



**Altrincham Grammar School
for Boys**

**Work Experience
Booklet**

Guide to finding a placement



What is Work Experience?

The Department of Education (DfE) definition of work experience is: 'A placement on employer's premises in which a student carries out a particular task or duty, or range of tasks and duties, more or less as would an employee, but with an emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience'

Work experience gives young people the opportunity for involvement in a workplace, helping them to understand how the world of work operates and how it differs to school. It also gives businesses the opportunity to raise their profile in the local area and to be involved in developing the workforce of the future.

Over the last 30 years it has become the norm for all students to have some experience of work, whilst still at school, and this generally takes place over one week around the age of 15.

The benefits of work experience

When done well, work experience brings tangible benefits for young people, employers, schools and society as a whole. It can increase young people's confidence and promote social mobility by challenging stereotypes in relation to their career aspirations. A recent report states that many young people believe that work experience helps to develop their employability skills and that around a quarter of students are offered part-time employment following a work experience placement.

How do I choose my work placement?

Finding a work placement is not always easy. It requires patience, determination and a willingness to compromise and be open minded.

One of the main purposes of work experience for school age students is to give you the experience of 'work', 'going to work' and 'working with adults'. It could be argued that it does not really matter where you work. You may have your sights set on becoming an architect, doctor, engineer scientist, solicitor etc. These are jobs that require years of training so think carefully what working in a professional area might mean. For example working at a doctor's surgery is most likely to involve work in reception, with some observation if you are lucky. However, if this is what you really want to do, don't be put off, but remember such placements can be hard to find. Maybe look for placement in a related field, in this case perhaps work in a pharmacy or chemist's shop.

So, how do you decide what work placement is for you? You don't necessarily have to choose something that you want to do as a job when you leave school. The aim is for you to experience life in an adult workplace. It might even be an advantage to do something different.

Why not start by writing down a list of as many possibilities that come to mind – use the following questions to help you do this:

- What do I want to do when I leave school?
- What are my interests and hobbies?
- What am I good at?
- What new skills would I like to learn?
- What jobs have I seen people doing that I think look interesting?

and **remember**

- Be positive – work experience, whatever the placement, is an opportunity to learn new things and find things out about yourself
- Many boys who take on jobs that they would never have dreamt of doing have a very rewarding time, and you don't have to do the job for life!

Other questions that may help you decide.

- Is this a realistic work placement for a 14/15 year old?
- What sort of work am I likely to be doing? Will there be enough to do? Will I be bored?
- Would this placement give me experience of tasks related to a profession that I am interested in?
- Is this work placement an opportunity to try something completely different?

What makes a great work experience placement?

The best placements are often those in a sector about which you feel passionately, and/or one in which you have opportunities to do 'hands-on' tasks.

There is still a great deal that you can learn though from a work experience opportunity which may not align directly to your future aspirations. This includes positive outcomes relating to the generic experience of work and the recognition and development of employability skill and a better understanding of your career aspirations.

How can I find my work placement?

Now that you have some ideas for work placements, you can make a start looking for a business that will offer you the kind of placement you want. If your parents, relatives, friends or neighbours know someone in that line of work that could be a useful way of getting a placement. Otherwise you could search for your own placement.

Having decided what type of business you are looking for, you could approach this in a number of ways:

1. For some placements you could approach a local business with which you are familiar. Look them up in the phone book or on the internet. If it is a small business such as an optician or shop you might make a direct approach and call in person. Larger businesses would expect a more formal approach by letter.
2. Often the simplest way to find the placement you want is to use the Yellow Pages Directory, Thompson Directory or other local directory. These have details of most local businesses under different business categories from which you can get business names and addresses to write to. Many businesses have websites, so once you have found the name and address of a business you could try to find their website (the web address is often given in the directory) and see exactly what they do and if there is a named person to whom you could write or email.
3. Another way of finding the above information is to use the online versions of these directories:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Yell.com | http://www.yell.com/ |
| THOMPSONLocal.com | http://www.thomsonlocal.com/ |
4. Alternatively, just try typing the name of the business type you are looking for into the search engine. For example, if you were looking for placements at an architect's type 'architects', or better still type 'architects + name of your town/city' into the search engine.
5. You could look at the local papers and see what companies are advertising in there that might be of interest to you. Then look up their details on the internet.

