



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

# CAREERS & POST-16 OPTIONS

How we support your child from Year 7 to Year 11, every route open to them at 16, and how to book time with our careers adviser.

**WELCOME**

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S NEXT STEPS

Dear Parents and Carers,

You are the biggest influence on your child's choices about their future. This guide is here to help you have those conversations with confidence.

From Year 7 to Year 11, every student at Sir William Stanier follows a planned careers journey. They explore their interests, meet employers, colleges and universities, and build the confidence to make informed decisions. In Year 11, they receive personalised guidance from a qualified careers adviser to help them choose their post-16 route.

The options at 16 are changing, with new V Levels arriving from September 2027. Inside, you'll find a clear explanation of every route, what we offer in school, and how to book a careers guidance appointment.

If you have any questions at all, please get in touch.

## Jess Sheridan

Assistant Headteacher, Careers Leader

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### CAREERS CONTACT

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AT SIR WILLIAM STANIER

# OUR CAREERS PROGRAMME

Our careers programme inspires ambition and opens doors. Support comes in three layers, so every student gets the core programme and those who need more get it.

## UNIVERSAL

For every student

- Assemblies
- Planned careers lessons
- Employer talks
- Careers fairs and events
- Careers links in every subject
- Experiences of the workplace
- Online careers resources

## TARGETED

For specific groups

- Support based on circumstances, such as Pupil Premium, SEND and EAL
- Aspiration-raising groups
- Intervention programmes
- Small group workshops

## PERSONALISED

For individual students

- 1:1 careers guidance interview
- Bespoke action plans
- Tailored pathway planning
- Help with applications, CVs, interviews and post-16 choices

## GUIDED BY THE 8 GATSBY BENCHMARKS

The national standard for good careers guidance in schools. Here is what each one means for your child.

### 1. A stable careers programme

A planned programme every year, shared with families.

### 2. Labour market information

Learning where the jobs are and what they pay.

### 3. The needs of each pupil

Support shaped around your child's goals and needs.

### 4. Careers in the curriculum

Seeing how every subject links to real jobs.

### 5. Meeting employers

Talks, workshops and events with real employers.

### 6. Experiences of workplaces

Seeing work first-hand, including work experience.

### 7. Further and higher education

Meeting colleges, training providers and universities.

### 8. Personal guidance

A 1:1 interview with a qualified careers adviser.

AT SIR WILLIAM STANIER

# THE STUDENT JOURNEY: YEAR 7-11

Each year builds on the last. Here is what your child will focus on, and a simple way you can help at home.

YEAR

7

## EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

Self-awareness, personal strengths, aspirations, and a broad introduction to the world of work.

**How you can help:** talk about the jobs people in your family and friends do, and what they enjoy about them.

YEAR

8

## LEARN AND CHALLENGE

Investigating different career routes, challenging stereotypes, and an introduction to key employability skills.

**How you can help:** encourage your child to look at jobs they might never have considered.

YEAR

9

## PLAN AND CHOOSE

Linking GCSE options to future pathways through structured planning and research.

**How you can help:** come to options evening, and ask what each subject could lead to, not just which ones they like.

YEAR

10

## EXPERIENCE AND PREPARE

Real-world readiness: CV writing, mock interviews, work experience, workplace encounters and growing independence.

**How you can help:** help them find a work experience placement, and start visiting college open evenings together.

YEAR

11

## DECIDE AND TRANSITION

Making informed decisions, completing applications, a 1:1 careers guidance interview, and preparing for the next step.

**How you can help:** keep track of application deadlines and always have a back-up plan.

## POST-16 OPTIONS

# THE BIG PICTURE

In England, young people must stay in education or training until their 18th birthday. That doesn't have to mean staying in a classroom. It can be done in one of three ways:

## Full-time education

At a college, sixth form or training provider.

## An apprenticeship

A paid job with training towards a qualification.

## Work plus study

Working or volunteering 20+ hours a week, alongside part-time study.

