



Preventing young people from becoming NEET
A practical guide for headteachers



About The NFER Research Programme

Against a backdrop of economic recession, high youth unemployment and a sustained reduction in public funding, the task of supporting young people to make effective post-16 transitions into further education or employment is highly challenging. This document is based on a literature review produced under **The NFER Research Programme**, as part of the **From Education to Employment** theme. Collectively, these reviews identify strategies for assisting young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) to make effective post-16 transitions into learning or employment.

This document offers practical guidance for school leaders based on findings from **Approaches to supporting young people not in education, employment or training – a review**. Evidence from this review shows that the following approaches are beneficial in supporting young people to make positive transitions.

Ofsted Common Inspection Framework

In conversation with school leaders this guidance has been mapped against the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework 2012. This is shown in square brackets at the end of relevant bullet-points using the following abbreviations:

AoP: achievement of pupils at the school

QoT: quality of teaching in the school

B&S: the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

QLM: the quality of leadership in and management of the school

OE: overall effectiveness

The numbering, for example, 41:1, is the relevant paragraph within the above headings. Where such links are likely to be especially direct and significant, they are shown in **bold**; where they are likely to be indirect or less significant they are in *italics*.

For all school heads, throughout the primary and secondary phases

- The NEET problem is long-standing and complex, and thus needs long-term and multi-faceted solutions throughout the education system. Heads of all kinds should take a range of strategic approaches and practical steps, both within their schools and alongside their stakeholders and communities.
- Schools' success in helping prevent young people becoming NEET depends in good measure on regular updating, reflection, planning, implementation and monitoring of interventions by senior staff.
- The phased increase in the participation age to 18 by 2015 will affect the NEETs situation in a number of ways that are not yet clear, but that change is unlikely to diminish the need for action over the issue in schools of all types.

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For heads of primary schools

Important points to consider

- **Maintain close links with education services**
- **Promote early intervention throughout primary schooling**
- **Provide high-quality early education and care**
- **Focus on learner needs and styles**
- **Foster positive relationships with trusted adults**
- **Offer supplementary teaching opportunities**
- **Use other staff alongside teachers to encourage engagement**
- **Engage parents and families in any interventions**
- **Offer more and better advice to parents.**

Strategic level

- Maintain close links – with the local authority, other schools, further public services and other agencies – over relevant area-wide plans, gaining political commitment, data- (and other intelligence-) sharing, and needs-analysis for *preventative strategies*.

QLM (45:1-5);
OE 46: 5 and 6

Ongoing early intervention

- This should start in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and continue throughout primary schooling, to help keep children on track.

AoP 41:6; QoT 43;
QLM 45:1 and 6; *OE*
46:5

- There should be careful and continuous monitoring of pupils' early attendance, behaviour and achievement patterns, with targeted support provided where early problems are identified.

AoP 41:2,4,5 and 6;
QoT 42:1,4,5 and 7;
QoT 43; B&S 44:1-3,5,
6; QLM 45:2 and 6, *OE* 5

- Particularly in disadvantaged areas, intervene promptly where pupils are from families at risk of poor outcomes.

AoP 41:2,5 and 6; QoT
42:1,3,4,8 and 10; **QoT**
43; **B&S 44:1-6;** QLM
45:1-3, **6** and 7; *OE* 46:5
and 6

- Focus on reading and writing especially, for those children not making appropriate progress.

AoP 41:13,5 and 6;
QoT 42:1-10; QoT 43;
QLM 45:3 and 6; *OE* 5

- Early interventions that boost personal and social skills should be considered as well as those targeting literacy and numeracy levels.

AoP41:4-6; QoT 42:6,8
and 10; **QoT 43;** **B&S**
44:1-4; QLM 45:1-3,6
and 7; **OE 46:6**

- High-quality early education and care provide positive effects on children's achievements at school, as well as on their subsequent school-to-work transitions

A varied and flexible curriculum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricula and pedagogy should focus on learner needs and styles, and use innovative and experiential methods. Variety matters. 	QoT 42:2-10; QoT 43; QLM 45:1-5; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor as far as possible to the needs of the individual, and provide real and appropriate learning opportunities. 	AoP 41:5 and 6; QoT 42:2-8 and 10; QLM 45:2-3,5-6; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal learning with varied, creative and innovative teaching methods, for instance in extra-curricular activities outside the normal school day such as sport, drama and dance, should be provided alongside conventional approaches. 	AoP 41:3,5 and 6; QoT 42:8-10; QoT 43; B&S 44:3-5; QLM 45:1,3,7; OE 46:6

Relevance to the world of work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to begin understanding the world of work early, for example through visits and involving employers in school, or entrepreneurship activities, can be integrated into the primary curriculum. 	QoT 42:8; QoT 43; QLM 45:3; OE 46:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly, children can be helped early on in beginning to grasp their personal skills, interests and aspirations. 	QoT 42:1, and 8-10; QoT 43; QLM 45:3 and 6; OE 46:6

