


What does the new Provider Access Legislation mean for schools?

10 February 2023  Laura Murphy

The 'Provider Access Legislation' came into force in January 2023. The provisions require that schools (maintained and academies) must provide at least *six* encounters with providers of technical education or apprenticeships for all their students during school years 8-13.

This is an important element of improving knowledge of technical pathways. The aim is that all pathways are promoted equally.

The first *four* encounters are mandatory for all registered pupils (not just select groups) to attend:

- two in school years 8 or 9
- two in school years 10 or 11 (held between 1 September and 28 February if for pupils in year 9 or year 11)
- Schools will also be required to put on two encounters for pupils in school years 12 or 13 (held between 1 September and 28 February for pupils in year 13) that are mandatory for the school to put on but optional for pupils to attend.

What should schools be doing now?

1. Checking your careers timetable/calendar and ensuring you are meeting the encounter obligations
2. Review the relevant statutory guidance, Ofsted handbook and understand your duties
3. Doing your due diligence on the providers to ensure they meet the requirements, and they can provide the necessary 'meaningful' encounters
4. Update your policy statement – set out the circumstances in which the education and training providers will be given access to pupils
5. Publish your policy statement – either as part of or alongside your careers programme – this should be on your school website (each academy within a MAT should have one)
6. Set review dates for the policy statement

It is important that schools take action to get the above in place. The DfE will be able to take action to respond to cases of non-compliance and the Ofsted inspection handbook has been strengthened to take PAL into account.

Lack of engagement in this area can have significant impact on a school's grading. Given the implications of not getting this right it would be wise to make use of guidance available and seek further advice where necessary.

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