



**Apprenticeships**  
AT LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Shape, Build, Invest.

# Apprenticeships as part of Strategic Workforce Planning

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A Definitive Guide for Schools, MATs, and FE





## Introduction

At Liverpool Hope University, we believe people are the foundation of every successful organisation.

This guide is designed to help our employer partners in Education to build a strong, skilled and sustainable workforce. Whether you're planning for growth, addressing skills gaps or developing leadership capability, we'll work with you to create meaningful workforce strategies that align with your business goals. Together, we can nurture the next generation of talent to shape, build and invest through gold-standard apprenticeships and professional development.

This guide provides information specific to schools, Multi Academy Trust's and Further Education institutions on what apprenticeships are, how your organisation can use them to benefit its workforce and how to access funding through the Growth and Skills Levy.

## Key steps to take after reading this guide:

- Strategically** plan how apprenticeships can be used to strengthen your workforce

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- Use training to drive workforce development** - it is a cost-effective way to retain valued employees and keep their talent within the organisation

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- Target diverse groups to meet the skill gaps** apprenticeships are often more attractive to minority groups and will help build a workforce that better reflects the local community

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- Consider the practical implementation** of how apprenticeships will work for you as an organisation, whether you're a local authority school, part of a Multi Academy Trust or a Further Education provider

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- Engage with Liverpool Hope University** to gain their support and guidance and explore the range of apprenticeship opportunities

According to the UK Government's Apprenticeships Evaluation Report **86% of employers said apprenticeships helped them to bridge skill gaps, develop skills relevant to their organisation and supporting recruitment.**

# What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships provide an excellent way for schools and education providers to either bring in fresh talent or enhance the skills of their current staff.

A diverse range of apprenticeships are available ranging from level 2 (GCSE) to level 6 (degree level). Apprentices are employed by the school, college or MAT, acquiring on-the-job training that familiarises them with the organisation's environment. Additionally, they dedicate time to learning to enhance their formal knowledge.



Reduce staff  
turn over



Create a talent  
pipeline



Upskill existing  
staff



Improve your  
company image



Improve  
productivity



Match skills of  
employees to the skills  
needed

## Recruit and retain a talented workforce

Apprenticeships can be used as part of a People and Talent or Workforce Strategy and also for Continued Professional Development (CPD). Schools, Colleges and MATs employ lots of different roles and numerous apprenticeships are available for training or upskilling staff. Various apprenticeship training programmes may be relevant to your school and your workforce development with opportunities for both teaching staff and support staff.



Teachers Teaching Assistants Pastoral Teams Safeguarding Leads



School Chaplain Business Managers Admin Teams Finance Teams

**Future Growth:** An overwhelming 93% of employers state that degree apprenticeships play a pivotal role in fostering the future growth of their organisations. (QAA Degree Apprenticeship: Voices from the frontline Impact, Policy and Good Practice Guide 2024)



## How are apprenticeships structured?

Apprenticeships are a flexible way to train staff in a recognised qualification. The structure of the apprenticeship and what your employees learn depends on the role they are training for and the level it's set at. There is a level of flexibility within apprenticeships to support you to work with your training provider to ensure the delivery of the programme is suitable to the needs of your organisation.

Typically apprentices spend a minimum of 20% of the programme Off The Job (OTJ) undertaking new learning and the rest of the time they are in work applying the learning to their role. OTJ hours can be structured and delivered at scale, flexibly to suit your organisation's needs.

All apprentices follow an approved study programme, which means they gain a nationally recognised apprenticeship qualification and an additional academic qualification where appropriate. For example those undertaking a Level 6 qualification will receive a degree certificate alongside their apprenticeship qualification.



Apprenticeships are a cost-effective way for schools to bring in fresh talent and to enhance the skills of their current staff.



## Who can do an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships allow people of all ages to earn while they learn and gain the skills they need to build a rewarding career. Higher and Degree level Apprenticeships are available to individuals aged 18 and above who seek to learn through practical experience while working. Apprenticeships allow people of all ages to earn while they learn and gain the skills they need to build a rewarding career. They're often pursued by young adults but they're also open to people of any age who want to learn new skills or change careers.

