

Speakers: Taking Part

Speakers for Schools(SfS) is a network of the UK's leading figures who are committed to helping level the playing field in state schools, starting with giving some of their time each year to share their experiences and insights. Our talks are uniquely about broadening horizons and raising the aspirations of young people through hearing from the leaders of today, and we keep this entirely free of charge for our schools, as our speakers generously donate their time and travel costs.

Commitment in Brief

- Our events are a 1-hour school talk in a state secondary school, academy or college in the SfS network. We work across the UK-wide and can tell you where we need the most support.
- Speakers donate their time and travel, with our team working with your office to make this fit for your diary, often pairing travel with existing commitments.
- We focus on reaching state schools with the highest need. However, as schools and their students vary in need and their aims/objectives, talks are tailored between the speaker/office and the school in the lead-up to the event.

Working with You

- Our charity specialises in working with leading figures who have the most challenging diaries, so our team works creatively with your office to fit in a talk and to reach underserved locations.
- We contact speakers a few times during the academic year to schedule a talk around your diary. This often depends on your last event with us and the school calendar.
- Our team has developed expertise and insights to help ensure our speakers are giving their time in the most high-impact way possible for them.
- We can always be contacted for extra information, event guidance and advice on how this could link into the wider educational/youth engagement work, like work experience or apprenticeships etc.

Please contact us on inspiration@speakersforschools.org with any changes or updates to titles, biographies etc. Given the sensitivities of working with schools & children, if there are any professional/personal circumstances that arise that may raise unexpected safeguarding or reputational questions with participation we ask you to notify us immediately so we can advise.

Planning Your Talk

1. When starting to coordinate your talk, we will contact schools in agreed locations and then come back to you with our recommended school. This is based on:

- Your geographic availability
- Schools' need level compared to others in the area or network and fit for your talk
- The school's availability to host a talk during your preferred time frame (where applicable) your preference for age group, size of audience and other expectations

2. Once a school is agreed, you will be introduced to them to choose a date and discuss the event details directly.

- Please make contact promptly or tell us if you are having trouble contacting the school.

3. Once a date is agreed please let SfS know so that further guides can be sent to you and the school for next steps.

- If you have trouble confirming a date, please contact the team for help.
- Schools will often reply to emails at a slower pace than business offices, but should there be a major lack of communication, let us know.

4. As a part of the programme, schools and speakers are required to have at least one phone call in advance to avoid any miscommunication on expectations. Please be sure to discuss the below with schools, highlighting any preferences you may have, such as:

- The preferred time within the school day; our events should be roughly one hour long, with plenty of student engagement.
- The exact audience make-up (size, age); schools should not be suggesting audiences less than 50 pupils unless you have requested this. Schools can give you advice on relating your talk and experiences to younger students, so be sure to ask what they recommend.
- Agree event format, broad theme(s) and key aims of the talk to help you in crafting your talk (please see our 'Planning Your Talk' guide for our themes and formats)
- Make sure you know who will be there to greet you on the day and who will be moderating the Q&A. It's also a good idea to make sure you know who to speak to in case your main contact is unavailable.
- If the school requests something that does not seem to meet the above or might be an issue for you, please do let us know.

Fostering Inclusivity Across Diverse Student Audiences

As a valued volunteer speaker, it's crucial to remember that we collaborate with a diverse array of schools and communities. Your talk has the power to inspire, educate, and uplift students from various backgrounds and experiences. To ensure that your message reaches every individual in your audience, please keep the following points in mind:

- **Core Messages of Inclusion:**

Craft your talk around core messages that promote inclusivity, diversity, and respect. Emphasize the importance of embracing differences and working together towards common goals.

- **Tailoring Your Talk:**

While sharing your insights and experiences, strive to connect with students from different walks of life. Acknowledge and address varying perspectives and tailor your examples to resonate with a wide range of interests and experiences.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:**

Be mindful of cultural references, language, and anecdotes to ensure they are universally relatable and avoid unintentional exclusion.

- **Student-Centered Approach:**

Prior to your talk, engage in meaningful conversations with the school to understand the students' age group, interests, and needs. This can be done during the essential planning call.

- **Interactive and Engaging:**

If possible, employ interactive elements that encourage participation from all students, regardless of their background or abilities. This fosters a sense of belonging and active engagement.

- **Question and Answer Session:**

All our talks should have time dedicated to a Q&A session where students can seek clarity and share their thoughts. This promotes an open dialogue and demonstrates your commitment to addressing a diverse array of questions.

- **Encourage Dialogue:**

If appropriate, encourage students to share their own stories, experiences, and aspirations. This creates an inclusive environment where everyone's voice is valued. Remember, your talk has the potential to leave a lasting impact on students' lives. By embracing inclusivity and understanding the diverse range of experiences within the audience, you can contribute to a more meaningful and enriching educational experience. Thank you for your dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of our students.

Leaving an Impact

Beyond the talk, there are practical ways speakers can ensure students leave better informed about their future:

- **Create a link between big-picture insights and practical next steps for these students:**

Many speakers bring an apprentice, graduate or junior executive along to help provide a practical perspective on the opportunities the industry has given them. At the end they can chat to students about steps they have taken, as well as shed light on the realities of different pathways like apprenticeships, university or other routes into your industry.

- **1/3 of students do not have access to any work experience through their networks:**

Our Experience Programme is run through a simple, safe-guarded portal, giving students access to opportunities, schools an easy way to manage their work experience and employers the chance to diversify their early talent pipelines and meet their social mobility goals. Contact us on inspiration@speakersforschools.org to find out more.

- **Tell schools about free programmes, local events, resources or materials from your organisation:**

Many schools now have less time and money than ever so welcome knowing about any wider opportunities their students can take advantage of. Please remember that teachers have many competing demands on their time, so their ability to act on these can be limited. If you would like help with this, please contact the SfS team.

After the talk

We will assume all has gone forward with no issues if we do not hear from the speaker or school before the talk, but we always send a follow-up email promptly after.

Following the talk, you will also receive a feedback form to help us keep track of our work. At this point, you can then let us know when we should be back in touch to plan your next talk. Once available, we will also share feedback from the school with you.



Top Tips

You can find more tips from past speakers, talk ideas and FAQs in our [Planning Your Talk](#) guide but here are our absolute essentials for a great event:

- Be sure to have a phone call with the school in advance to agree the format, audience and content of the talk. We ask that all our speakers have at least one phone call with the school to ensure nothing is missed through email.
- Make sure to clearly tell the school about any expectations you might have, e.g. how you should be introduced to the audience, reserved parking space, if you require advice on how to make your talk appropriate for their suggested student group, meeting with the headteacher etc
- Take the time to adjust your talk for an SfS audience as every cohort is different! For advice and recommendations on what works well for our events please see our [Planning Your Talk guide](#).
- Every talk regardless of the topic set the stage by telling students who you are, what you want them to take away from your talk and why the topic should matter to them.
- Ensure you're comfortable and aware of the talk format. Many speakers opt for a conversational approach or an interview format to avoid talking 'at' the students. See more about formats in our [Planning Your Talk](#) guide.

Helpful to know...

- Schools are sometimes slower to reply to emails than business offices because teachers are usually in the classroom all day, marking during the evenings and preparing the next day's lessons. This means it can take longer than you expect to firm up details.
- SfS will send reminders to check in with you about how the preparations are going; we have hundreds of talks in the making, so these emails are just to ensure all is on track and remind you of important planning steps.
- We are often asked how to best engage students and what types of talks leave an impact – even seasoned speakers find our [Planning Your Talk](#) useful. The tips and advice are updated annually so be sure to check back before each talk.