High-quality, sustained, one-to-one support, both academic and pastoral

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such support, when needed at the key transition points within the primary phase, and perhaps involving external professionals, may be helpful. 	QoT 42:8 and 10; B&S 44:5; QLM 45:3 and 6; OE 46:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive relationship with even a single teacher or support worker can make a real difference. 	AoP 41:2,4-6; QoT 42:1-8; QoT 43; B&S 44:3, 5 and 6; QLM 45:2,3,6 and 7; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of early information, advice and guidance (IAG) may be particularly helpful at the key transition from the primary to the secondary phase. 	QoT 42: 8,10; QLM 45:3

Academic support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider offering supplementary teaching opportunities or even classes, and/or the provision of dedicated homework/study spaces for pupils. 	QoT 42:2-8, 10; QoT 43; QLM 45:2-3, 5; OE 46:5
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Pastoral support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with difficulties within the home or school that could act as barriers to engagement and later participation – including effective policies for identifying and dealing with bullying of any kind – is important. 	QoT 43; B&S 44:2-6; QLM 45:3,6 and 7; QLM 45:2,3,6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective support for pupils by other staff alongside teachers, including outside professionals such as trained counsellors, marks out those schools that are most successful in engaging children and encouraging future engagement and progression. 	AoP 41:1-6; QoT 42:2,5,7 and 8; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-3, 5 and 6; QLM 45:2-4, 6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although challenging in the current budgetary climate, the use of mentors and key workers helps keep children on track – especially those that are vulnerable. 	<p><i>AoP 41:1-6; QoT 42:2,5,7 and 8; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-3, 5 and 6; QLM 45:2-4, 6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give opportunities to build positive relationships, based on mutual trust and respect, with teachers and other adult role models. 	<p><i>QoT 42:8 and 9; B&S 44:1-5; QLM 45:2,5,6 and 7; OE 46:6</i></p>

Parental involvement and support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage parents and families in any interventions, and support them to support their children. 	<p><i>AoP 41:6; QoT 42:10; QoT 43; B&S 44:2-6; QLM 45:6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve parents and carers in the life of the school, ensuring that they too feel comfortable when there. School-home support workers can help in achieving this. 	<p><i>QoT 43; QLM 45:6; OE 46:6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give regular information on pupils' progress to parents and carers, and about expectations regarding their role. 	<p><i>QoT 42:1 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44: 1-6; QLM 45:6 and 7; OE 46:6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More, and better-quality, advice to parents on how they can help primary pupils to make positive transitions to the secondary phase will help. 	<p><i>QLM 45:6; OE 46:6</i></p>

For heads of all secondary schools

Important points to consider

- **Maintain close strategic links with education services**
- **Continue with interventions started at primary school**
- **Aim to boost social and personal skills of young people**
- **Focus on learner needs and styles**
- **Provide informal learning, in particular**
- **Give pupils a chance to become acquainted with the world of work from key stage 3**
- **Offer impartial, realistic and responsive IAG provision**
- **Foster positive relationships with trusted adults**
- **Identify and deal with barriers to young people's engagement**
- **Support and involve families in interventions being made**
- **Provide parents with effective advice and guidance on how they can contribute.**

Strategic level

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain close strategic links with local authorities, other schools both primary and secondary, further public services and other agencies regarding gaining and strengthening political commitment, area-wide plans, intelligence-/data-sharing, and needs-analysis for preventative and reintegration strategies. 	<p><i>QLM (45:1-5); OE 46: 5 and 6</i></p>
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Ongoing early intervention

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those interventions begun during primary schooling may need to continue (or to be adjusted), to carry on helping to keep pupils on track. 	AoP 41:6; QoT 43; QLM 45:1 and 6; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring young people's attendance, behaviour and achievement should carry on, carefully and regularly. Targeted support needs providing where early problems continue, and/or new issues are identified. 	AoP 41:2,4,5 and 6; QoT 42:1,4,5 and 7; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-3,5,6; QLM 45:2 and 6, OE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervene as soon as possible with pupils who come from families where there is an identified risk of poor outcomes – particularly those from disadvantaged areas. 	AoP 41:2,5 and 6; QoT 42:1,3,4,8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-6; QLM 45:1-3,6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus support on reading and writing in particular, for those young people who are not making appropriate progress. 	AoP 41:13,5 and 6; QoT 42:1-10; QoT 43; QLM 45:3 and 6; OE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As well as targeting literacy and numeracy problems, interventions that aim to boost the social and personal skills of young people should be considered. 	AoP41:4-6; QoT 42:6,8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-4; QLM 45:1-3,6 and 7; OE 46:6

A varied and flexible curriculum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curricula and pedagogy should focus on learner needs and styles, using a variety of experiential learning and innovative methods. 	QoT 42:2-10; QoT 43; QLM 45:1-5; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on individual pupil needs wherever possible, offering appropriate opportunities for differing learning styles. 	<i>AoP 41:4-6;</i> QoT 42:2-8 and 10; QoT 43; QLM 45:2 and 3; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing informal learning in particular, with varied, creative and innovative teaching methods (and in contexts such as experiential learning outside the normal school day with extra-curricular activities like sport, drama and dance) can be very valuable for young people. 	<i>QoT 42:38 and 10;</i> QoT 43; QLM 45:3; OE 46:6

