Employer Guide to Meaningful Engagement with Primary Schools

A practical guide for employers

North East Ambition

North East Mayoral Strategic Authority | Kim McGuinness North East Mayor

Summary:

This guide highlights the importance of early employer engagement with primary schools to inspire children and support their development while benefiting employers and communities.

Benefits for children and employer

Early engagement helps children challenge job stereotypes, build confidence, connect learning to real life, and develop career curiosity, while employers can cultivate future talent, support staff, build community ties, and create social impact.

Characteristics of meaningful encounters

Effective interactions have clear purposes, age-appropriate learning outcomes, two-way communication, and include reflection to deepen understanding.

Planning and delivering engagement

Employers should clarify school needs, co-develop tailored activities, consider school context, focus on purposeful themes, use simple language, encourage interaction, and support reflection to maximize impact.

Examples and sustaining engagement

Activities include storytelling, dress-up, mini challenges, career carousels, workplace visits, and talks. After sessions, feedback, ongoing relationships, impact tracking, and celebration of involvement are encouraged.



Employer Guide to Meaningful Engagement with Primary Schools

Children are naturally curious, imaginative, and eager to explore. Engaging with them early helps raise aspirations, build awareness of the world of work, and open their minds to future possibilities.

Why early employer engagement matters

For children, it helps them:

- Challenge stereotypes about jobs and who can do them
- Build confidence and communication skills
- Understand how learning connects to real life
- Develop curiosity about future careers.

For employers, it enables you to:

- Develop your future talent pipeline
- Support staff development
- Build partnerships and engage with your local community
- Create meaningful social impact.

This guide supports employers in designing and delivering meaningful encounters with primary-aged pupils.

Everyone has something to bring – whether it's sharing your career journey, showcasing the skills behind your industry, or offering hands-on activities. These experiences help pupils see the value of learning and broaden their horizons from an early age.

What is a meaningful encounter?

A meaningful encounter is a carefully planned experience that:

- Has a clear purpose, shared with both the employer and the pupils
- Is underpinned by age-appropriate learning outcomes
- Includes two-way interaction, allowing children to ask questions and share ideas
- Ends with reflection, helping children think about what they've learned.

Preparing for Your Encounter

1	**Understand the School's Request** Clarify logistics, pupil cohort details, and activity expectations. Your school contact should provide this information—if not, be sure to ask ahead of time.
2	**Co-Develop Activities** Collaborate with teachers or school partners to plan activities that are both meaningful and sustainable. Pupils benefit from tailored learning, while teachers gain real-world context to enrich curriculum delivery.
3	**School Context** Engagement may differ depending on the type, size and location of a school. For smaller schools, the most impactful approach often involves activities that engage the whole school across all year groups. This ensures every child benefits and maximizes the reach of your efforts.



Planning Your Encounter

Make your engagement impactful and enjoyable by focusing on four key principles:

1

Make it Purposeful

- Focus on themes like teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, or helping others.
- Link your activity to classroom topics (e.g., transport, community, science).

2

Keep it Age-Appropriate

- Use simple language and relatable examples.
- Consider how you will explain technical vocabulary — explain your job in terms they will understand (e.g., "I help people stay safe" instead of "I'm a compliance officer").

3

Encourage Interaction

- Let children ask questions, guess what you do, or try simple tasks.
- Use props, pictures, or role-play to bring your job to life.

4

Support Reflection

- Ask children to draw or write about what they have learned and what it might mean for their own aspirations.
- Encourage teachers to follow up with classroom discussion or creative activities.



Examples of Primary-Friendly Encounters

Type of Encounter	What Employers Can Do	What Pupils Gain
Storytelling Session	Share how you use skills like maths or teamwork	See how school subjects connect to jobs
Job Role Dress-Up	Bring uniforms, tools, or props	Explore different roles in a fun, engaging way
Mini Challenges	Set a simple task (e.g., build a tower)	Practice problem-solving and teamwork
Career Carousel	Rotate small groups through job stations	Discover a variety of careers
Workplace Visit	Host a tour and introduce your team	Understand workplace environments
Career Talk	Share your career story and answer questions	Learn about different roles and pathways

Review and Sustain Engagement

After your encounter:

- **Seek feedback** from teachers and pupils to inform future sessions
- **Maintain relationships** with the school – schedule a follow-up or plan your next visit
- **Capture impact** (e.g., pupil numbers, year group, location) to share within your organisation
- **Celebrate your engagement** via your website or social media (ensure photo permissions are confirmed with the school).

Tips for Successful Engagement

- **Be enthusiastic** – your energy makes a lasting impression
- **Be inclusive** – represent diverse roles, backgrounds, and career pathways
- **Be flexible** – adapt to the school's needs and schedule
- **Be reflective** – ask pupils what they enjoyed and what they learned.

Testimonials

"Working with a local primary school, just three miles from our site, was a truly rewarding experience. The pupils' enthusiasm and curiosity highlighted how early engagement with local schools can inspire young people and strengthen our future talent pipeline."

Marmax Products Ltd

"Our main outcomes from engaging with local primary schools - raising children's aspirations, broke down some stereotypes and created long-term engagement paths with children"

Wates Construction

"The staff were really impressed with how well planned and organised the trip was. The hosts were really helpful and informative. The staff thought that the children got an awful lot out of inspiration and information about construction jobs from the trip."

Harlow Green Community Primary School

Useful Resources

- **For session planning tips explore**
  How to Talk to Tiny People: Primary Business Partnership for session planning tips.
- **An overview of the Education System and engagement ideas explore**
  Education Landscape: A guide for Employers for an overview of the education system.
- **For practical tips**
  Education outreach - starter pack for employers | The Careers and Enterprise Company
- **Impact of early engagement**
  Insight briefing 3: The promise of primary | The Careers and Enterprise Company.