Apprentices must meet the minimum eligibility and entry requirements for their course. This can vary depending on the course they are applying to and the training provider's requirements.



**Performance enhancement:** 99% of all employers state that degree apprenticeships positively influence their organisation's performance.

## How are apprenticeships funded?

The Growth and Skills Levy (formerly known as The Apprenticeship Levy), implemented by the UK Government in April 2017, mandates contributions from all employers with a wage bill exceeding £3 million.

While this requirement covers many schools, many are unaware of the extent of their contributions or the procedures for accessing their allocated funds. Schools affiliated with larger employer entities, such as local authorities or multi-academy trusts (MATs), may potentially access substantial funds. While only larger organisations pay the levy, the funds it generates also support apprenticeship training for smaller employers interested in taking on apprentices.

The levy is paid into a central Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account at a rate of 0.5% of the total annual pay bill. Employers manage their levy funds through a DAS account dedicated to apprenticeship training expenditures.



## How does the levy work for your school?

Depending on how your school is run, the growth and skills levy will work differently for different types of schools and multi-academy trusts.

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### Academies and multi-academy trusts

The trust is going to be your employer, and they're likely to pay the growth and skills levy. You'll need to contact your trust head office to confirm you receive the relevant funding and it's managed as effectively as possible. There may well be a centralised apprenticeship strategy in place across the trust.

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### Voluntary-aided schools

If your governing body's pay bill is over £3 million, they'll need to pay the levy. To access the funds, you'll need to contact your governing body and see how much allocation is available. Some VA schools can access the levy via their local authority, this will need to be discussed with them directly, however, The Apprenticeships Team at Liverpool Hope University can support these discussions.

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### Community and voluntary controlled schools

If your local authority's pay bill is over £3 million, they'll need to pay the levy. Your LA should let you know how much levy you have available to spend each year. If you're unsure how to access the funds, contact them to find out.

The Apprenticeships Team at Liverpool Hope University will support you with the management of the DAS process.

# How do apprenticeships fit into your workforce strategy?

A strong workforce strategy is central to organisational success, ensuring you have the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles, not just today, but in the years ahead. By planning strategically, you can anticipate change rather than react to it, aligning workforce capability with long-term goals.



## Skills shortages

Not enough people with the right skills available



## Skills Mismatches

Available skills don't align with required skills



## Skills Gaps

Current workforce lacks needed skills

A well-designed strategy goes beyond immediate recruitment; it considers how to attract, retain and develop employees, ensuring that every individual contributes to your mission and feels valued. Apprenticeships are a flexible, government-backed tool that impacts every key component of your strategy.

## Key principles

The DfE identified 6 key principles in its School workforce planning guide (October 2024) which underpinning good practice. These are:

1. Have a clear school vision, underpinned by a people strategy.
2. Invest in the development of people.
3. Review working practices to ensure staff can focus on what matters.
4. Be data and evidence led when making decisions about staffing.
5. Be creative, saving where you can to invest elsewhere.
6. Have a culture, system and processes that enable staff to be deployed flexibly across schools.

Including apprenticeships as part of your strategic approach supports your organisation to evidence the principles. Apprenticeships provide a cost effective way to invest in people and allow creative approaches to their training using pathways you can create a culture and system that enable staff to be effectively deployed across the organisation for both teaching and non teaching staff.

**26% of employers fear** that employees will leave after training... yet **69% of Gen Z say** they are more likely to stay with an employer that offers training and career development.

– OU Business barometer 2025

# The key components to effectively integrating apprenticeships into your workforce strategy:



## Workforce planning

Understanding your current workforce, forecasting future needs and addressing potential gaps before they impact service delivery or growth.

### How apprenticeships support this:

Access qualifications that are mapped to Ofsted recognised standards, ensuring the skills you develop are exactly what your organisation needs.



## Retention and engagement

Creating an environment where employees feel supported, recognised and motivated to stay and progress.

### How apprenticeships support this:

Apprenticeships can be a powerful way to demonstrate tangible investment and value, which significantly boosts morale and increases retention rates among your most experienced staff.



