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# STARTING EARLY



**NICK CHAMBER  
WRITES ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF  
CAREER-RELATED  
LEARNING IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

In responding to the Covid pandemic much of the focus of the profession is rightly on the needs of secondary/tertiary students and those Not in Education, Employment or Training and the need to provide them with high-quality independent impartial careers advice and guidance from professionally-qualified advisers.

Against this backdrop one might question the relevance of an article on career-related learning in primary schools. As we know schools have a massive challenge ahead to motivate children, re-socialise and support them in overcoming their anxieties whilst re-energising them about the importance of learning. And this is particularly so for those from more disadvantaged and challenging backgrounds. I believe that career-related learning and connecting primary-aged children with role models from the world of work in a safe and engaging way would really help with this.

## Isn't primary too young to talk about careers?

Many teachers and parents have expressed concerns that we risk making our children 'grow up too fast' at such a young age. They are understandably concerned about the dangers of directing children towards a particular career or job at a time when their aspirations should be very tentative and wide-ranging. I share their concern. We should not be providing careers advice in primary schools but instead focussing on broadening horizons

and raising aspirations, giving children a wide range of experiences of the world including the world of work. It is about opening doors, showing children the vast range of possibilities open to them and helping to keep their options open for as long as possible. And there is a range of attributes, skills, and behaviours that can be encouraged in this early stage of a child's life that will leave them in the best possible position as they begin their transitions to secondary education and to future life.

## Why is it important?

Our first survey in partnership with TES and NAHT asked primary teachers why introducing children to the world of work at an early age was important. It found that:

- The majority of teachers believe children should be learning about the world of work and different jobs in their first years of primary school.
- The overwhelming majority of primary schools were already carrying out a variety of activities with the aim of increasing children's understanding of the world of work.

And nearly all agreed that introducing children to the world of work was important in:

- Linking learning to the real world and in doing so increasing motivation to work hard bringing more relevance to their learning
- Challenging gender stereotyping and broadening aspirations.