## THE MAIN ROUTES AT 16

### A LEVELS

Academic: study subjects in depth

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### V LEVELS

Vocational: explore a sector. New from 2027

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### T LEVELS

Technical: train for a specific career

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### APPRENTICESHIP

Work-based: earn while you learn

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## UNDERSTANDING QUALIFICATION LEVELS

Every qualification has a level. GCSEs at grades 4–9 are Level 2, so most students start post-16 study at Level 3. Students can also build up from Level 1 or 2 first.

### LEVEL 7

Master's degree, degree apprenticeship

### LEVEL 6

Bachelor's degree, degree apprenticeship

### LEVELS 4–5

HNC, HND, foundation degree, higher apprenticeship

### LEVEL 3

A Levels, V Levels, T Levels, advanced apprenticeship

### LEVEL 2

GCSEs grades 4–9, foundation or intermediate apprenticeship

### LEVEL 1

GCSEs grades 1–3, Level 1 college courses

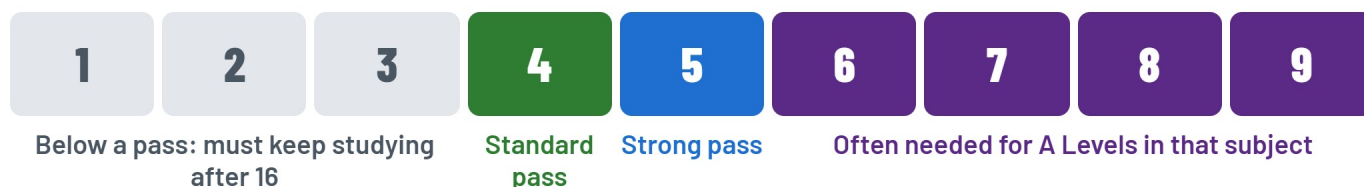
### ENTRY

Entry level certificates, foundation learning

## POST-16 OPTIONS

# ENGLISH AND MATHS: WHY GRADE 4 MATTERS

English and maths are the two GCSEs that every college, training provider and employer looks at first. Passing them opens doors to almost every post-16 route.



## It opens courses

Most Level 3 courses and advanced apprenticeships ask for grade 4 or above in both, and some ask for a 5 or 6.

## Employers ask for it

Communication was the top skill in local job adverts last year, named in over 32,000 of them.

## It's for life

From payslips and budgets to writing applications, these skills are used every day.

## WHAT IF MY CHILD DOESN'T GET A GRADE 4?

They will keep studying English and/or maths after 16, alongside their main course, until they pass or turn 18. It isn't the end of the road, but it does take time away from their chosen course.

**Grade 3**      Must retake the GCSE.

**Grade 2 or below**      Can study either the GCSE or Functional Skills Level 2.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Encourage good attendance and revision sessions
- Use maths in everyday life: shopping, cooking, budgeting
- Encourage reading of any kind, every day
- Try free revision tools such as BBC Bitesize
- Ask teachers which topics to focus on
- Celebrate effort and progress, not just grades

## POST-16 OPTIONS

# A LEVELS AND V LEVELS

## A LEVELS

ACADEMIC · LEVEL 3

|                    |                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What</b>        | Academic qualifications in individual subjects, studied in depth.                                                          |
| <b>How long</b>    | Two years, usually studying three subjects.                                                                                |
| <b>Assessed by</b> | Mainly exams at the end of the two years.                                                                                  |
| <b>Entry</b>       | Often five or more GCSEs at grade 4+, with higher grades in the subjects chosen. Every provider sets its own requirements. |
| <b>Leads to</b>    | University, higher and degree apprenticeships, or employment.                                                              |
| <b>Suits</b>       | Students who love a subject, enjoy independent study and are confident with exams.                                         |

## V LEVELS

NEW

VOCATIONAL · LEVEL 3

|                       |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What</b>           | New vocational qualifications for students who want to explore a sector before deciding where to specialise.          |
| <b>Starts</b>         | First teaching from September 2027, so this year's Year 11 could be among the first to take them.                     |
| <b>Size</b>           | Each V Level is the same size as one A Level, so students can mix V Levels with A Levels.                             |
| <b>First subjects</b> | Include Digital, Education and Early Years, and Finance and Accounting, with more to follow.                          |
| <b>Replacing</b>      | Over time, V Levels will replace most Level 3 qualifications that are not A Levels or T Levels, including many BTECs. |
| <b>Suits</b>          | Students who prefer practical, applied learning in an area that interests them.                                       |



**Ask at open evenings:** "Which V Levels and A Levels will you offer from September 2027, and can my child combine them?" Course offers are changing, so it's worth checking with each provider.