## Recruitment and onboarding

Attracting the right talent with values that align to your organisation, supported by a structured and inclusive onboarding process.

### How apprenticeships support this:

Apprenticeship training provides a formal, extended onboarding period that immerses new starters into your culture and operational needs from day one, often leading to stronger loyalty.



## Skills development and progression

Investing in learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, CPD and mentoring to enhance capability at every level.

### How apprenticeships support this:

Apprenticeships provide a formal framework for upskilling and reskilling current staff or providing pathways to new and diverse talent in your organisation.



## Leadership and culture

Developing leaders who can drive positive change, inspire others, and embed a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

### How apprenticeships support this:

Higher and degree level apprenticeships can help you to develop strong, quality leadership roles within your organisation. The opportunity for senior members of your team to mentor and support apprentices, as well as accessing opportunities provided by the training provider as an employer partner can also open avenues for increased CPD or professional enhancement across your existing leadership teams.



# Benefits of apprenticeships for recruitment and retention

## Recruitment

How can apprenticeships help you to build your talent pipeline?

- **Attract diverse and new talent:** Apprenticeships offer an earn-while-you-learn model that appeals to school/college leavers, career changers and individuals who want a debt-free route into a profession. This taps into talent pools often missed by traditional university routes.
- **The 'home-grown' advantage:** Schools and Multi Academy Trusts are in the unique position of having the potential to identify talent from their existing student or alumni body, who may have aspirations for a career in teaching or education. This means, there is the opportunity to continue to invest in the pupil's education, leveraging the existing knowledge of their character and aptitude and the pupil becomes the employee.
- **Cost-effective recruitment:** The Growth and Skills Levy (or government co-investment funding) covers the majority, if not all, of the training costs. This offers a significantly lower cost-per-hire and training investment compared to external recruitment and private CPD providers.

98% of employers with apprentices reported that they **experienced additional benefits to their business**, with **"addressing skills shortages"** and **"providing value for money"** being the most cited. (The St Martin's Group: The Real Costs and Benefits of Apprenticeships, 2021)

## Retention

How can apprenticeships support you to develop and value existing staff?

- **Upskilling and reskilling current teams:** Provide structured training for existing employees. For example, a Teaching Assistant can undertake a Specialist Teaching Assistant apprenticeship or become a Qualified Teacher through the Primary degree apprenticeship route. Or, a support staff member can train in Business Management or Marketing. This addresses skill gaps from within whilst leading to clear, recognised qualifications and promotions that allow staff to visualise their future within your organisation.
- **Demonstrating investment and value:** Funding apprenticeship training signals a tangible, financial investment in an employee's long-term career. This significantly boosts staff morale and job satisfaction, fostering a powerful sense of loyalty.
- **Reducing attrition and absence:** Employees who feel valued and have clear development opportunities are less likely to leave (lower staff turnover) and often report higher engagement, which can contribute to lower rates of sickness absence.

**Staff Retention:** A significant majority (89%) credit degree apprenticeships with improving staff retention. (QAA Degree Apprenticeship: Voices from the frontline Impact, Policy and Good Practice Guide 2024).

## Driving Diversity and Meeting OFSTED's Aims

Apprenticeships represent a strategic and powerful tool for schools, colleges or Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to actively promote workforce diversity and better reflect the community it serves. By offering a vocational route, leaders can demonstrate a proactive commitment to widening participation, which aligns directly with key OFSTED expectations regarding leadership and management.

Yet, too few businesses have strategic plans or initiatives to engage vital underrepresented groups such as young people, older workers, those with disabilities, and neurodiverse individuals.

