

St Thomas More Catholic Academy

Provider Access Policy Statement 2026–27

This policy statement sets out the school's arrangements for managing the access of education and training providers for the purpose of giving pupils information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. It is written in accordance with the school's legal obligations under Section 42B of the Education Act 1997 and the Department for Education's statutory Careers guidance and access for education and training providers, updated in June 2026.

This policy ensures that pupils are able to access impartial information about the full range of post-16 and post-18 pathways and that provider access is managed in a transparent, fair and consistent way.

Student entitlement:

All pupils in Years 8 to 13 are entitled to opportunities to hear directly from providers of approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Through the wider careers programme, pupils are also supported to understand the full range of academic, technical and vocational pathways, including T Levels, apprenticeships, higher technical qualifications and traditional academic routes.

- to receive information about approved technical education qualifications, apprenticeships and training opportunities as part of a planned and progressive careers programme;





- to hear directly from a range of education and training providers, including further education colleges, independent training providers and apprenticeship providers through meaningful encounters;
- to understand the application and progression routes associated with academic, technical and vocational options, including apprenticeships and employment with training.

At St Thomas More Catholic Academy, pupils begin exploring future pathways from the start of Year 7 as part of the wider careers education programme.

The school will meet the legal requirement to provide six provider encounters across Years 8 to 13. The statutory pattern is:

- two mandatory provider encounters during Key Stage 3 (Years 8 and 9);
- two mandatory provider encounters during Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11);
- two further provider encounters offered during Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13). Attendance at these Key Stage 5 encounters is optional for pupils, but the opportunities will be made available, particularly to support those who have not yet decided on their next steps.

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable groups, have equitable access to provider encounters and information about technical education, apprenticeships and employment pathways.

Provider encounters:

Provider encounters are scheduled during the normal school day and are planned so that providers are given sufficient time to, as a minimum:

- share information about their organisation and the approved technical education qualifications or apprenticeships they offer;
- explain the careers and progression routes to which those qualifications or apprenticeships might lead;
- provide insight into what learning or training with the provider is like;
- answer questions from pupils.

These encounters form part of the school's core careers entitlement and are planned in accordance with the statutory provider access requirements.

Meaningful provider encounters:

A provider encounter is a meeting or session between pupils and one provider. The school is committed to ensuring encounters are meaningful, appropriately timed and enable pupils to understand the provider's offer, progression routes and learning or training experience, with opportunities to ask questions.

Encounters will normally be delivered in person. Live online encounters may also be used where appropriate, provided they allow meaningful interaction between pupils and the provider.





Previous and current providers:

Recent provider partners have included local further education colleges, universities, apprenticeship providers, armed forces representatives, employers, training providers and professional organisations. These partnerships support breadth, impartiality and relevance within the careers programme.

The school is an active member of the local Careers Hub and works closely with the Hub Lead to support high-quality employer and provider engagement. Pupils have individual access to Unifrog, enabling them to research opportunities, record encounters and plan next steps at key transition points.



Destinations information:

The school monitors and reviews destination data for pupils post-16 and post-18 to evaluate the effectiveness of careers provision and ensure pupils are progressing to sustained education, employment or training. This information informs planning and continuous improvement.

Management of provider access requests:

A provider wishing to request access should contact:

Victoria Kerr, Careers Leader

Telephone: 01782 882900

Email: vkerr@stmca.org.uk

Requests should provide details of the provider, the proposed activity, intended year group(s), preferred timing and any premises, equipment or safeguarding requirements.

Opportunities for access:

Provider access opportunities are embedded within the school's annual careers programme and take place during the normal school day. These may include assemblies, curriculum-linked events, options events, workshops, group discussions, taster activities and targeted sessions. The school will seek to schedule encounters at appropriate points before key education and training decisions.

Requests will be considered by the Careers Leader in light of the statutory entitlement, the needs of pupils, the timing and relevance of the proposed activity, the school calendar, safeguarding requirements and the availability of suitable premises and resources. Access will not be refused solely because a provider offers a route that differs from the school's own provision. Where a request cannot be accommodated as proposed, the school will seek to identify a reasonable alternative opportunity where practicable.





The annual Careers Programme Overview, published on the school website, identifies planned careers and provider engagement across Years 7 to 13. Providers are invited to contact the school to discuss suitable opportunities for engagement.



Programme overview (academic year 2026–27):

The school publishes an annual Careers Programme Overview for Years 7 to 13. It sets out the core careers entitlement and planned employer, workplace, further and higher education, and provider encounters, alongside targeted interventions and individual guidance.

Workplace experiences are delivered as part of the wider careers programme and are set out in the annual Careers Programme Overview.

Sixth form careers provision is increasingly personalised, with ongoing access to employer encounters, higher education engagement, apprenticeship and technical pathway information, and individual guidance throughout Years 12 and 13.

Complaints:

Any complaints regarding provider access should first be raised through the school's complaints procedure. Where a complaint concerns compliance with provider access legislation, further support is available from The Careers & Enterprise Company via provideraccess@careersandenterprise.co.uk.

Premises and facilities:

The school will make appropriate premises and facilities available for provider encounters, including halls, classrooms or meeting rooms, depending on the nature and size of the activity. Audio-visual equipment and other resources may be made available where agreed in advance. All provider activity is subject to the school's safeguarding and visitor procedures.

Providers may leave prospectuses, course information and other appropriate materials for pupils. Digital materials may also be shared through the school's careers platform or other agreed channels.

Review:

This policy statement is published on the school's website and is available to pupils, parents/carers, providers and other stakeholders. It is reviewed annually by the Careers Leader and relevant senior leaders and agreed by the governing board. Review activity includes consideration of provider access compliance, pupil and provider feedback, destination information and Gatsby Benchmark evaluation through Compass+. The next review will take place by July 2027, with any revisions published on the school website.

