



**BEDFORD
GIRLS'
SCHOOL**



Reviewed: July 2024

Next Review: July 2026

Reviewed by: Director of Sixth Form and Head of Careers

Character	Building
Fostering	Relationships
Developing	Independence
Promoting	Determination
Nurturing	Growth
Creating	Employability

The Bridge

Our role is to ensure the future generations of young women are prepared and inspired to pursue fulfilling careers that make a meaningful contribution to the world beyond school. The Bridge, our careers service, is a vital component in helping our students identify and achieve their aims and aspirations, so they can move with confidence onto the next stage of their education and working life.

We **Build** the skills and confidence in students as they grow into motivated young women, working alongside both the pastoral and academic staff to support development, and stretch skills and attributes. A formal careers education starts in Year 7 and we plant seeds of ideas, inspiring our students to look ahead, take time to reflect, and understand their own strengths and interests so that they can be in a position to make informed choices about their futures at each stage of their education.

We form **Relationships** with employers, external agencies, universities, colleges and alumnae. Listening to, and learning from, external voices is an important skill and vital to making informed choices. We have an extensive network of professionals and higher education specialists who can help our students with their own decision making for their futures. We work with our Alumnae office and a wide network of employers to help facilitate work experience for both current and former students, and offer a mentoring programme where Sixth Form students have the opportunity to develop a professional working relationship. We provide opportunities to assist the students developing skills to network and pitch themselves confidently.

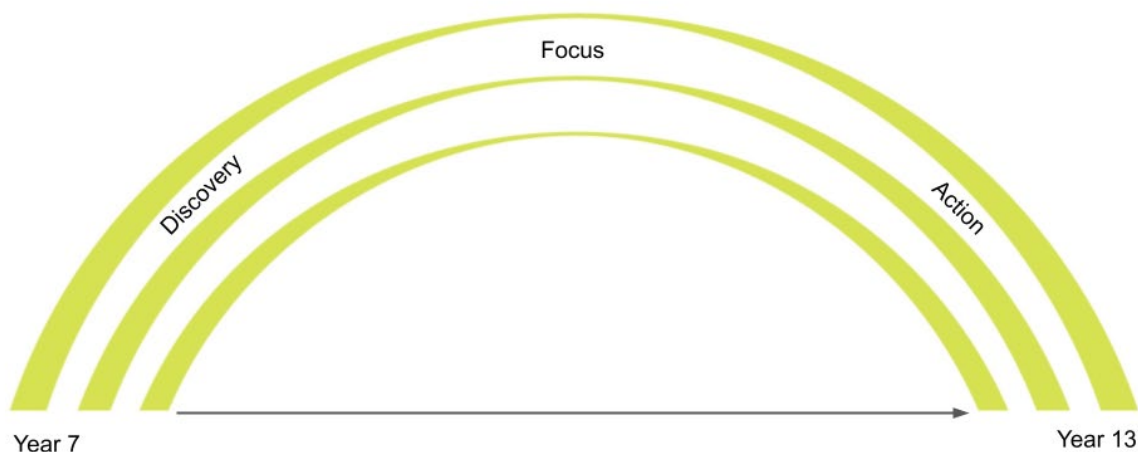
Our education develops **Independence**. Our students are encouraged to take active ownership of their futures. We provide the tools and deliver lessons on how to source information, research subjects, explore options, gain work experience and placements. We help the students assess their qualities and strengths and they are encouraged to identify, develop and use their talents and abilities unhampered by stereotyped attitudes.

Possessing **Determination** and grit in a hugely volatile and competitive world is important; young people need ambition, but also the ability to overcome challenges to achieve a successful and fulfilling future. Resilience is developed when we experience and work through set-backs: understanding what really inspires them and where their interests lie helps students retain focus on their objectives, and be open to a range of options to achieve these. We work alongside our students to create goals that are realistic, but ambitious.

We support the students as they **Grow**, and progress throughout their school life. At *The Bridge*, we believe in lifelong learning. By ensuring they are introduced to a wide range of opportunities, we can support ideas and interests as they change and grow, helping students define possible routes.

Employability is central in preparing individuals for the outside world. Throughout a BGS education, students are taught the importance of transferable skills; we show them how skills honed at school can transfer into the wider working world, and, importantly, what skills employers are looking for. Entering the working world should not be a shock, and we make sure our students will be prepared. We introduce a huge range of professions and options through our weekly Lunchbox Lectures series; we run careers evenings, open days and arrange one-to-one meetings with professionals. We encourage work placements and part-time employment (from Year 11) to build resilience, prioritising time and money management skills to prepare for adult life.

In order to enhance the clarity, integration and visibility of The Bridge, we use a framework called Discovery, Focus, Action (used with undergraduates at King's College London). This, along with attention to Gatsby benchmarks and the school's High Performance Learning model, underpins each student's careers journey through the school, and is a message which can be easily understood by parents, teachers and students.