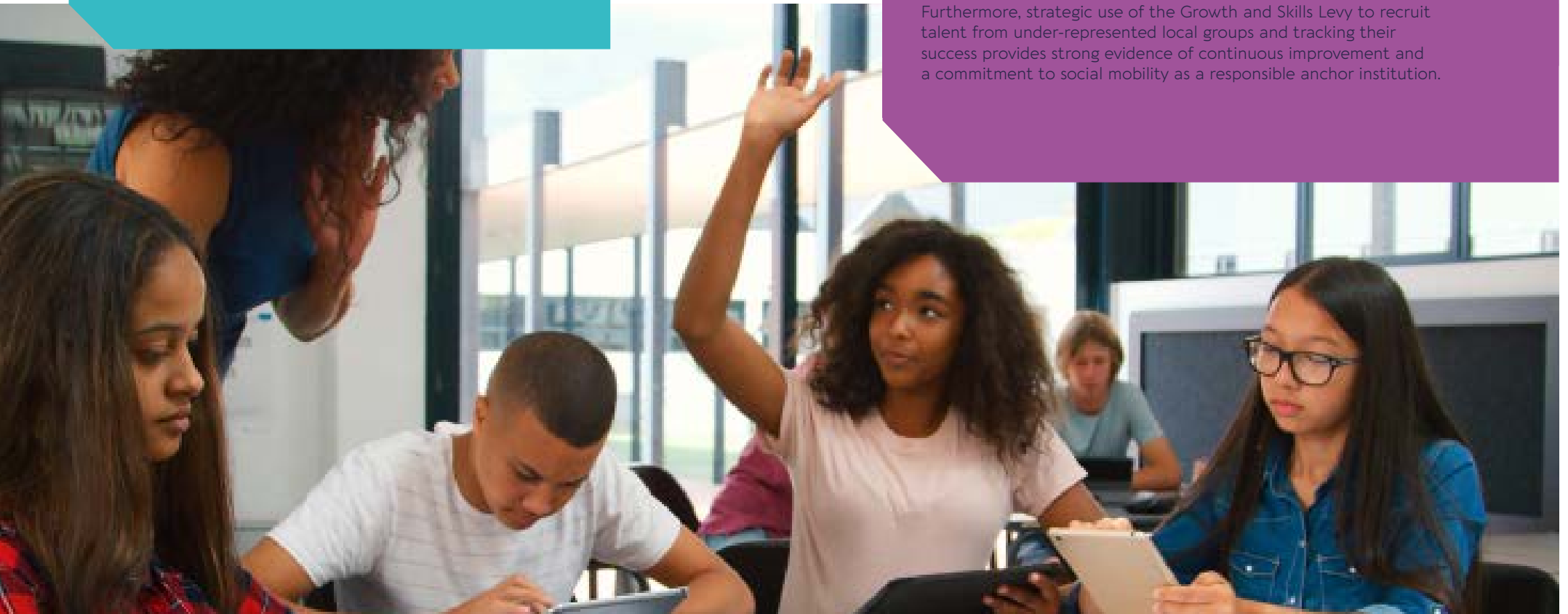
– OU Business Barameter 2024: An analysis of the UK skills landscape

## Connecting Apprenticeships to OFSTED Priorities

Leaders can strategically demonstrate how their apprenticeship programme supports high-quality Leadership and Management and advances the statutory Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), a key focus for OFSTED.

By utilising apprenticeships, a Trust can clearly show it is advancing equality of opportunity by providing an entry or progression route that is often debt-free and skills-focused, thereby lowering the financial and academic barriers typically associated with traditional routes. This intentional strategy moves beyond simple compliance to actively promote an inclusive culture where the workforce begins to reflect the full diversity of the community, offering diverse role models for pupils from all backgrounds and demonstrating that the organisation values different pathways to success.

Furthermore, strategic use of the Growth and Skills Levy to recruit talent from under-represented local groups and tracking their success provides strong evidence of continuous improvement and a commitment to social mobility as a responsible anchor institution.



## Apprenticeships as a Supportive, Alternative Route

Apprenticeships are fundamentally structured as a supportive, hands-on learning model which naturally removes barriers for candidates from non-traditional academic backgrounds. This is particularly effective for candidates facing challenges due to neurodiversity or from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.



