

# The Oaks Specialist College Careers Programme

Skills for employment

Professional  
development

Business-led transition  
to work programmes

Linking curriculum  
to careers

Career talks  
& workshops

Workplace visits

Careers Information,  
Advice & Guidance

Enterprise projects

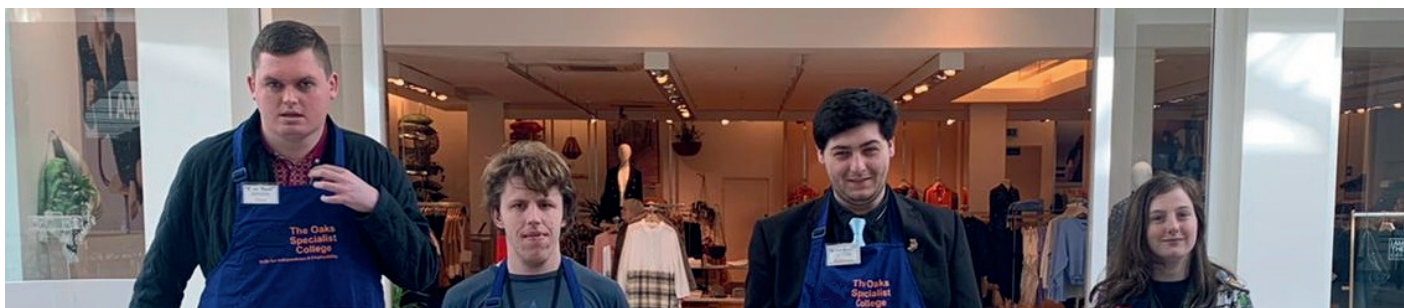
Career & job fairs

Work-related learning

**The Careers Programme at The Oaks Specialist College has 10 different sections that all come together as part of our careers offering.**

**The Careers Programme follows guidance from “The 8 Gatsby Benchmarks”, a framework that supports colleges to provide quality careers education, information, advice and guidance.**

# 1. Linking curriculum to careers



At The Oaks Specialist College, learners gain skills for “Independence and Employment” - but they also gain key skills and qualification in Maths, English, Life Skills, Cooking, Art, Drama, Music, Enterprise and Digital Media and Technology. By linking all curriculum areas to careers education, learners develop skills and knowledge that improve their opportunities and understanding, in the journey to reaching their full potential.

Here are some examples as to how careers learning is embedded into various parts of the curriculum:

## Maths

Maths is used in all in almost every situation in the workplace, so linking maths to careers is massively important. Being able to confidently read the time, use money, measure, add and subtract numbers are all skills needed in everyday life and in employment. At The Oaks Specialist College, we use our internal Tesco store to give us practical ways of developing these skills.

## English

Whatever the business sector, English skills are key to having a career and sustaining employment. Being able to read, write, listen, follow instructions and communicate are all key skills needed in every job role and career path.

## Digital media and Technology

Digital media and Technology are used in every sector to increase productivity and efficiency. As a Microsoft Showcase college, The Oaks has a huge focus on connecting its learners to the most up-to-date and accessible technology for their learning and development in college, on work placements and in every walk of life. We also work with employers so they can better understand technological solutions and adjustments that may be required for our learners.

## 2. Work related learning

All learners at The Oaks Specialist College have multiple opportunities to gain work experience. These opportunities are either through the college's internal enterprise initiatives, or externally in the community. and include group or individual work experience, community projects and/or volunteering.



Work Placements are an important part of the Careers Programme. They give an opportunity for learners to gain real work experience of different job roles and find a career that takes their interest. Practical experience gives learners a better understanding of different job roles and a chance to develop valuable skills for employment. Learners complete a Work-Related Learning Booklet, or follow a non-accredited programme of study, to record and evidence their progress.

### Internal Work Placements at The Oaks College

At The Oaks, our internal Work Placements are treated exactly the same as work experience in an external business. Learners have a work induction, are given information on health and safety procedures, fill out time sheets, have a contract of employment with a clear job description. Learners also review their Work Placement and understand the key employability skills they have developed during the placement, and how this can support them for future employment.

### External Work Placements

Learners at The Oaks College also have opportunities to attend a Work Placement in their local community to gain a real-life insight into different jobs and industries. These experiences allow learners to gain competencies and references to add to the CVs. In most cases, there is also the possibility for learners to gain employment if they are successful during their placement.

## External work placement partners:

Blue Diamond Garden Centre

DPD

Premier Inn

The Entertainer

Grove Park School

Porthaven - Tonbridge House Care Home

And many more...

