



THE **BIG** FUTURES SHOW



The BIG Futures Show

Schools Pack 2026



Tuesday 28 April 2026 (9.30am – 3.00pm)
Eastbourne Sports Park
www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk

Last updated 5 March 2026

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1. Introduction to BFS Schools Pack

Since its inception in 2016, The BIG Futures Show has established itself as a key element in the Eastbourne and East Sussex annual calendar of events, and has been a great example of the collaboration between schools, employers and Eastbourne Borough Council in assisting our young people to make informed decisions about their all-important futures.

The BFS philosophy has been dominated by the need to support and assist teachers in their already wonderful effort to provide excellent and appropriate careers education, information, advice and guidance.

As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, the Eastbourne Education Business Partnership has mined its 30 years of experience in brokering the partnership between business and education in organising the event, and has been greatly encouraged by the positive and constructive feedback received from teachers as well as exhibitors.

With amendments to the event that have been recommended by participants, BFS 2026 plans to be even more effective and beneficial to the schools and their students (and parents). This is especially relevant given the massive economic changes that we have all witnessed in recent months, and the new opportunities for career and job prospects that such changes create.

We hope this Schools Pack provides helpful information for you to be able to plan and take full advantage of BFS 2026.

Board of Trustees, Eastbourne Education Business Partnership

2. About The BIG Futures Show (BFS), Eastbourne Education Business Partnership and our Sponsors

The BIG Futures Show (BFS) is the largest employability, skills and jobs event in East Sussex for students aged 14 plus. It is also open to parents, carers and anyone looking for work or training and features a dedicated job-seekers area.

BFS is organised by Eastbourne Education Business Partnership (EEBP) in association with Eastbourne Borough Council. EEBP is a registered charity consisting of a board and representatives from local schools, colleges and businesses and has successfully been delivering work-related learning activities for students in the local area for the past 30 years.

3. Why the BIG Futures Show has been established

In the past, many East Sussex schools have organised their own careers fairs to which local colleges, training providers and businesses have been invited. Whilst these have been valued, such events can take a considerable amount of time to plan and deliver for each school, and some employers have said that they do not have the capacity to attend them all. It seemed sensible to consolidate all the effort made by schools into just one annual event, which would be large enough to cater for a much broader range of career interests across all sectors. A larger event (over 75 exhibitors) also attracts employers from out of the area who are more confident of a wider audience.

4. What are the benefits of attending BFS?

4.1 To schools and teachers

- Contributes to the overall **Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)** programme
- Provides students with the opportunity to have direct contact with over 75 exhibitors consisting of local colleges, training providers and employers, to enable them to obtain up to date information about a range of careers **linked to Labour Market Information (LMI)**. Exhibitors are provided with support to help them engage well with students
- Helps to address **DfE and Ofsted** requirements for a quality careers programme and supports criteria within Investor in Careers (part of the national Quality in Careers Standard) and the **Gatsby benchmarks** for quality careers guidance
- Offers a professional development opportunity for careers and subject teachers who can obtain up to date information about the **careers linked**

to their curriculum area and develop links with employers who may be able to contribute to lessons and careers events

- Provides pre and post event student and **teaching materials**, including a comprehensive 32-page show guide which can be used in lessons as a stand-alone careers education resource
- Attendance at one high profile, externally organised and sustainable **careers event frees up time and resources within the school**
- Increases **student motivation** back in school after they have developed a clearer career plan

4.2 To students

- Direct contact with employers, colleges and training providers and the chance to network and initiate work experience and other opportunities
- Opportunity to engage in interactive activities at exhibitor stands
- Students can meet people working in careers that are currently of interest to them, to find out more about what the job entails as well as entry requirements
- Raised awareness of careers, jobs and organisations not previously known about
- Can challenge pre-conceived ideas about what a job involves (including gender stereotyping)
- Provides information about further education and training
- Up to date information about individual sectors and routes and pathways into that area of work
- Learn about local and national Labour Market Information (LMI)
- Talking to someone 'doing the job' can often 'light a spark' of interest with students
- Awareness of alternative routes into employment e.g. Apprenticeships
- Meet local employers and practice communication skills
- Increased confidence in job research skills
- Opportunity to match personal skills and qualities to selected career possibilities

5. How The BIG Futures Show links to DfE Careers Statutory Guidance, the Gatsby Benchmarks and Investor in Careers

The BIG Futures Show can support:

- The achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks
- DfE statutory careers guidance
- The Investor in Careers (IiC) and Quality in Careers Standard (QiCS) awards
- Ofsted requirements

6. Preparing students for their attendance at BFS

Preparing students before they come to BFS is an important part of the process to enable them to gain the maximum benefit from attending the event. A few weeks before the Show, schools are provided with a lesson plan which links to national career learning outcome requirements, and copies of the 32-page BFS Show Guide (one per student), to enable staff to deliver preparation activities. The Show Guide provides detailed information about all the exhibitors (colour coded according to the sector they represent), a site map and 7 pages of student material. Suggested student workbook activities cover:

- How BFS can help me
- My career ideas (before and after BFS)
- Exhibitor stands to visit
- Questions to ask exhibitors
- Careers within each sector

Students are also asked to evaluate their experience and think about what they have learnt, back in school. A post-event lesson plan is available for this purpose.