Relevance to the world of work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From key stage 3, pupils should be given chances to become well-acquainted with work and its associated world, through opportunities that have been integrated in the school curriculum. 	<i>QoT 42:8 and 10;</i> QoT 43; B&S 44:5; QLM 45:3; OE 46: 5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic, structured experience, company visits, careers fairs, entrepreneurship education, and volunteering programmes are all recommended approaches. So, too, are vocational training courses, apprenticeships and a greater degree of employer involvement in the school. 	<i>QoT 42:8 and 10;</i> QoT 43; B&S 44:5; QLM 45:3; OE 46: 5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the same time, young people should have opportunities to develop career management skills, including acquiring a better understanding of their own abilities, competencies and aspirations, and developing the ability to match these to the available opportunities. 	<i>AoP 41:3-5;</i> QoT 42:8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:4 and 5; QLM 45:3 and 6; OE 46:6

Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All young people need to have impartial, realistic and responsive IAG provision available to them – and such support needs to be tailored to their individual needs. 	QoT 42:6 and 8; QoT 43; QLM 45:3 and 5; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Such provision should be delivered from year 9, at the very least. 	[see previous]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving local employers supports the effectiveness of any IAG offer from schools. 	[see previous]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of effective IAG at particular key transition points such as moving up from the primary phase, from year 9 to year 10, and in year 11 is important. 	QoT 42:6 and 8; QoT 43; QLM 45:3 and 5; OE 46:5 and 6

High-quality, sustained, one-to-one support, both academic and pastoral

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing this type of support, ideally involving external professionals, is especially important at key transitional points when young people are more likely to become disengaged. 	<i>AoP 41:1-6</i> ; QoT 42:2-8 ; QoT 43 ; <i>B&S 4:1-3,5 and 6</i> ; QLM 45:2,3 and 6; OE 46:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How an ‘at-risk’ young person feels about school can be transformed through just one positive relationship established with a teacher or support worker. 	QoT 42:8; QoT 43 ; <i>B&S 44:1-6</i> ; <i>QLM 45:5 and 6</i> ; OE 46:5 and 6

Academic support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likelihood of disengagement can be reduced by the offer of additional teacher-led classes for examination preparation and other purposes, as well as ‘drop-in’ provision allowing young people to study on their own or with their peers, or holiday classes. 	<i>AoP 41:1-6</i> ; QoT 42:3,5,7,8 and 10 ; QoT 43 ; QLM 45:1-6; OE 46:5
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Pastoral support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers to young people’s engagement and progression, such as instances of bullying, need identifying and dealing with through pastoral support policies and actions. 	B&S 44:1-6 ; QLM 45:2,3,5,6 and 7; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schools that have been most successful in keeping their pupils engaged draw on the support that can come from outside professionals like trained counsellors, working alongside teaching staff. 	<i>AoP 41:4-6</i> ; QoT 42:8; QoT 43 ; B&S 44:1-3,4,5 and 6 ; QLM 45:1,3,4,5 and 6; OE 46:5 and 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentors and key workers can be deployed to help young people stay on track, and progress – especially those that are vulnerable. 	<i>AoP 41:1-6</i> ; <i>QoT 42:8 and 10</i> ; B&S 44:1-6 ; QLM 45:2-7; OE 46:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive relationships, founded on mutual respect and trust, with teachers and other adults who can provide role models can help pupils: make opportunities to build these. 	<i>AoP 41:4</i> ; QoT 42:8; QoT 43 ; B&S 44:1-3, 5 and 6 ; <i>QLM 45:5 and 6</i> ; OE 46:6

Parental involvement and support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support families, parents and carers in providing support to young people in turn – not least by involving them in the interventions being made. 	<p><i>AoP 41:5 and 6; QoT 42:8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-6; QLM 1-3, 6 and 7; OE 46: 6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and others should feel comfortable themselves when in the school, and be involved in its general life. Help in achieving this can come from school-home support workers. 	<p><i>QoT 42:8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-6; QLM 1-3, 6 and 7; OE 46: 6</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular information for parents and carers about what's expected of them, and about pupils' progress, is important. 	<p>QoT 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-6; QLM 1-3, 6 and 7; OE 46:6</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide parents with a greater degree of effective advice and guidance on ways that they can contribute to young people's positive transitions. 	<p><i>AoP 41:1,4 and 6; QoT 42:1,8 and 10; QoT 43; B&S 44:1-6; QLM 45:6; OE 46:6</i></p>

This guide is based on a review from The NFER Research Programme which is available for free at www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RSRN01

The NFER Research Programme

This Programme was set up in 2011. Funded by NFER, it is developing partnerships with organisations and individuals who share our commitment to solving unanswered challenges young people face in education. The Programme targets key areas of education, highlighting gaps in existing evidence and conducting new research to provide evidence to fill the gaps. Current areas of focus are: *From Education to Employment, Developing the Education Workforce and Innovation in Education.*

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