## Internal work placement options:

Gardening & horticulture

Carpentry & upcycling

Hospitality and catering

Retail

Art & enterprise

Deja Brew coffee cart



## 3. Skills for employment

The Oaks College promotes learners to recognise, learn and develop a full range of employability skills during their time at college. These skills give learners the best opportunity of success in their Work Placements, which can then lead to volunteering or employment.



During the academic year, learners develop a range of these skills across all subjects within the curriculum. This can be in class, out in the community or within their internal or external work placements. There are eight key skills that we particularly focus on (shown below).

### The Oaks' Key Skills for Employment

- Teamwork
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Perseverance
- Using initiative
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Professional communication

## 4. Career talks & workshops

The Oaks College Careers Team has qualified Job Coaches and therapists to run employability workshops, covering the process of employment, communication and interaction and CPD courses, throughout the academic year. These workshops particularly focus on key skills like CV writing, searching and applying for jobs, and interview skills.

To complement this, we work closely with numerous business partners to ensure that our learners gain an understanding of a wide variety of business sectors and hear directly from as many different inspirational people as possible, raising awareness and aspirations.

### Our workshops cover:

- **Personal details**
- **General skills for employment**
- **CV Writing**
- **Career aspiration**
- **Job searching**
- **Social inclusion**
- **Applying for jobs**
- **Covering letters**
- **Body language**
- **Interview skills**

Our work with the business community includes a range of career talks from a host of different people across numerous sectors and industries. Learners are able to ask questions, talk about different careers, the application and recruitment processes for each, and also hear about the skills needed within particular industries. These career talks are fun and interactive and give the learners and opportunity to explore areas they have not previously heard about.

In previous years our events have included talks from a landscape gardener, medical therapist, nurse, artist / fashion designer, police officer, hospitality worker, events manager, and finance clerk.

All of our work in this area helps learners to understand the process of employment and what is required from them to demonstrate they are suitable candidates.

## Amelia the artist



Amelia came into The Oaks College and shared her passions in life - art and textiles.

Amelia shared her knowledge and experiences of working in different careers but still keeping her passion for art and textiles alive.

Her talk provided our learners the opportunity to understand that working isn't all about money and that, to many people, it is about being happy, doing something you enjoy and feel passionately about.

**Find a job you enjoy  
doing, and you will  
never have to work  
a day in your life**



## 5. Workplace visits

Throughout the academic year, our learners visit various workplaces to gain a better understanding of different industries, businesses and job roles. This first-hand experience cannot be replicated in college and is hugely powerful in raising learners aspirations and giving them the full picture of specific workplaces.

In previous years, we have taken learners to a wide spectrum of different workplaces, such as Royal Mail, Thames Water, Warburton's, Trinity Theatre, and these have proved memorable experiences for all involved. Learners get to do a range of fun activities and ask questions to lots of different professionals while they are in their working environment. Learners can also find out about how to apply for jobs, apprenticeship, traineeships, and the different routes to access certain job roles.

### A visit to BNY Mellon in Blackfriars, London

As part of a wider work-related learning partnership with the U.S. bank, BNY Mellon, a group of our learners were given the fabulous opportunity of a visit to their U.K. headquarters, in Blackfriars, London.



The group had a superb day, touring the offices, interviewing employees about their job roles and wider careers, and gaining an insight into how a huge business operates.



## 6. Enterprise Projects

Our creative enterprise projects enable learners to experience the world of business by taking part in a range of different enterprise projects, in college and out in the community. Each project helps to develop an understanding of basic business concepts, like profit and loss, alongside enhancing employability skills like teamwork, communication, problem solving and time management.

In the creative groups, such as art, hospitality & catering, carpentry & upcycling, and gardening & horticulture, the majority of products made are sold to staff, parents, carers and guardians, as well as our wider community. All money raised from these enterprise projects are then reinvested, allowing us to broaden our scope and even to undertake new ideas and projects.

The projects are a fun and creative way to learn employability skills and explore different job roles. When learners have a better understanding of different careers, they can make better informed decisions about what they might like to do in the future.

### Spill the Beans Café

The Oaks College has its own café run by a group of learners. The group cook a variety of foods, organise and cater for events, and practice their customer service skills. The café gives our young people a great understanding of the different job roles in hospitality and catering and gives a superb outlet for their creativity. All tasks and roles within this enterprise group develop valuable employability skills that support learners' future career development.