What will you learn while on work experience?

Work experience can be useful in helping you to develop knowledge and skills that will help you in adult life, including general workplace and employability skills.

General workplace skills

Almost every work placement will help you develop general workplace skills, for example:

- experience of the workplace and workplace culture and routines
- working alongside adults
- carrying out new tasks
- fitting in with the 'workplace culture'
- developing self confidence

How do I make contact and get my work placement?

Once you have found some companies that carry out the business that you are interested in for your work placement you need to make contact and see if they can offer you a placement.

There are four ways to contact a company

1. In person

If it is a local shop that you are interested in working in then it might be a good idea to go along in person when the shop isn't very busy and enquire about a placement.

If you are calling in person you should:

- a. Think about what to say before you call (*who you are, your school, that you want a work placement in pharmacy/retail etc because....., when you need the placement for and for how long, would they be able to offer you a placement, if yes – what are working days/times etc – get them to fill in the details of the placement form*)
- b. Be presentable (ie clean and smart appearance)
- c. Ask to talk to the manager/owner
- d. Introduce yourself and explain why you are there (see a.)
- e. Thank the employer for their time (and offer if successful) even if they cannot offer a placement.

2. By phone

Use of the telephone is perhaps the least preferred way of contacting a company. You must be really confident to do this. The person you are speaking to does not know you, cannot see you, may be busy at the time you call, and it is so easy just to say no. If you do choose to phone the employer, you should:

- a. Think about what to say before you call (*who you are, your school, that you want a work placement in pharmacy/retail etc because....., when you need the placement for and for how long, would they be able to offer you a placement, if yes – what are working days/times etc – ask them for contact information to fill in the details on the placement form*)
- b. Speak clearly and slowly
- c. Ask to speak to the manager/owner or someone in the Human Resources Department
- d. Introduce yourself and explain why you are phoning (see a.)
- e. Thank the employer for their time (and offer if successful) even if they cannot offer a placement.

3. By letter

This is the most common way of contacting large companies. If you are sending a letter it can be hand written or typed on the computer. Ideally it should be no longer than one side of A4 paper.

In a large company, contact the **Human Resources department**. In a smaller company you will usually need to write to the **Manager**.

Remember – this is the first contact you will have with an employer and you therefore want to create a good impression so check that the following are correct:

- Presentation and layout
- Spelling
- Company name and address
- That you have the right dates for your work experience

4. By email

Email seems to be the most effective way to contact a company these days as it is very convenient for the company to reply to you. You will probably need to look at the company's website to get an email address.

In a large company, contact the **Human Resources department**. In a smaller company you will usually need to write to the **Manager**. If you are sending an email and don't have an individual's name or email address at the company mark your email at the beginning or in the subject line "FAO Human Resources" or "FAO The Manager".

Remember – this is the first contact you will have with an employer and you therefore want to create a good impression so check that the following are correct:

- Presentation and layout
- Spelling
- That you have the right dates for your work Experience

If you are sending a letter or email contact several companies as you may not receive a reply or they may take weeks to say "no". Don't get disheartened by this, it is nothing personal, they are usually just very busy! However, because of this it is important to approach several companies so that you have a number of options open to you.

What do I do next?

Once you have found a work experience placement, fill in the Y10 Work Experience Form found online in the Parents section of the School website.

Mrs Lord will then use the details on the form to make contact with your work experience company and will ask them to complete a risk assessment form and ask for them to send a copy of their Employer's Liability Insurance. You will not hear any more unless there are any problems.

Nearer the time of your work experience you will have to complete a form with your medical details, Mrs Lord will then use this information to contact your work experience placement with any relevant medical details, and a contact telephone number for emergencies, this is also a reminder to your work experience placement that you are coming, as some placements were arranged many months ago.

The week prior to your placement Dr Thomas will hold an assembly to let you know what is expected of you on your work experience placement. You will receive 2 forms to take with you which are to be completed at the end of your placement, one to be completed by you and one to be completed by your supervisor about how your week went.

Your work experience placement should take place on the last week of the Summer Term, if for whatever reason your placement is on alternative dates you will be expected to be in school during the last week.