



NATIONAL ALUMNI APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME • FIRST IN SECTOR

Leave as learners. Return as professionals.

A pioneering programme that helps secondary schools, trusts and local authorities recruit their own Year 11 and Year 13 leavers into funded apprenticeships — as teaching assistants, AI and digital specialists, ICT technicians and more.



TRUSTED

Recruit young people your school already knows.

FUNDED

Develop talent through funded apprenticeship training.

CONNECTED

Strengthen your school and wider community.

Two challenges. One local answer.

Every summer, schools say goodbye to capable young people whose character, reliability and interests staff know well. At the same time, support roles have never been harder to fill — and too many young people leave education without a clear next step.

77%

of secondary school leaders find it difficult to recruit teaching assistants — more than find it hard to recruit teachers (71%).

NFER Teacher Voice, autumn 2025

1 in 5

support staff left the school system between 2023/24 and 2024/25 — the highest exit rate since the data began in 2011/12.

NFER School Support Staff Workforce report, 2026

981,000

young people aged 16–24 were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in April–June 2026 — 13% of the age group.

ONS, August 2026

65%

of teachers in state-funded secondary schools report a shortage of teaching assistants at their school.

Royal Society of Chemistry, Science Teaching Survey 2025

The alumni answer

The A4Ed National Alumni Apprenticeship Programme connects these two facts. Instead of advertising to strangers, schools invite suitable leavers back as apprentices — earning, learning and building a career in a setting where they already belong.

YEAR 11 / 13 LEAVER

ALUMNI APPRENTICE

QUALIFIED
PROFESSIONAL

FUTURE SCHOOL
LEADER

“Our pupils can leave our school as learners and return as professionals.”

A culture of aspiration, belonging and progression — for every leaver to see

Sources: NFER, School Support Staff Workforce in England Annual Report 2026 (March 2026); ONS, Young people not in education, employment or training (August 2026); RSC, Science Teaching Survey 2025.

What your school gains

The Alumni Programme turns relationships built over five to seven years into a planned, repeatable recruitment pipeline — moving you from reactive vacancy-filling to growing your own workforce.

Trusted recruitment

Appoint young people your staff have known for years — their attendance, character, reliability and values are already understood.

Lower-risk hiring

CIPD finds 41% of employers see new recruits resign within 12 weeks. Knowing a candidate well takes the gamble out of an unknown hire.

Funded training

Training is paid from levy funds or, for under-25s at non-levy employers, 100% government funded from August 2026.

Positive destinations

Evidence clear progression into employment and training for leavers — strong material for Ofsted and your careers programme.

Hard-to-fill roles, filled

Build a steady pipeline into teaching assistant, SEND, IT and digital roles — where vacancies are hardest to fill.

Community leadership

Show families that leaving school opens doors and strengthen your reputation as a local employer of young people.

Grow your own — across your whole family of schools

Their former school — returning to a setting they know inside out.

Another trust school — shared systems and culture, with a fresh start.

Local authority schools — keeping local talent in local schools.

Placing an alumnus in a partner school can give them familiar ways of working with a clear professional distance from younger siblings and former peers.

Sources: CIPD research on early leavers, via Adecco UK; apprenticeship funding rules 2026 to 2027 (GOV.UK). Funding eligibility depends on employer levy status and apprentice age.

A confident first step into work

For many 16- and 18-year-olds, the move from classroom to workplace is the biggest transition they have faced. The Alumni Programme lets them make it inside a community that already knows and supports them.

1 A familiar, supportive workplace

They already know the site, routines, expectations and many of the people — so their energy goes into learning the job, not surviving the first term.

2 Strengths and interests, recognised

Staff can match leavers to roles they have shown real aptitude for: the peer mentor or reading buddy towards teaching assistant; the digital leader or computing student towards AI and ICT.

3 Earn while you learn

A salary from day one (the apprentice minimum is £8.00 an hour from April 2026, and many employers pay more), a nationally recognised qualification and no tuition-fee debt.

4 Workplace skills from the first application

Writing an application and personal statement, preparing for interview, presenting professionally and taking structured feedback — skills that last, whatever the outcome.

5 A clear career ladder

Progress from Level 3 into specialist, SEND, digital and leadership pathways, with onward routes towards teaching.

86%

less likely to be NEET after four or more meaningful encounters with employers at school.

68%

of apprentices were still employed by the same organisation after completing.

97%

of completers reported a positive impact on their job or career.

“It allows young people to earn, learn and develop in an environment where they already feel they belong, while giving schools access to committed future talent.”

Executive School Leader, Multi-Academy Trust

Sources: Education and Employers, *It's who you meet*; DfE Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2023 (reported by FE Week); GOV.UK / ACAS National Minimum Wage rates from 1 April 2026.

Pathways matched to real interests

Three high-demand routes for school leavers, each built around skills schools have already seen them show.

Teaching Assistant LEVEL 3	IDEAL FOR Leavers who have mentored younger pupils, helped in lessons or shown patience and care — from Year 11 or Year 13.	IN SCHOOL THEY Support learning in class and small groups, SEND provision, behaviour and wellbeing, alongside teachers.
AI & Automation Practitioner LEVEL 4 · NEW	IDEAL FOR Year 13 leavers with Computing, Maths or digital interests who enjoy solving practical problems.	IN SCHOOL THEY Find where AI and automation can save staff time, build low-code workflows and promote safe, ethical, data-protected AI use.
IT & ICT Support LEVEL 3	IDEAL FOR Year 11 or Year 13 leavers who were digital leaders or the go-to helper with technology.	IN SCHOOL THEY Support devices, networks, accounts and classroom technology, help staff and pupils, and keep systems secure.