## POST-16 OPTIONS

# T LEVELS AND VOCATIONAL COURSES

## T LEVELS

TECHNICAL • LEVEL 3

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What</b>        | Two-year technical courses that prepare students for a particular career area, such as health, engineering, digital, construction or education and early years. |
| <b>Size</b>        | One T Level is equivalent to three A Levels, so it's a full-time programme on its own.                                                                          |
| <b>Placement</b>   | Includes a substantial industry placement with an employer, of at least 45 days.                                                                                |
| <b>Assessed by</b> | A mix of exams, practical projects and the placement.                                                                                                           |
| <b>Leads to</b>    | Skilled employment, higher or degree apprenticeships, or university. T Levels carry UCAS points.                                                                |
| <b>Suits</b>       | Students who already have a good idea of the career area they want to work in.                                                                                  |

## BTECS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Many colleges still offer BTECs and similar courses in areas such as sport, health and social care, business, IT and creative subjects. They are taught through a mix of practical work, coursework and some exams.

These courses are being phased out as V Levels arrive from 2027. If your child is interested in one, ask the provider what it will be offering for their start date.

## LEVEL 1 AND LEVEL 2 COURSES

STEPPING STONES

Not ready for Level 3 yet? That's absolutely fine. Level 1 and 2 courses in areas like catering, hair and beauty, construction, motor vehicle and care let students build skills and confidence, then progress to Level 3 or an apprenticeship.

New Level 2 pathways are also being introduced from 2027, either preparing students for work in a specific area or as a bridge to Level 3 study.

## POST-16 OPTIONS

# APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is a real job with training. Apprentices earn a wage, gain experience and work towards a nationally recognised qualification. The training is free for the apprentice, and part of the working week is spent learning, often with a college or training provider.

## £8.00

minimum hourly pay for apprentices under 19 (2026 rate). Many employers pay more.

## £0

training costs for the apprentice, including degree apprenticeships.

## 16+

Apprenticeships are open to young people from age 16.

## APPRENTICESHIP LEVELS

### Foundation (Level 2)

New in 2025 for 16 to 21-year-olds. A first step into work in areas such as construction, digital, engineering, health and social care, hospitality and retail.

### Intermediate (Level 2)

Equivalent to GCSEs. Builds the core skills for a specific job.

### Advanced (Level 3)

Equivalent to A Levels. Often needs good GCSEs, including English and maths.

### Higher (Levels 4–5)

Equivalent to a foundation degree or HND.

### Degree (Levels 6–7)

A full bachelor's or master's degree, with no tuition fees for the apprentice.

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Apprenticeships are competitive, like applying for any job.
- Many vacancies for school leavers appear in spring and summer of Year 11.
- Apply for a college place too, as a back-up.

## WHERE TO LOOK

- Find an Apprenticeship (gov.uk)
- Amazing Apprenticeships
- UCAS apprenticeship search
- Local employers' and colleges' websites

## POST-16 OPTIONS

## COMPARING THE ROUTES

| ROUTE                        | HOW THEY LEARN                    | HOW LONG                          | ASSESSED BY                    | CAN LEAD TO                               |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>A Levels</b>              | Classroom, academic               | 2 years                           | Mainly exams                   | University, apprenticeships, work         |
| <b>V Levels</b>              | Classroom, applied to a sector    | From Sept 2027                    | Details being finalised        | Further study, apprenticeships, work      |
| <b>T Levels</b>              | Classroom plus industry placement | 2 years                           | Exams, projects, placement     | Skilled work, apprenticeships, university |
| <b>BTECs and similar</b>     | Practical and coursework          | 1-2 years                         | Coursework and some exams      | Further study, apprenticeships, work      |
| <b>Apprenticeships</b>       | On the job, with training         | From 8 months, depending on level | Assessment at the end          | Promotion, higher apprenticeships         |
| <b>Level 1 and 2 courses</b> | Practical, skills-based           | Usually 1 year                    | Practical tasks and coursework | Level 3 courses, apprenticeships          |