The BFS Show Guide is in itself a useful resource and can be used afterwards to support other careers education activities, such as Labour Market Information (LMI) research.

7. Feedback from those who attended BFS in the past (2016-2022)

Exhibitors

“BIG Futures offers an ideal opportunity for businesses to do their bit engaging and inspiring the next generation of young talent locally. It is something as business owners we should all take responsibility for, and it is great to exhibit and connect with other like-minded organisations which share our values in this regard”, Chalk Eastbourne (2024)

“Wave upon wave of hungry young minds exploring their options for BIG Futures”, thebestof Eastbourne (2024)

“Such a blast yesterday at The BIG Futures Show for Drainline. It was amazing to see how the interactive games were sparking conversations amongst teenagers. They were more than just fun; they are creating opportunities for learning and dialogue”, Drainline Ltd (2024)

Sponsor

“BIG Futures is great event for local young people, it’s an opportunity for employers and local businesses to create brand awareness and excitement with future career options”, Edwards Vacuum, Partner Sponsor (2023/24)

Students

“I liked the stand that asked you what you want to be and how you can achieve that and suggested future options” (2024)

“It was interesting and cool to experience a bit of the job – construction/plastering” (2024)

“You can do an apprenticeship and learn on the job” (2024)

Parents/carers/others

“A great local event with plenty of exhibitors! This event is inclusive to students but also to job-seekers and career conversions. No matter your age or career stage it’s worth coming”, job-seeker (2024)

“Congratulations on an excellent ‘BIG Futures’ show in Eastbourne. It was a terrific occasion and it was so good to see first-hand the massive number of stall holders and so many youngsters showing such an interest” Peter Field, the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex (2017)

Teachers

“Good mix of sectors and education providers with engaging activities. Coach travel was also well organised”, Claverham Community College (2024)

“What an amazing experience BFS has been. We have attended virtually since its inception, and this improves year on year with more employer engagement, a greater variety of industries represented, with fantastic interactive activities for students to experience and engage with”, The Turing School (2023)

“BFS gave me a major boost of enthusiasm for my work as a career’s lead in a school. Seeing the exciting world of apprenticeships in particular, it gave me so much inspiration to share with our students”, Chailey (2022)

8. Costs and booking procedure

It is necessary to make a small charge per student to enable them to attend The BIG Futures Show as such a large-scale event incurs costs associated with the venue, Show Guide and student material, marketing and the employment of staff to plan and deliver the show over a lengthy period of lead up time.

Costs for 2026 are as follows:

- For group bookings, £3.95 (plus VAT) admission per student (inclusive of all support materials) plus subsidised coach travel at £5.75 (no VAT) per student.
- Discounts are available for Eastbourne schools plus groups of over 100 and also for afternoon bookings. Please email for latest details.
- Entry for individuals or families on the day, £3.00, or free for job-seekers inclusive of Show Guide thanks to sponsorship from Recruitment South East.

8.1 How to book places and deadlines

Places can be booked via the website at www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk

The duration of the visit for group bookings will be 90 minutes. Arrival times are at 30-minute intervals starting at 9.30am. Pre-registration is required for all school groups and early booking is recommended to secure the preferred choice of visit time and to discuss available discounts.

The deadline for group bookings and associated coach travel is **Friday 28th February 2026** (unless individual arrangements have been agreed). Confirmed bookings will be invoiced and **must be paid by 11th April 2026**.

9. Marketing information for schools (see Appendices)

1. Appendix 1: Sample letter to send to parents/carers
2. Appendix 2: Sample newsletter article
3. Appendix 3: Sample content for school website

Free BFS advertising postcards will be available and can be ordered through: hello@bigfuturesshow.org.uk.

10. Further information

Mina O'Brien: mina.obrieneastbournebp.org.uk

Website: www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk

Email: hello@bigfuturesshow.org.uk



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And Finally,

The team at BFS looks forward to welcoming you and your students (and perhaps parents) on Tuesday 28th April 2026 to find out more about their **BIG** Future.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sample letter to send to parents/carers about BFS

Dear Parent/Carer

The BIG Futures Show – Eastbourne Sports Park

Tuesday 28th April 2026 (9.30am – 3.00pm)

On 28th April 2026, your son or daughter will have the opportunity to attend The BIG Futures Show (BFS), along with other students from the school and accompanied by staff, during a pre-booked time slot within the school day. This is the largest employability, skills and jobs event in East Sussex, with over 75 exhibitors and offers students the opportunity to meet with a wide variety of further education and training providers and prospective employers. BFS will provide young people across the county with information, advice and guidance about a broad range of careers and opportunities.