Discovery: students find out for themselves, 'What's right for me?'. Taking the time to discover skills, sectors, roles, courses, and talents whilst reflecting on learning experiences develops self-awareness, and therefore positions students to make the best possible choices.

Focus: with greater awareness of what's right for them, students explore options in more depth, perhaps led by the skills they're interested in using professionally, or perhaps in specific sectors.

Action: in a world where professional lives will be made of many choices, not just one, students make decisions for work experience, GCSE, A level / IB, and post-Year 13 with an understanding of what could come after, and confidence that there are many routes to reach a goal. Tutors and the Bridge support students during these processes, of which parents are fully informed

Senior School Curriculum

BGS renewed its subscription to the Unifrog platform in 2022 for a further 3 years. Unifrog is an impartial user-friendly online careers package that helps students to make the best choices and submit the strongest applications. It empowers our teachers and careers team to manage the progression process effectively. It is iPad friendly and has a wealth of information on careers, higher education and international opportunities, along with tools to guide choices, gather self-knowledge, and draft applications. Students are also encouraged to sign up for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) via FutureLearn and OpenLearn, allowing them to engage with university-provided content and assignments, explore areas of study and demonstrate curiosity and commitment to learn.

Starting in 2024-25, Careers provision will be a discrete unit within the form tutor programme for Years 7 – 12. For a half term, each year group has Careers sessions once a week in form time. These sessions are mapped to the Careers Development Institute guidelines for Careers education as follows: grow throughout life; explore possibilities; manage your career; create opportunities; balance life and work; and seeing the big picture. These will also include age-appropriate psychometric profiling, questionnaires and activities (to explore preferred style of working and transferable skills); an introduction to The Bridge, including online resources and careers-based research methods.

In Years 9 and 11 advice and guidance will be given on option choices with the implications explored of particular subject choices for future academic and career plans. In Sixth Form, each student also works closely with their form tutor, who will lead tutorial sessions and meet with them on a one-to-one basis throughout the two years to assist and advise in making decisions about future plans.

In addition to a bespoke programme of events such as workshops, practical interview preparation sessions, and interactive learning opportunities, each student has a series of interviews and meetings with the Head of Careers to discuss plans and to agree action points, starting in Lower Sixth - these include:

- Spring careers appointments;
- UCAS predicted grade meetings which further refine planning and applications;
- A day set aside to register with UCAS and ensure students get specific advice on personal statements;
- CV writing and other application guidance;
- Ongoing support in Upper Sixth as students work to meet their submission deadlines.

A clear expectation is set that students take the lead in managing their own applications, from research and course choice, to student finance and liaising with admissions tutors. The close relationships developed between tutee, tutor and Head of Careers is key in helping each student make aspirational, yet realistic, choices and is an important factor in, for example, ensuring they secure their first or second choice university places or equivalent.

In practice, almost all Sixth Formers go on to Higher Education but the small number who choose another path are given the same care and attention in achieving their goals. The Bridge also maintains its profile across the school with staff and all year groups, for instance via the Bridge bulletin which targets year group specific careers or university opportunities and direction. The Bridge office has also been thoughtfully reoriented to provide a multipurpose space where students feel at ease to discuss their aspirations and ask for advice, and several times a year we stage a pop-up Bridge outside the dining hall to engage more easily with younger students. The Bridge Hub, launched summer 2022, will be reviewed and updated in 2024-25, to ensure it continues to include a combination of additional opportunities for students to explore pathways and opportunities, including the Work Experience directory of local businesses who may be approached for placements and job shadowing.

Employability Skills

The curriculum is supported by events to inform students and their parents about HE, careers and routes into these and opportunities for students to develop transferable skills, experience what the working world is like and to develop independence and leadership.

Year 9 Bridge Morning – Young Enterprise run this session exploring the relationship between employment, professional fulfilment and lifestyle. Students are introduced to budgeting and financial planning, and also work on projects in teams to highlight how skills and knowledge are used in the workplace.

L6 Work the Room focuses on the skills needed to network with professionals from a variety of industries and gives students an immediate opportunity to put their skills to the test. This is a great way for students to discover more about certain careers as well as seek out opportunities for work experience.

Sixth Form-Alumna mentoring pairs students with former students in a one-to-one mentoring relationship. Both mentor and mentee are trained in the relevant protocol, and how to get the most out of the partnership. Places are limited by the availability of mentors; all students in the Lower Sixth are welcome to apply.

Students in the Sixth Form are offered an Interview Technique workshop in addition to a set of mock interviews in preparation for university and employment; there are also workshops and interview practice sessions for applicants to clinical degrees and creative courses.