### Deja Vu – Coffee cart

Learners at The Oaks took part in a range of fundraising activities to purchase a mobile Coffee Kart. The kart has given another excellent opportunity to develop key skills for employment; working within their local community, and learning how to make a range of coffees and teas. The learners have lots of amazing ideas for the future of this project, including working in a range of locations in the local community, and providing a service for our taxi drivers.



# “Love That!”

Our vision is to give all our young people opportunities to discover ways of learning that engage them and enable them to gain new skills and knowledge.

By developing entrepreneurial credentials, our learners not only develop key skills for employments, but they gain a better understanding of business and finance.



One way of embedding these skills is through ‘Enterprise’, where our young people look at creative ways to produce products to sell.

In 2022, we were provided an opportunity by Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre, in Tunbridge Wells, to open a pop-up shop, sell some of our amazing products and give our learners valuable work experience. This fabulous partnership has also been a valuable way of showcasing The Oaks, and the boundless ability of our learners, to our local community.

The pop-up shop was a huge success and has now become an annual event, thanks to the incredible trust our learners won from our hosts - they were bowled over by our young people and their enthusiasm and professionalism.

All learners in the college are involved in this initiative and it enhances many parts of their usual weekly curriculum, including both core subjects - Maths and English.



## 7. Career and job fairs

Throughout the academic year, our learners are able to attend a range of careers and job fairs. These events are vital to help raise aspirations and give learners an opportunity to speak to a wide range of different career professionals.

These events offer an opportunity to gathering information and contact details. Questions are always encouraged, so we challenge our learners to not only gain a better understanding of what skills, qualifications and experience are needed for a variety of jobs, but to also find out what each businesses' application process looks like.

Post-event follow-up, back at the college, is also covered to further discuss and explore each of these local business the jobs and career opportunities they offer.

### Reverse Jobs Fair

In addition to external events, and as a key part of the Careers Programme at The Oaks Specialist College, learners take part in a Reverse Jobs Fair.

This allows them one-to-one time to meet with employers and share their skills, qualifications, work experience, employment history, and aspirations for the future.

It is an amazing opportunity for learners to improve their understanding of each company attending and for employers to truly understand the vast amount our young people have to offer. As with external events, learners can also find out about the recruitment processes of each business and the skills and qualifications needed to work in that chosen career pathway.

Our Reverse Jobs Fairs have brought many businesses into our college and have led to work experience and employment opportunities with organisations such as DPD and Premier Inn. The events have also received positive attention from the media and local MPs.

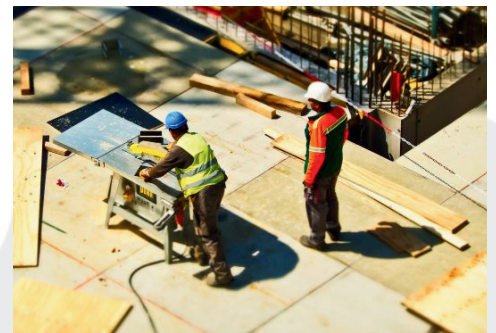


## 8. Professional development

Our learners have opportunities to go on careers related CPD courses, such as First Aid, Food Hygiene, Customer Service, and Driving Theory, to improve their chances of gaining employment.



Learners at The Oaks College can access different courses that will support their career development and give them better opportunities to secure work experience and employment. Providing learners, the opportunity to gain valuable qualifications that can support them to gain a work placement and employment in the future.



### Courses previously supported

- First Aid course
- Food Hygiene course
- Health and Safety course
- Customer Service course
- CSCS Operative card
- Driving Theory

## 9. Employer-led transition to work programmes



More and more businesses offer Supported Employment programmes, as part of their recruitment. At The Oaks, we can dovetail neatly with these, as we are able to offer businesses, who offer places to our learners, the extra support of the Job Coaches within our Careers Team.

We work with the individual businesses to ensure that we give our learners the best possible opportunity of a positive, sustainable outcome.

We also encourage businesses, who might not have an existing programme, to give serious thought to getting something started. We work with experts in this field to clearly demonstrate the huge successes that are possible.



## 10. Careers Education, Information, Advice & Guidance (CEIAG)

At The Oaks, we tailor careers advice and guidance to each individual learner, taking into consideration their skills, interests, aspirations, and the area in which they live. Our Careers Team provides advice and support and, if appropriate, learners are also assigned to a Level 6 Careers Advisor. Together, we ensure our learners are fully supported with CV writing, job matching and searching, applications, and interview skills. We also arrange opportunities for learners to attend jobs fairs and run careers workshops to improve different employability skills.

