

Shaping Futures, Opening Doors: Our Approach to Careers Education at St Monica's

At St Monica's RC High School, we believe that preparing young people for the world beyond the classroom shouldn't be left to chance. Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is woven directly into the fabric of daily school life.

Our goal is straightforward: to give every student—regardless of their background—the self-awareness, knowledge, and practical experiences they need to make confident, informed choices about their future. We want our pupils not just to find a job, but to understand the vast array of possibilities available to them and develop the resilience to pursue them.

A Progressive, Year-by-Year Journey

We know that career development is a journey, not a destination. That is why we use a carefully structured spiral curriculum that starts the moment a pupil steps through our doors in Year 7 and grows with them until they leave us in Year 11. Rather than treating careers as a standalone event, students revisit core themes every single year, encountering them with greater maturity and depth:

- In Year 7, we focus inward, helping students build self-awareness and answer the foundational question: *"Who am I?"*
- In Year 8, students explore personal drivers, asking: *"What are my interests?"*
- In Year 9, we shift toward practical application, prompting pupils to evaluate: *"What are my skills?"* as they approach key GCSE choices.
- In Years 10 and 11, the focus moves sharply toward execution, leadership, and preparation for post-16 pathways, higher education, apprenticeships, and the modern workplace.

To ensure this learning remains a continuous, visible thread rather than a rushed topic, students take part in dedicated careers sessions every half term. This steady pacing gives them the time and space to process new concepts, discuss ideas at home, and reflect on how their education connects to the real world.

Expert 1-to-1 Guidance & Specialist Support

Central to our guidance provision is Damion Langford, our dedicated in-school Careers Adviser from Positive Steps. Damion holds the Level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance and Development and is based in school two days a week (typically Mondays and Tuesdays) to deliver tailored, one-to-one careers guidance meetings. To ensure equity of opportunity, Damion's one-to-one caseload is carefully scheduled to ensure pupils who require additional support, advocacy, or early transition planning receive early and prioritised guidance.

In addition to individual guidance, Damion plays an active role in school life by leading themed assemblies across all year groups—with a strong focus during National Apprenticeship Week and National Careers Week—and supporting our wider employer and Further Education events. At critical key stages, he works directly with form groups on practical skills, such as guiding Year 11 pupils through writing compelling personal statements for post-16 applications.

Grounded in National Standards and Local Opportunity

Our curriculum is built on the robust benchmarks set by the Career Development Institute (CDI) and the Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance, ensuring our provision meets the highest national standards. But a great careers strategy must also reflect the world our students are stepping into.

We work closely with regional employers, Local Labour Market Information (LMI), and our wider community to align our pathways with areas of genuine economic growth. Whether a pupil's ambitions lie in **Creative Industries, Culture and Sport, Construction and the Green Economy, Digital and Technology, Education and Early Years, Engineering and Manufacturing, Financial, Business and Professional Services, Health and Social Care or Public Services**, we provide structured, industry-aligned routes to help them get there.

Modern Workplace Experiences That Go Beyond the Traditional

We recognise that finding meaningful work experience can be challenging, which is why we've modernised our approach to ensure every student gains genuine, high-quality employer encounters long before they leave school.

Our Modern Workplace Experience strategy embeds encounters early—through mock interviews, virtual workplace site visits, and employer talks in Years 7 through 10. When it comes to formal work placements, we combine traditional self-sourced opportunities with innovative, group-based employer projects and task-driven industry briefs. This hybrid model ensures all students gain practical, problem-solving experience regardless of external barriers.

Ultimately, our CEIAG programme is about opening doors. By combining robust academic guidance, real-world employer partnerships, and a deeply supportive school culture, we ensure that every St Monica's student leaves us equipped to shape their own destiny and thrive in an ever-changing world.