

School: Riversides School



RIVERSIDES
EVERY STUDENT MATTERS

Event: Work Experience at West Midland Railways

Number of pupils attending: 1

Aims of the activity

Increasing employer engagement.

Raising industry sectors profiles and appeal to students.

Experience of further education.

Aspiration raising.

Linking to Gatsby Benchmarks- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.



Overview of Activity

Mitchell is a Year 10 student who, prior to the placement, had no clear idea of what he wanted to for post 16. He was unsure about his post-16 options and lacked confidence in choosing between further education, apprenticeships, or entering the workforce.

To help him explore potential career pathways, Mitchell undertook a one-week work experience placement with West Midlands Railways.

Mitchell's placement provided a structured introduction to the rail industry, combining safety training, hands-on observation, and exposure to different departments. He experienced both operational and engineering environments, helping him understand how the railway functions.

On his first day, Mitchell completed a 25-minute health and safety video, which introduced him to essential railway safety rules and procedures.

This was followed by a guided tour of the depot, where he was shown different working areas and introduced to staff. This helped him get an initial understanding of the working environment and expectations.

Mitchell spent time in the engineering depot, where he:

- Observed maintenance processes
- Learned about how trains are serviced and repaired
- Gained insight into the tools and equipment used by engineers

Although he did not carry out hands-on tasks, this experience gave him a clearer understanding of engineering roles within the rail industry.

Mitchell observed routine checks carried out on stationary trains, including:

- Visual inspections
- Safety and operational checks
- Preparation procedures before trains go into service

This demonstrated the importance of attention to detail and safety in rail operations.

Mitchell also had the opportunity to shadow two apprentices, which was particularly valuable as it helped him relate to people closer to his age and stage in life.

Through this, he;

- Learned about apprenticeship pathways
- Gained insight into training and career progression
- Asked questions about their experiences entering the industry

This experience had a strong impact on his understanding of post-16 options, has opened an apprenticeship pathway in which Mitchell is considering greatly as an option.

During the placement he developed Mitchell developed a range of transferable skills,

- Confidence: Became more comfortable in a professional environment
- Communication: Improved through interaction with staff
- Awareness of safety: Gained understanding of strict industry regulations
- Career awareness: Learned about apprenticeships and engineering roles
- Observation skills: Developed attention to detail through watching checks and procedures

Mitchell started the week feeling unsure about his future. However initially at the beginning of the week found the environment unfamiliar and slightly overwhelming, over the week Mitchell grew in confidence and engaged well with all staff and engagement.

Student Reflection

“Before the placement, I didn’t know what I wanted to do after school. Seeing the depot and shadowing the apprentice’s helped me understand what an apprenticeship is like. It something I’d now seriously consider; I want to return for my second placement in the next academic year”.

Conclusion;

Mitchell’s work experience with West Midlands Railways played an important role in helping him move from uncertainty about his future to having a clearer sense of direction.

The combination of safety training, depot exposure, observing train checks, and shadowing both staff and apprentices gave him a realistic and valuable insight into the rail industry—particularly highlighting apprenticeships as a viable and appealing post-16 pathway.

