



Maplewell Hall School
Maplewell Road
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Maplewell Hall School Post-16
Thorpe Hill
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Hello,

Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Rob Cooper and I am Deputy Head and Careers Leader at Maplewell Hall School.

Maplewell is a school for students aged 11 – 19 who have special educational needs. We have 300 students across two sites. Students aged 11-16 attend our main site at Woodhouse Eaves whilst our post-16-19 students are based in Loughborough, on Thorpe Hill. They can live anywhere in Leicestershire, so we probably have students who live close to your business.

Our students find learning more challenging because of a range of identified difficulties such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. With the right support and when they are ready to leave us, our students go on to access A' Levels, Further Education, apprenticeships and full-time employment.

One of the challenges we face is providing students with experiences of work, work experience and work placements. And of course, that's why I'm writing to you!

You're probably thinking, "I don't have time", "this sounds like a lot of work", "Special Needs? That sounds scary!" Before you throw this in the bin, let me explain.

Education is full of jargon, so first of all I'll explain the difference between experience of work, work experience and work placement.

Experience of Work

"Students don't know what they don't know, and they can't know what they haven't experienced."

Experience of work describes all the encounters our students have with employers and employees. Here are some examples of experiences of work you might be able to help us with:

- A recorded telephone interview for our website where you talk about your own career pathway or your recruitment processes, for our website;
- A chance for a group of our students (you set the age and size of group) to come and have a look 'behind the scenes';
- Deliver an assembly about your work and sector;
- Take part in a speed networking event, where you meet lots of students in turn, for a short amount of time, and they ask you (or an employee) about work;
- Deliver a CV workshop or take part in mock interviews.

At the top of this list, your time commitment would be 30 minutes, at the bottom of the list, half a day. You wouldn't be responsible for the students at any point – you can leave all that to us!

Work Experience

You are probably more familiar with this term – you may even have done work experience yourself. There is more commitment from you, but with that comes the opportunity for greater reward. Typically, a work experience is where a student comes to work, either to shadow an employee, or to be part of the workforce for up to 5 days. 5 days might be a full week, or it might be 5 separate days. We are flexible – this suits us and our students, as well as you. At a work experience, school staff would be available to provide support according to the student's needs at every step of the way, and we would sort out the risk assessments. Students wanting to be placed with you, would have to attend an interview, leaving you with the final say as to whether they are suitable – you will always be in control and if something isn't working, you can cut it short.

Work Placement

This is the biggest commitment, but employers who have committed to work placements have gone on to employ our students and have gained a valuable member of staff and enhanced their public image.

A work placement, is where you commit to having a student for an extended period of time, at least 1 day a week and for up to 9 months. Work placements tend to be for our 18- and 19-year-old students, and the work placement is their last step before setting out into an apprenticeship or employment. It's very rewarding to play such a big part in their preparation for adulthood, and you will have extensive support from our staff for the duration to help resolve any issues.

What we offer in return

The feel-good factor of knowing you are directly improving the outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged students can never be under-estimated. You also get the chance to work with young people who are inspiring – they are determined to succeed despite their additional needs and the challenges they face. We can also offer:

- Free advertising for your business and acknowledgment of your support on our website and social media – this is good for your profile and may put you in contact with new customers.
- Staff development opportunities. You or your employees will have the opportunity to develop their speaking, listening, teamwork, leadership, creativity, problem solving, aiming high, and staying positive skills – we call these the Essential Skills.
- Free breakfast! Yes, we invite any employers who want to get involved and offer their help the chance to come to one of our sites to talk to staff, meet some students and have a free breakfast on the way to work – with no obligation to commit.

If you want to find out more, drop me an email or give me a call.

I look forward to meeting you,

Rob Cooper

Deputy Head Teacher and Careers Lead

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