And more pathways to explore

Specialist Teaching Assistant (Level 5) · Business Administration · Digital Marketing · Data Analysis · Social Wellbeing · Sport Coach · Catering

Why AI and digital, and why now?

The Level 4 AI & Automation Practitioner standard was approved by Skills England in December 2025 to help organisations adopt AI safely and productively. Schools can grow the in-house digital expertise they need — with young people who already understand how the school works.

Sources: Skills England, AI and automation practitioner (ST1512), approved 10 December 2025; GOV.UK press release on the AI apprenticeship. Entry requirements are set by each employer and training provider.

Alumni vs external recruitment

How recruiting your own leavers compares with advertising an entry-level post on the open market.

~5 weeks average UK time from application to offer for an external hire StandOut CV; Totaljobs	£6,125 CIPD average cost of filling a vacancy, including labour costs CIPD	£0 agency or advertising fees with the Alumni Programme A4Ed Alumni Programme
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	External entry-level hire	A4Ed Alumni apprentice
Finding candidates	Advertise to unknown applicants, then screen and shortlist from scratch.	Shortlist from leavers staff already know, with interest built through school channels.
Time to hire	About 4.9–5.1 weeks from application to offer on average — before advertising time and notice periods.	Timetabled into the school year, with offers made before leavers finish — ready for September.
Recruitment cost	£6,125 average cost of filling a vacancy (CIPD); agency fees commonly add 15%+ of salary.	No agency or advertising spend; A4Ed supplies every campaign and interview material.
Training cost	Induction and any qualification funded from the school budget.	Apprenticeship training funded from levy, or 100% for under-25s at non-levy employers.
Incentives	None.	£1,000 per 16–18 apprentice; up to £2,000 for non-levy employers hiring 16–24s from 1 Oct 2026; no employer NI for apprentices under 25.
Early-leaver risk	41% of employers report new recruits resigning within 12 weeks (CIPD).	Character, attendance and values known from years in school.
Induction	New to the site, culture, systems and pupils.	Knows the setting; induction focuses on the professional role and boundaries.

Safer recruitment checks, including an enhanced DBS check and references, apply to every appointment. Time and cost figures are national, cross-sector averages; school costs vary. Funding and incentive eligibility depends on employer levy status and apprentice age, and A4Ed confirms it for each appointment.

Sources: StandOut CV and Totaljobs Hiring Trends Index (time to hire); CIPD Resourcing and Talent Planning (cost per vacancy, early leavers); apprenticeship funding rules 2026 to 2027 and employer incentives (GOV.UK).

The alumni recruitment journey

A structured, safer-recruitment process that doubles as real workplace learning for every applicant — with A4Ed materials ready at every step.

STEP & WHAT HAPPENS		A4ED PROVIDES
1	Launch AUTUMN TERM Announce the programme to pupils, parents and the local community. Students build: awareness of real careers on their doorstep.	Website and social content, noticeboard publications, parent and community briefing pack.
2	Identify & invite AUTUMN – SPRING Staff nominate suitable leavers; students register interest with careers guidance. Students build: reflection on their strengths and interests.	Nomination and expression-of-interest forms, role profiles for each pathway.
3	Apply SPRING TERM Leavers complete a genuine application and personal statement. Students build: written communication and evidencing their experience.	Application pack and an application-writing workshop plan.
4	Select SPRING – SUMMER A practical task or observation, a panel interview and structured feedback for every candidate. Students build: interview technique, professional conduct, using feedback.	Interview process flow, interview steps, question bank, scoring and feedback templates.
5	Offer & checks SUMMER TERM Conditional offer and safer recruitment checks in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education. Students build: understanding of professional responsibilities.	Offer letter templates and a pre-employment checklist.
6	Onboard SUMMER – SEPTEMBER Role induction, a named mentor and clear boundaries with former peers. Students build: workplace routines, expectations and confidence.	Onboarding and induction programme for the role, plus a mentor guide.
7	Learn & earn FROM SEPTEMBER The apprenticeship begins with a matched training provider: off-the-job learning, progress reviews and end-point assessment. Students build: occupational skills and a recognised qualification.	Provider matching, enrolment support and a learner journey map.

Timings are indicative and can be adapted to your school calendar, trust or local authority recruitment cycle.

EVERYTHING PROVIDED BY A4ED

Your complete Alumni Toolkit

You provide the opportunity. We provide everything else to run it well, year after year.

Website & digital content

Web pages, social posts and newsletter copy, ready to publish.

Parent & community briefings

Slides and handouts for parents' evenings and local partners.

Noticeboard publications

Posters and displays for corridors, careers areas and staffrooms.

Recruitment process flow

A term-by-term plan from launch to September start.

Interview steps & scoring

Tasks, question banks, scoring grids and feedback templates.

Offers & safer recruitment

Offer templates and pre-employment checklists.

Onboarding for the role

Induction programme, mentor guide and professional boundaries.

Training & learner journey

Provider matching, enrolment and a clear map to qualification.

LEAVER

APPRENTICE

PROFESSIONAL

FUTURE SCHOOL
LEADER

"The Alumni Programme provides schools with a unique opportunity to turn the relationship we have built with young people over many years into a genuine employment pathway."

Principal, Secondary School

READY TO BUILD YOUR ALUMNI WORKFORCE?

Let's identify your next generation of talent.

Start with one apprentice or build an annual cohort across your trust or local authority. For more details, contact us:

Email: hello@apprenticeships4education.co.uk

Web: <https://apprenticeships4education.co.uk>

Book a free consultation: apprenticeships4education.co.uk/Contact