### Labour Market Information - what is it?

Labour Market Information (LMI) can provide us with insights into jobs available now or predicted to be in the future - making it an important consideration when researching potential career pathways.

Tools, such as the one available on the website [imiforall.org.uk](http://imiforall.org.uk), can help us access basic data on different jobs which, is helpful for a broad picture but very generalised. Therefore, it is important to ask questions like, "How was the information gathered? When? By whom and for what purpose?" The answers to these will affect what the data is attempting to prove, whether it is biased, and what it may mean for you and your career decisions.

Type to start searching	Gardeners and landscape gardeners				
Q e.g. hair stylist	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Weekly Pay <b>£440</b></td> <td>Annual Pay <b>£22,880</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hours/Week <b>79h</b></td> <td>Hourly Pay <b>£6</b></td> </tr> </table>	Weekly Pay <b>£440</b>	Annual Pay <b>£22,880</b>	Hours/Week <b>79h</b>	Hourly Pay <b>£6</b>
Weekly Pay <b>£440</b>	Annual Pay <b>£22,880</b>				
Hours/Week <b>79h</b>	Hourly Pay <b>£6</b>				
	<p><b>Workforce Change</b> (projected)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Growth <b>2.5%</b></td> <td>Replacement <b>97.4%</b></td> </tr> </table> <p>The workforce is projected to grow by 2.5% over the period to 2027, creating <b>3,700</b> jobs. In the same period, 97.4% of the workforce is projected to retire, creating <b>143,000</b> job openings.</p>	Growth <b>2.5%</b>	Replacement <b>97.4%</b>		
Growth <b>2.5%</b>	Replacement <b>97.4%</b>				
	<p>You might find this job in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, etc</li> <li>Sport &amp; recreation</li> <li>Computer programming, etc</li> <li>Other personal service</li> <li>Specialised construction</li> </ul>				
	<p><b>More info</b> <b>Clear card</b></p>				

Screen grab from the LMI For All careerometer

### Be informed

When researching the labour market, it is important to try and use more than one source of information to ensure the most accurate data. Don't forget to reach out to your own network - there are plenty of sources of support to help you with this: parents, carers, teachers, friends and your careers adviser.

There are some excellent resources available for researching Labour Market Information in the different areas of Kent, plus other areas across the South East.

These include the careers section of 'startprofile.com', the resources section of 'cxk.org', economic profiles and statistics via 'nomisweb.co.uk' and economic forecasting via 'kent.gov.uk > facts and figures'

## Advice for parents, carers and guardians

We will do everything we can at The Oaks College, to teach and develop key employability skills and support them into external work placements and employment. But to provide our learners with the best opportunities available, we need everyone in our learners "circle of support" to be fully involved.

We encourage parents and carers to get involved in the Careers Programme and share their knowledge and opportunities with the wider college community. An opportunity might not be suitable for one learner might be perfect for another. So please get in contact with the college the Careers Team at The Oaks and share any opportunities.

### Work Placements

- Parents, carers and guardians are encouraged to proactively support their learners into work placements and employment.
- To look for work placements and employment that is accessible to where you live.
- Don't discourage high aspirations but be realistic with the careers advice and guidance you explain to your learners.
- Share work placement and employment opportunities with The Oaks College – a work placement opportunity might not be suitable for your learner but there are other learners who might be interested.
- Be a part of the Careers Programme - we'd be delighted to have you along to The Oaks to speak about your career, experiences, job role and provide an opportunity for learners to ask questions.

### Enterprise and community projects

Parents, carers and guardians are encouraged to help with enterprise and community projects at The Oaks.

To support the different enterprise projects throughout the year – All proceeds that are made are reinvested within other enterprise projects.

Share community projects with The Oaks College – If you have an opportunity for our learners to do some work in the local community that will explore different job roles and teach employability skills. Feel free to contact the Careers Team at The Oaks and share any opportunity.



## Useful Careers Websites

There are some amazing websites that offer careers advice and guidance, support to gain employment and provide opportunities for volunteering and employment. Please take some time to put these into your favourite search engine web-page and explore the resources

- The Careers & Enterprise Company
- National Careers Service
- Prospects.ac.uk (careers advice)
- Monster.co.uk (careers advice & career guidance)
- Youth Employment UK
- UK Youth Employment
- Careers Guidance And Advice For Disabled Young People
- Sec-Ed (careers education for students with SEND)
- startprofile.com (careers Information)
- Career Connect
- Volunteers Wanted in Kent - Give Back To Your Community
- Volunteering - Kent County Council
- The Shaw Trust
- Kent Volunteers
- The Wow Show
- RBLI Careers