

HYDESVILLE
TOWER SCHOOL

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Sixth Form Guide For Parents

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Leading independent education in Walsall for boys and girls aged 3-16 since 1952

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Introduction...

We know you want the very best for your child, so our aim with this guide is to help provide you with the advice and guidance and the benefit of our experience to make the transition to Sixth Form as easy as possible.

Post 16 options

All 16 year olds must undertake further education until they are 18. This does not mean they have to stay on at school or go to college, they can get a job with a training element to it, but they cannot work full-time without some training.

Their options are to take academic qualifications, such as A levels, BTECs, IB or T Levels or take vocational qualifications, such as an apprenticeship or job with training. If they have struggled to get good results at GCSE, they can do an internship or traineeships to get the experience to progress.

Thinking ahead

If your child thinks they know what they want to do when they leave school at 18, this may influence their choices. For example, someone who hopes to train as a dentist will need to take the sciences at sixth-form or someone who has a flair for linguistics may want to study languages.

Learning styles

Another driver in choosing what to study at sixth-form will be the way in which your child prefers to learn. Those who like course-work and prefer “doing” will enjoy taking BTECs, T Levels or apprenticeships. Pupils that prefer listening and exams will enjoy the traditional A level approach



A Levels

An A level, or General Certificate of Advanced Level qualification, is an in-depth study of a subject over two years with an examination at the end to test knowledge. Learning mostly takes place in the classroom.

Pupils take three A levels, although some may take four. For pupils wishing to go on to university, UCAS points are awarded for up to three A levels. Points range from 16 to 56 points depending on the grade achieved. If a pupil takes four A levels, only their top three grades will count towards their total UCAS points.

Subject choices

There are many more subject choices at A level than GCSE, so it's possible they might choose a subject they haven't studied before. If they find they don't enjoy the subject as much as they'd hoped, most schools or colleges allow them to make changes towards the end of the first term. Pupils usually need at least a GCSE grade 6 in their subject choice, if it's something they have studied before, although exceptions can be made.



The IB Diploma

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma is offered by King Edwards Boys' School and aims to provide both breadth and depth of knowledge.

Pupils choose up to six subjects (three standard level and three at higher level) as well as undertaking some compulsory core modules. Most learning is theory, although there are some practical elements. IB is graded by levels, with Level 7 (IBO certificate in higher level) earning 56 UCAS points.

Core modules

In addition to their six subjects, each pupil must undertake three core modules designed to encourage them to become active, compassionate and life-long learners.

These are:

- An extended essay - an in-depth study of a question relating to one of their chosen subjects, which requires independent research.
- The theory of knowledge - a course on critical thinking assessed through both an oral presentation and a 1,600 word essay.
- Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) - a series of activities alongside the pupil's academic study in creative thinking, healthy living and service to the community. The three strands of CAS are designed to grow a pupil's personal and interpersonal development through a journey of self discovery



BTECs (Level 3)

BTECs at Level 3 are a similar standard to A levels with a focus on vocational subjects. The subsidiary diploma is equivalent to one A level, the diploma is equivalent to two and the extended diploma is equivalent to three A levels.

Study takes place over a two year period and is a combination of both practical and theory. Knowledge is tested through course work and a final examination (comprising 40% of the total grade). For those wishing to go to university, subsidiary diplomas offer the same opportunity to earn UCAS points as A levels (15 to 56 points). UCAS points for BTEC diplomas and extended diploma are double and trebled respectively.

If your child prefers learning through practical application, they will more likely do better taking BTECs than A levels. However, some universities have a preference for A levels over BTEC, so if your child has their heart set on a specific university or course, it's worth checking entry requirements to see whether this will influence their sixth-form choices.



T Levels

T Levels, or Technical Level Qualifications, are a new government backed qualification introduced as of September 2020 and equivalent to 3 A Levels. These 2-year courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares pupils for working life.

T Levels offer pupils a mixture of classroom learning with an 'on-the job' placement equating to 315 hours (approximately 45 days or 20% of the course time).

They provide the knowledge, skills and experience needed for pupils to get ahead in their chosen industries or go on to further study or a higher apprenticeship. T-Levels offer the chance to earn between 72 and 168 UCAS points.

Current T Level subjects:

- Construction
- Digital
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Education and childcare
- Health and science
- Legal, finance and accounting

Additional T Level subjects available from Sept. 2023:

- Agriculture, land management and production
- Animal care and management
- Catering
- Craft and design
- Hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy
- Media, broadcast and production
- Legal services



Initial T Level Providers

The eight initial providers of T Levels in the West Midlands Combined Authority announced by the Department for Education are:

- Access Creative College (Access to Music Ltd.), Digbeth, Birmingham
- Bordesley Green Girls' School & Sixth Form, Birmingham
- Dudley College of Technology
- Lordswood Girls' School & Sixth Form Centre, Birmingham
- Sandwell Academy
- University College Birmingham
- Walsall College
- Walsall Studio School



Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are real jobs which include learning elements which might take place at university, college or an education provider. Apprenticeships were developed to help address the skills shortage in UK businesses. They provide a way of combining learning with on the job training to build professional skills transferable from one organisation to another.

Sixteen year olds can start an apprenticeship at Level 2 (few qualifications required) or Level 3 (5 GCSEs required). There is no level one as enrolling on an apprenticeship requires demonstrating a certain ability. Pupils with no qualifications can take on a traineeship or internship to help them achieve the necessary skills to start an apprenticeship.

Most apprenticeships work towards one or more qualifications. These qualifications correspond to the level of apprenticeship. Advanced apprenticeships (level 3) provide qualifications equivalent to 2 A levels. Level 3 qualifications may include National Certificates, National Diplomas or NVQs which will open up choices once your child is 18.