## EXTRA SUPPORT AFTER 16

**English and maths**

Students without a grade 4 in English or maths keep studying them alongside their main course. See page 6.

**Help with costs**

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund can help with travel, equipment and meals. Ask each provider's student services.

**SEND and EHCPs**

Support can continue after 16. Supported internships help young people with an EHCP move into work.

**Transition support**

Our targeted support helps students who may find the move to post-16 harder. Talk to us early.

## NEXT STEPS

# LOCAL OPTIONS

Our students go on to a wide range of local providers. Visit their websites and open events to see what each one offers.

**Cheshire College South & West**  
[ccsw.ac.uk](http://ccsw.ac.uk)

**Reaseheath College**  
[reaseheath.ac.uk](http://reaseheath.ac.uk)

**Sir John Deane's Sixth Form College**  
[sjd.ac.uk](http://sjd.ac.uk)

**Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group**  
[nscg.ac.uk](http://nscg.ac.uk)

**Warrington & Vale Royal College**  
[wvr.ac.uk](http://wvr.ac.uk)

Plus school sixth forms, training providers and local employers offering apprenticeships.

## YEAR 11 AT A GLANCE

### SEPT - NOV

Attend open evenings and research courses. Start applications to colleges and sixth forms.

### NOV - FEB

1:1 careers guidance interviews. Submit applications, ideally before Christmas. Mock exams.

### JAN - APR

College interviews and offers. Apprenticeship vacancies start to appear.

### MAY - JUNE

GCSE exams. Keep applying for apprenticeships. Attend college taster or welcome days.

### AUGUST

GCSE results day, then enrolment. We're here to help if plans need to change.

Dates vary between providers. Always check each college's own deadlines.

## NEXT STEPS

# BOOKING CAREERS GUIDANCE

Every Year 11 student has a 1:1 interview with a qualified, impartial careers adviser. Students in other years, and parents and carers, can ask for support at any time.

### 1 Get in touch

Email or call Jess Sheridan using the details below.

### 2 Tell us about it

Your child's name, tutor group and what they'd like help with.

### 3 The interview

A private meeting in school with our adviser, Jennie Walsh

### 4 Action plan

A personal plan with clear next steps to talk through at home.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

**National Careers Service** [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)

**Start Profile** [startprofile.com](https://startprofile.com)

**Find an Apprenticeship**

[findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk](https://findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk)

**Amazing Apprenticeships** [amazingapprenticeships.com](https://amazingapprenticeships.com)

**UCAS** [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

**BBC Bitesize Careers** [bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers](https://bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers)

**Springpod** [springpod.com](https://springpod.com)

**Barclays LifeSkills** [barclayslifeskills.com](https://barclayslifeskills.com)

**LMI for All** [lmiforall.org.uk](https://lmiforall.org.uk)

**NHS Health Careers** [healthcareers.nhs.uk](https://healthcareers.nhs.uk)

**University later?** Nearby: Chester, Keele, Edge Hill, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Ask what they enjoy and are good at
- Keep an open mind about every route
- Go to open evenings together
- Help them keep track of deadlines
- Encourage a back-up plan

## QUESTIONS FOR OPEN EVENINGS

- What are the entry requirements?
- How is the course assessed?
- What did last year's students go on to do?
- What support is there for SEND, travel and costs?
- When is the application deadline?



## TO BOOK, CONTACT

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**GOALS & ASPIRATIONS**



**RESPONSIBILITY**



**OPPORTUNITIES**



**WORLD AWARENESS**



**TOLERANCE & RESPECT**



**HEALTH & WELLBEING**