting involved, you can play a key part in motivating and inspiring young people. Whatever level of commitment you want to make, you can help raise aspirations and achievement.

There are many ways you can get involved. Here are some examples:

Primary volunteering: helping young children with their reading and number skills.

If you can offer just one hour a week, you could give children the extra support and individual attention they need. It's a chance to give something back to the community, as well as an opportunity to practice your communication and teamwork skills – plus you'll enjoy the satisfaction of seeing young people grow in confidence and become more able.

“For at least one lunchtime a week it’s good to know that you are contributing to a child’s education and the reward is watching your reading partner improve as the weeks go by.”

Jon Green, Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

E-mentoring: using the power of e-mail to support and encourage young people at a crucial time in their lives. E-mentors are business people from across the capital who are paired with a secondary student from a London school to offer support, advice and encouragement. E-mentors and students exchange e-mails once or twice a week, building a relationship that supports students in years 10, 11 and 12.

Work experience: is a crucial part of the curriculum for all school students. Work experience gives young people an opportunity to learn about a whole range of careers, as well as developing interpersonal and employability skills. As well as contributing to the development of young people, you as an employer will reap the rewards in terms of motivating and developing staff.

“My work experience time is something I won’t forget, the staff were polite and treated me like an adult. Before my summer holidays, after finishing my exams, I plan to call back the placement and ask if I can work there for six weeks to gain work experience and to keep me learning.”

Year 10 Student, Quintin Kynaston School, Westminster

Presentation/ discussion: you could share your lessons learnt from school, university and the business world by going into a school to talk to students about your job etc. This could be one-off or ongoing.

Mentoring: supporting London students one-to-one through their final terms at school. A mentor is someone who is not a parent or a teacher – someone outside a young person’s normal life who can encourage and guide, share experiences or simply listen. Apart from the personal satisfaction of helping a young person, you too will benefit by using your communication skills, adapting to different situations and thinking on your feet.

“I have found being a mentor is a rewarding experience and an important element in providing support and information for students at a critical time in their studies”

Ed Maguire, Business Volunteer, City of Westminster Council

Professional Development Placements: supporting a London teacher. Professional Development Placements (PDPs) give London teachers the chance to spend up to five days in a business environment, learning new skills which they can take back to the classroom. It’s your chance to make sure today’s students receive a broad, business-related education. Plus it’s also an opportunity to learn about the world of education first hand.

These are just a few of the ways that businesses and schools in London are already working together. You may have your own ideas, which LCEBA, local EBP or school business link broker can help you develop. To find out more, see the Resources insert.

“I was fortunate to have participated in the Professional Development Placement for Paula Ledger from Waverley School in Southwark. Paula worked with us for two weeks looking at accelerated learning ideas and created a comprehensive folder. This resource has been shared with her colleagues and the Crystal Palace Study Centre.”

Chris Myant, Centre Manager, Crystal Palace FC Study Centre



Seven steps... ...to a successful Education Business Partnership!



Step 1

Read this brochure then contact your local Education Business Partnership, London Central Education Business Alliance or other local school business link broker if you have any questions (see Resources insert for contact details).

Step 2

Decide what your business wants to achieve by working with schools.

Step 3

Make contact with a school, probably via your local Education Business Partnership, LCEBA or other local school business link broker (see Resources insert), and think about what kind of activity will best meet your needs.

Step 4

Meet with the school and agree an activity. Create a plan showing what will happen and who will do what and how the project will be evaluated.

Step 5

Put the plan into action and evaluate its success.

Step 6

Feedback the results to everyone concerned so people know what has been achieved.

Step 7

Think about how to improve the activity for next time, or another activity to try, building on what has been learned.

Getting started

You are interested in working with schools, but where should you begin? Your first step should be to contact your local Education Business Partnership (EBP), Education Business Link Organisations (EBLO) or school business link brokers e.g. City Action. These are organisations which have extensive experience of running Education Business Link projects. See Resources insert for contact details.

They may already have a programme you can get involved in, and schools you can make contact with. If, however, the activity you have in mind doesn't already exist – or isn't being run in your borough, the LCEBA Business Club, or other school business link brokers should be able to help you get started. You'll find the contact details on the Resources insert.

Asking the right questions

The key to a successful education business link is the right partnership and the right activity. Some useful questions you should ask yourself are:

What do we want to achieve? The potential benefits to business have already been outlined. It may be you can identify a specific need – such as skills development or boosting staff morale – or you may just want to put something back into the community.