Links with industry

The BGS Careers Fayre was piloted in June 2024, with students from both Junior and Senior Schools given the opportunity to interact with professionals from the wider BGS community. Junior School students also participated in VR sessions and workshops led by professionals. Students in the senior school spent a lesson exploring exhibition stands, and a Subjects Fayre in the LRC, with the opportunity for students to engage with individuals representing a wide range of sectors and job roles. They developed questioning and listening skills as well as hearing about a variety of pathways including apprenticeships and postgraduate research.

Lunchbox Lectures are held for students in Years 10 to U6 and are a chance for students to meet local employers and alumnae that have been invited in to share their experience of work. The range of careers covered is very broad and this forum allows us

to introduce students to industries they may have very little awareness of. In addition, subject departments and societies regularly invite guest speakers in to run sessions related to their own subject area.

Work experience is encouraged, and, in recognition that younger students may have the opportunity to visit workplaces on a more informal basis, perhaps through a family member or friend, Year 9 and above are informed that they need to use the Work Placements tool on Unifrog to record these opportunities: this ensures that employers and parents are aware of responsibilities towards any visiting students, and allows BGS to track these important development activities. After summer GCSE examinations, a week is allocated before the end of term for Year 11 students to undertake formal work experience. Students are expected to organise their own placement in order to foster initiative and communication skills, although Careers will assist with suggestions and contact details from our extensive database. Students are encouraged to continue to develop their links with industry through additional work experience in the Sixth Form. Students and parents receive information about how to log this work experience via unifrog for safeguarding purposes.

For Years 11 to 13, BGS collaborates with the Old Bedfordians Club in providing speakers for a comprehensive careers evening enabling students to speak to current practitioners in a wide variety of professional careers.

Careers guidance

As well as the supportive relationships we build with students in our own networks, we understand the importance of offering impartial guidance on a broad range of careers and courses. We ensure that this is accurate and up to date with a combination of ways to develop expertise; staff attending online training, contact with UCAS and UCAS news alongside experience built working with students each year and communication with Universities directly alongside working with other schools in the Harpur Trust.

MyFutureChoice (formerly Cambridge Occupational Analysts) offer two questionnaires students are encouraged to take:

- MyCareerChoices at the start of Year 11 offers impartial guidance regarding potential career options, and the results are used to support choices of A level / IB subjects during the Autumn term.
- MyUniChoices is offered to students during the first term of Year 12, and provides advice on areas they would be well-suited to study at degree level.
- The results of both questionnaires are available online (students can access these throughout their time at BGS) and are produced with an accompanying workbook, with suggestions for further research and investigation.
- We find that in conjunction with the resources available on Unifrog, the questionnaire results and reflection on these prompted by form tutors and Sixth Form team mean students have all they need to make truly informed choices in Y13.

Unifrog: The use of this system as a third-party platform encourages each student to explore their own pathway within but also beyond the form time Careers sessions, as well as being an important source of accurate and up to date information for careers and Sixth Form staff. It also covers the reference to a broad range of careers – the tools include means by which students are encouraged to look around professional options, pathways and qualifications, beyond common choices. Unifrog also facilitates an emphasis on self-awareness and focus on identification of skills and behaviours that will underpin a happy and successful professional life for each individual student, whatever that might look like. Impartial coaching through advice and choices with the adoption of a neutral approach with emphasis on students being positioned to make, and take responsibility themselves, for their own well-informed choices ensures they retain autonomy over their own futures.

Opportunities for all

We work hard to promote role models of successful women, especially our former students who are keen to return to school to share their experiences with current students. We keep in contact with students after they leave school and they are always willing to advise and assist current students. At our many careers events, we aim to recruit as many inspirational female speakers as we can. Additionally, we have a strong tradition of our students going into perceived 'male' careers such as engineering; an all girls' environment allows our students the freedom to choose freely without influences of stereotyping.

Holiday courses are advertised regularly to students in Years 9 to 13, with good uptake, for courses including Smallpiece Trust courses on engineering, Headstart courses, GSK vacation scheme, University taster courses in a wide range of subjects and vocational courses in Law, Medicine and Veterinary Science.

A dedicated Oxbridge Coordinator supports the applications and preparation of students interested in making an application to the Universities of Oxford / Cambridge; support of recent cohorts has included workshops with Oxbridge Admissions Tutors and interview training.

Specialised support for Medicine and related studies is overseen by the school Faculty of Science's MedSoc.

The Careers department also work closely with Heads of Year and Learning Support to ensure students with special educational needs and disabilities are fully aware of the support available to them in employment and further education.

Having hosted a well-received and highly attended International University Information Evening in April 2023 and September 2024 for parents and students from all 3 Harpur Trust Schools, BGS is working with BMS and Bedford School to offer this event again going forwards. Students seeking to apply to higher education abroad receive further support from the school in terms of documentation required, process advice and guidance, and where appropriate, directing towards external experts in this field. The onus here is also on the student to ensure they inform their tutor and Head of Careers early and to ensure they are well researched and prepared for entrance tests which may be required.