## Supporting Neurodiversity

For individuals with neurodiversity (e.g., dyslexia, autism, or ADHD), the traditional exam-heavy model of qualification can be a significant barrier. Apprenticeships offer a supportive alternative because:

- The core principle of 'earning while learning' means knowledge is immediately applied in a practical, workplace setting, which is highly effective for kinetic and experiential learners.
- The system mandates dedicated support through structured mentorship and a consistent routine, which are vital for many neurodiverse individuals to manage their workload and anxiety.
- Recruitment often focuses on practical skills and commitment over solely traditional academic grades, widening the talent pool to those whose strengths lie outside of standard academic assessment.



## Widening Participation

Apprenticeships are one of the most effective tools for social mobility because they directly address the financial barriers to education:

- Being in a paid job avoids the financial strain and large student debt associated with university, making it a viable option for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may not have the financial support for full-time study.
- They offer a clear and immediate career progression pathway, allowing individuals to gain a recognised, high-level qualification (up to Degree Level) without sacrificing immediate income, thereby accelerating financial independence.

# Engaging the right Training Provider: Liverpool Hope University's partnership offer

The ultimate success of your workforce strategy relies on the quality of your training partner. At Liverpool Hope University, we are committed to moving beyond a simple transactional relationship to one of strategic partnership, co-designing a talent pipeline that meets your long-term goals and supports the diverse needs of your community.

By choosing to work with the Liverpool Hope University Apprenticeships Team, you're gaining a dedicated partner with a deep understanding of the education sector, a commitment to high-quality academic standards, and a focus on social justice and inclusive practice.

## Our Sector-specific apprenticeship offer

Liverpool Hope University offers high-quality degree and higher level apprenticeships that are essential for developing the next generation of staff across both teaching and professional support functions.

**Paying Forward:** By investing in our workforce, we increase, and extend into the future, the benefits from their expertise and leadership into school and communities

## Dedicated support for strategic workforce planning

Our Apprenticeships Team serves as your single point of contact, offering expertise at every stage of your strategic journey, from initial planning through to completion.

### 1. Strategic consultation and planning

We don't just deliver courses; we help you integrate them into your Workforce Strategy. This support includes:

**Needs Analysis:** We work with your senior leadership team (SLT) or HR department to review your staffing data, forecast future skills gaps, and map the most appropriate apprenticeship standards to your long-term roles (e.g., succession planning for School Business Managers, or developing a Teaching Assistant to QTS pipeline).

**Financial Optimisation:** We provide dedicated guidance on Growth and Skills Levy utilisation, transfer mechanisms and managing the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account to ensure no funding is lost. We simplify the complexities of the levy system for all education provider types.

### 2. Recruitment and programme implementation

We help you attract and onboard diverse, high-calibre talent while ensuring quality delivery and compliance:

**Inclusive recruitment:** We leverage our expertise in widening participation to ensure your apprenticeship vacancies attract candidates from under-represented local groups, directly aligning with your OFSTED diversity aims and statutory Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

**Structured onboarding:** We assist in setting entry criteria, conducting initial candidate screening, and providing clear timetables and joint induction sessions to ensure a seamless start for the apprentice, the line manager, and the in-school mentor.

**High-quality delivery and compliance:** Apprentices benefit from teaching by expert academics at Liverpool Hope University, coupled with integrated pastoral and academic support to maximise their success. Crucially, we manage the complex administrative burden of ensuring all aspects of the Off-The-Job (OTJ) training and regulatory requirements are met, structured flexibly to minimise disruption to your school timetable.

### 3. Mentor development and continuous partnership

We believe in elevating your existing staff as part of the process:

**Mentor development:** We provide training and CPD opportunities for the in-school mentors, elevating the professional development of your existing staff and embedding a valuable culture of coaching and reflective practice within your organisation.

**Continuous review:** We maintain continuous contact and strategic reviews throughout the apprenticeship lifecycle, ensuring the programme continues to align with your evolving organisational needs and the apprentice's progress.

## How to Engage with Our Team

Taking the next step to transform your workforce is simple and collaborative.

To begin your strategic partnership and explore how to invest in the future of your workforce, contact the Liverpool Hope University Apprenticeships Team today:

@ apprenticeships@hope.ac.uk

☎ 0151 291 2281

🌐 [www.hope.ac.uk/apprenticeships/](http://www.hope.ac.uk/apprenticeships/)

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