How much time do we want to commit? Organising a workplace visit for students takes much less time than mentoring, for example. Make sure the school understands the level of commitment you wish to make before undertaking a project together.

Where will the activity take place? Is it practical for your staff to spend time at the school? Some activities, such as e-mentoring, require no travel. Others, such as Professional Development Placements, involve the school or individual teachers visiting you.

Where is the school? If staff need to visit the school, you may want to choose one within easy reach. However, the schools that are hardest to reach are often the ones that need the most support.

What age group do we want to work with? Businesses and schools work together on projects with primary school students right up to higher education. What age group of students do you think would benefit most from your help?



How many students do we want to work with? You may prefer a one-to-one activity such as mentoring or you may want to work with the whole class.

What skills do we have to offer? Think about the specific business skills or departments your organisation has – such as marketing, HR, legal, catering, reception, finance. Think, too, about the ‘soft skills’ you can offer in activities such as primary volunteering.

How do I prepare staff to volunteer? Employees may require assistance in understanding the school environment and how to effectively engage with young people. A valuable resource ‘The Rough Guide to Communicating with Young People’ has been developed by *oneLondon* in partnership with City Action (see Resources insert).

As you are asking yourself these questions, try to think of the needs of the school and how you can add value to its existing activities. Avoid dictating what you can and can’t offer a school, but rather adopt a flexible approach.

Many organisations already have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy in place, which reflects how they meet the expectations society has for business. If your company has a CSR policy, think about how education business links could help you achieve your CSR objectives. If you don’t have a CSR policy, LCEBA can help you draw one up.



Working with schools

So you have an idea of how you want to work with schools. You might even have made contact with a school already. Here are some general guidelines about working with schools, although each Headteacher will have their own way of operating.

Time and commitment

Most teachers' main priority is teaching and this takes up the majority of their time and attention. You will both have to be realistic about how much time you have to devote to a project and establish this at the outset.

Timing

You will need to be aware of the school's timetable when planning business education links. Certain times of the school year – for instance, exams and holidays – will be off limits. A working day for schools also differs from yours as a business. There will be times of the day when teachers are unavailable, so always agree on the best time of day to contact each other.

Sustainability

Many schools in London suffer from a high turnover of staff, which may mean you will have to adapt to working with different teachers. Open channels of communication are essential on both sides to ensure the partnership doesn't collapse. This is where your local Education Business Partnership, Education Business Link Organisation or other school business link brokers can also help.

Communication

The working environment of most schools is very different to yours as a business. For a start, teachers sit in front of students, not computers! Schools, by their very nature, operate in ways which you may find frustrating – for example, messages often take a while to be passed on and phone calls may take longer to be returned. If possible, try and get a teacher's mobile number. To avoid misunderstanding, it's worth establishing some ground rules at the start of a project.



Health and safety

Depending on how you work with schools, there may be health and safety issues to take into account. Talk to your teacher about what these might be for your particular project before you get underway.

The Education System

Education in England and Wales is divided into four main stages: primary, secondary, further and higher education. Statutory education lasts for 11 years (from age five to 16).

Under the National Curriculum, four Key Stages to education have been established:

Key Stage 1	5-7 years old
Key Stage 2	7-11 years old
Key Stage 3	11-14 years old
Key Stage 4	14-16 years old

Students are assessed at the end of each stage. At Key Stage 4 it's GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). Once these have been completed, students have the choice of continuing with further education or seeking employment.



Making it work

So you've read this guide, and you now have a rough idea what to expect – and possibly even a project in mind. Here are our tips for making it a success:

Manage expectations

Make sure you and your link school have a clear idea at the outset of the level of commitment you both intend to offer. Business education link activities cater for all levels of commitment, whether it be a one-off visit to a school or a long-term relationship.

Establish ground rules

Always establish a working agreement, laying out expectations and objectives on both sides.

Share good practice

Discussing good practice with likeminded organisations will help improve the project and the partnership with the school. The LCEBA Business Club holds regular forums for employers involved in education business link activities. See Resources insert for contact details.

Gather feedback

Collecting feedback from everyone involved in an activity – teachers, students and volunteers – is a great way of improving the project and motivating participants.





This guide is produced by London Central Education Business Alliance (LCEBA) in partnership with *one*London and is sponsored by the London Challenge.

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The following organisations have contributed to the toolkit:



*one*London



Deutsche Bank
Marakon Associates
Procter & Gamble
Learning & Skills Development Agency
The Specialist Schools Trust
The Enterprise Advisor Service,
Southwest and Central London

