

Janet Colledge looks at the progress being made in appointing careers leaders in schools, as part of a government strategy, and the core competencies for the role



Leadership and development

As part of the careers strategy announced in December 2017 by Anne Milton, minister of state for apprenticeships and skills, it was announced that every school must have a named careers leader by September 2018, and should attempt to meet the eight Gatsby Benchmarks by September 2020.

The strategy acknowledged that most schools have a careers coordinator or teacher, but to improve the role of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in schools, there must be more understanding.

The strategy is outlined: "To lead and coordinate these activities requires a person with leadership skills, administrative ability and specialist knowledge of careers. They need the explicit backing of the headteacher and governors. We believe that designating such people as careers leaders recognises the importance of the role and will help to build the status of careers guidance for their school."

What does a careers leader do?

I receive a lot of emails from just-appointed careers leaders asking: what should I be doing? So here are the key responsibilities of the role:

1. Advising the senior leadership team (SLT) and governors on the requirements of legal and statutory obligations.
2. Working with the SLT and middle leadership team on benchmarks.
3. Driving up the status of CEIAG with staff, parents and pupils.

4. Supporting teachers to become more confident and able to deliver relevant careers as part of their subject teaching, including managing and/or delivering INSET training for teachers.
5. Coordinating and managing a whole school overview of CEIAG activity, including schemes of work and programmes, which ensure that each and every pupil has access to the required support they are entitled to and/or need.
6. Building and maintaining the network of business and educational contacts that are necessary to deliver all the above.

Shouldn't it be a member of the SLT?

To do all this requires someone with leadership skills, but with some schools opting to name a careers leader who is already part of the SLT, I would argue against that option.

With more than 15 years' experience as a de facto careers leader, I know it's not a job that can be done in a couple of hours of non-contact time. The Career Development Institute has examples of job descriptions, listing more than 20 main responsibilities.

Teaching or non-teaching?

Some schools appoint careers advisers to the role and some appoint teachers. Items four and five require teaching knowledge and/or experience, so if the role is occupied by a careers adviser, I would ensure there is a tight working relationship with a teacher – perhaps

the personal, social, health and economic lead – to ensure full coverage.

If a teacher occupies the role, I would ensure a tight working relationship with a fully qualified careers professional, along with careers leader training. I would suggest that your finance officer look at the funding available via the Careers & Enterprise Company.

Should it be a standalone role?

I would argue not. The careers leader will need to work with pastoral leaders and subject leaders to fulfil most of the tasks outlined above and in the suggested job descriptions.

Being part of the pastoral and the subject leader teams will probably mean a double meeting load, but it is essential to build the working relationships necessary.

Who should a careers leader report to?

The careers leader should report to a senior member of the SLT who has the authority to effect change and support the careers leader in developing relationships within the school.

Visit: www.thecdi.net/2018-Careers-Strategy-and-Related-Resources, or www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/funding/careers-leaders-training for more information.

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