Flexibility Apprenticeships are often flexible in that it may be possible to extend the apprenticeship period and obtain a higher qualification. For example, some apprenticeships will allow pupils to continue on to a higher apprenticeship (level 4/5) once the advanced apprenticeship is complete. Always check with their employer whether such progression is possible.



Choosing the right path

For some children the decision on what to study after their GCSEs will be fairly straightforward. For others, narrowing their subject choices may prove trickier. If your child needs some extra guidance, it's important to consider the following:

What is your child good at? What do they enjoy?

Almost all of us tend to be better at things we enjoy than things we don't. If your child has a natural passion for certain subjects, they will likely make good sixth form choices. Additionally, your child will need to spend a lot of time on each sixth form option they select, so it's a good idea that they have an interest in the subjects they study.

GCSE results can be a useful indicator of whether they'll do well in a subject. If they have not already studied the subjects at GCSE, speak to their teacher to get advice on whether they're likely to do well. For example, if they want to study a language that wasn't offered at GCSE, how well did they do in their compulsory language subjects?

Also, consider whether your child excels in practical studies or theoretical studies. This can also be a big influencer in subject choices.

What does your child want to do next?

If your child knows what profession they want to work towards, or which subject they want to read at university, their sixth form subject choices may be more obvious. For example, to study pharmacy they must take chemistry and at least one from biology, physics or maths; or if they want to take a degree in engineering, they will likely require maths.

Where conflict can appear is if they have their heart set on a career choice but little aptitude for the subjects needed to progress towards it. That's where vocational courses can be helpful.



What to consider?

With these options in mind, when it comes to choosing and applying for post-16 options, we recommend that your child thinks about the following considerations:

- Does this option choice offer the pathway that interests and motivates them most? Can your child meet the entry requirements for the course they want to do?
- Will it give them the best opportunity to build on their past achievements and strengths? Is it close enough to home to enable them to commute with ease?
- What reputation does the school/college/employer have? How good are the facilities?
- Will this learning environment suit them?
- Will your child get any one-to-one tutorial support? What weighting do exams have on the course?
- How much coursework will there be?
- Will they be offered the chance to do some work experience?
- Are there any opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities? What is your child's instinctive feeling about this option choice?



Also need to know...

During Year 11 we encourage pupils to attend open days and start thinking of post 16 destinations and courses that they may like to consider.

- Sixth Form open days are usually between October-December with college and other destinations going through to the following year with more than one open day. apprenticeships are live throughout the year so it is worth looking online to see what is available.
- all application form will be live online to complete around November of Year 11. Each deadline will be different for each college, Sixth Form or other destinations, so it is best to look online at each provider and make a note of these. Due to everything being online there isn't an option to hand in late applications.
- you will need a UPN number to complete application forms – these will be given to pupils by their form tutor.
- as a school we don't have UCI number that some schools ask for – if the application form won't let you submit without this you need to ring up the Sixth Form your applying to and they will work on an individual basis for you to bypass this section.



When to apply?

Planning and applying usually starts around 18 months before the start of the Year 12 academic year. Open events usually take place in the Autumn term of Year 11.

Most selective sixth forms will carry out face-to-face interview, and some independent schools may require pupils to sit an exam too. This usually happens in the Spring term of Year 11.

There is usually a shorter time frame for applying to sixth form colleges with a summer term deadline – usually around May – to apply ahead of starting in September.

Careers advice

During the end of Year 10, pupils will have a 30 minute slot with an outside careers advisor to discuss further post 16 and post 18 options and destinations relating to their own career interests and pathways.

Pupils will be sent a written copy of this meeting and links given to help further with their post 16 options.

Pupils are also encouraged to seek advice from Miss Fairbrother, Careers Advisor at Hydesville.



Work Experience

Work experience will be launched in an assembly in January. All Year 10 pupils will then be able to organise and secure their work experience placements.

Pupils are required to attend a minimum of 5 days' work experience before they leave Hydesville Tower School. Post 16 destinations now have a section within their application forms which specifically asks about the work experience which your child has completed. We therefore advise pupils to have completed some work experience by the time they reach year 11 to support their post 16 applications. Work experience must be completed outside of school time and can commence any point from January onwards. The 5 days does not have to be completed as 5 consecutive days and pupils can complete as many different work experience placements as they wish. An online logbook online will need to be completed when the pupils are on placement.

Virtual work experience is also available and beneficial, especially if pupils are interested in completing their work experience with the NHS, which is becoming increasingly difficult to complete in person due to the current climate.

Pupils are encouraged to search for their work experience placement using the 'SIPS' database. This database has all the companies listed where pupils have previously been able to complete their work experience placement. This database is a good start to find a placement of the pupils' interests. Pupils are encouraged to find a company, research their contact details and speak directly with the company to see what availability they may have. Once pupils have secured a placement, pupils must let Miss Fairbrother know at least three weeks in advance of going on placement so that all the health and safety checks can be completed in advance of their placements start date. The idea is that pupils lead and secure their work experience placement from start to finish.



Work Experience Cont.

If there are work experience opportunities with family members or with firms which are not on the SIPS database, then these placements can still go ahead, although the company's details will need to be submitted at least 4 week before the work experience placement start date, so that the correct paperwork and health and safety checks can be completed.

Please find below the SIPS website link along with the Hydesville pupils' username and password.

Login Details

Website www.sipseducation.work-experience.co.uk

Username: hydesvillestudent

Password: pupilwex123



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**If you have any questions please
contact the school office.**

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