Potential employers will be offering interactive exhibits and guidance aimed at inspiring tomorrow's workforce. They will be looking for tomorrow's talent and be explaining what qualifications they are looking for and what training and apprenticeships they can offer in the workplace. Colleges and Universities will also be on hand to show what they have to offer, where it fits with employers' requirements and what they are looking for in students. Other training providers will be available to discuss the wide range of other possibilities available between full time education and workplace training.

Students will take part in preparation activities before the day in school and will be provided with a comprehensive Show Guide which will help them to make the most of this valuable opportunity.

You are also welcome to attend BFS at any time during the day, to enable you to find out more information about the opportunities open to your son or daughter, after they leave school.

Costs for attending the BIG Futures Show:

- For group bookings, £3.95 (plus VAT) admission per student (inclusive of all support materials) plus subsidised coach travel at £5.75 (no VAT) per student. NB Group discounts may be available.
- Entry for individuals or families on the day £3.00, or free for job-seekers inclusive of Show Guide thanks to sponsorship from Recruitment South East.

Your contribution to the costs for this event would be very much appreciated.

Students who have attended BFS in previous years have found it to be an invaluable experience to help them with career choice and their next steps in education or training.

For further information please go to: www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk.

Yours Faithfully

Appendix 2: Article for the school newsletter

The BIG Futures Show – Eastbourne Sports Park

Tuesday 28th April 2026 (9.30am – 3.00pm)

The BIG Futures Show (BFS) is the largest employability, skills and jobs event in East Sussex for students aged 14 plus, organised by Eastbourne Education Business Partnership in association with Eastbourne Borough Council. It is also open to parents, carers and anyone looking for work or training.

The event will be attended by over 75 exhibitors including colleges, training providers and businesses from a broad range of sectors, who will provide information about careers and available opportunities. Students will be able to take part in interactive tasks and find out about the skills, qualities and entry requirements for a range of professions.

They will also be provided with a Show Guide in advance of the day and will take part in preparation activities in school to help them to gain the maximum benefit from attending BFS.

Students will be able to find out about the careers that currently interest them and about jobs that they didn't know existed. They will be able to talk directly to employers and ask questions, as well as meeting representatives from local colleges and training providers to discuss their next steps in further and higher education.

Further information:

Website: www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk

Email: hello@bigfuturesshow.org.uk



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Appendix 3: Content for the school website

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The BIG Futures Show (BFS) is the largest employability, skills and jobs event in East Sussex for students aged 14 plus, organised by Eastbourne Education Business Partnership in association with Eastbourne Borough Council. Students will be invited to attend in school groups but parents, carers and anyone looking for work or training can also come along. The entry fee for visitors on the day, other than school groups, is £3.00 per individual or family group and free for job-seekers inclusive of Show Guide. The event will be attended by over 80 exhibitors including colleges, training providers and businesses from a broad range of sectors, who will provide information about careers and available opportunities.

Further information:

Website: www.bigfuturesshow.org.uk

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The Big Futures Show (BFS) and the Gatsby Benchmarks

Gatsby 1 – A stable careers programme

Attendance at BFS, particularly for a whole year group, demonstrates commitment to CEIAG from the Senior Management Team and the Governing Body. BFS can become a regular annual feature of careers work, as part of the CEIAG programme published on the school/college website. Student/staff feedback after attending BFS can contribute to the overall evaluation of CEIAG at the school.

Gatsby 2 – Learning from career and labour market information

Attendance at BFS will enable students to access up to date information about the labour market directly from local employers, across all business sectors. This will help students to make informed decisions about their subject option choices and future career paths.

Gatsby 3 – Addressing the needs of each student

All students can access BFS, including those with special educational needs and disabilities and gifted and talented students. Schools will be able to record individual attendance at the event, which will help to build up a picture of each student's CEIAG programme.

Gatsby 4 – Linking curriculum learning to careers

Students will be able to see the practical application of the subjects they are studying, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), by talking to exhibitors about the requirements of the workplace. This will help to increase their motivation back in the classroom. Subject teachers will be able to connect with employers and establish a working relationship back in school.

Gatsby 5 – Encounters with employers and employees

Talking to exhibitors at BFS will contribute to the requirement for students to have at least one meaningful encounter with an employer per year. Students will be able to find out about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace.

Gatsby 6 – Experience of workplaces



Every student should have first-hand experience of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience. Through attendance at BFS, students and school/college staff can establish contacts with employers which can lead to work experience or an apprenticeship, at a later stage.

Gatsby 7 – Encounters with further and higher education

All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. Representatives from local FE colleges, training providers and universities will be present at BFS for students to talk to and find out information about the broad range of academic and vocational courses available to them.

Gatsby 8 – Personal guidance

Every student should have a guidance interview with a careers adviser. Attendance at BFS will help to broaden students' ideas about the wide range of careers open to them, which will help them to focus during a careers guidance interview. Students who have already seen a careers adviser can use BFS to take forward any action points identified during the interview.

www: bigfuturesshow.org.uk –  : BigFuturesShow –  : @BIGFuturesShow – #BIGFUTURESSHOW

The BIG Futures Show is organised by Eastbourne Education Business Partnership
In association with and supported by Eastbourne Borough Council.