THORNS COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

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Dear Family,

Post-16 Pathways

As your child enters Year 11 they will begin making important decisions about their future education, training and career pathway. Choosing what to do after secondary school can feel overwhelming, but with support from home and school, students can make informed decisions that are right for them.

Your encouragement and guidance can play a vital role in helping your child explore their options, complete applications, and prepare for their next steps with confidence.

Understanding Post-16 Pathways

After Year 11, young people are required to continue in education, employment or training until the age of 18. There are several pathways available, and each offers different opportunities depending on a student's interests, strengths and career aspirations.

Sixth Form

Sixth forms are often based within schools and typically offer A Levels and, in some cases, vocational qualifications. This route is well suited to students who enjoy academic study and may be considering further study at university, or careers requiring higher-level qualifications.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually five GCSEs at grades 4-9, including English and Maths.
- Some A Level subjects may require a grade 5, 6, or higher in the relevant subject.

Further Education College

Colleges offer a wide range of courses, including A Levels, BTECs, T Levels, vocational qualifications and technical courses. Colleges often provide a more independent learning environment and specialist facilities linked to different industries.

Typical entry requirements:

- Requirements vary depending on the course and level being studied.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships allow young people to earn a wage while gaining qualifications and workplace experience. They are available in a wide range of sectors including engineering, construction, healthcare, business, digital technology, hospitality, and many more.

Typical entry requirements:

- Set by individual employers and training providers.
- Often require GCSE English and Maths.
- Students apply directly to employers and apprenticeship providers.

T Levels

T Levels are technical qualifications designed alongside employers. They combine classroom learning with significant industry placement experience and are ideal for students interested in a particular career area.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually several GCSEs at grades 4-9, although requirements vary by provider.

Supported Internships

Supported internships are designed for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who may benefit from developing workplace skills before moving into employment.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually an EHCP and a commitment to developing employability skills.

Understanding BTEC and Vocational Levels

Many college courses are vocational qualifications such as BTECs. Students are placed onto different levels based on their GCSE results.

Level 1

Level 1 courses help students build confidence, skills and qualifications before progressing to higher-level study.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually, GCSE grades 1-3.

Progression:

- Level 2 courses
- Training opportunities
- Some apprenticeship routes

Level 2

Level 2 qualifications are broadly equivalent to GCSE level.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually, GCSE grades 3-4.

Progression:

- Level 3 courses
- Apprenticeships
- Employment with training

Level 3

Level 3 qualifications are equivalent to A Levels and are the most common vocational qualifications studied after Year 11.

Typical entry requirements:

- Usually, four or five GCSEs at grade 4 or above.
- Some courses require higher grades in specific subjects.

Progression:

- University
- Higher or Degree Apprenticeships
- Employment
- Further qualifications

How You Can Support Your Child

Talk About Their Future

Spend time discussing your child's interests, favourite subjects, strengths, and future ambitions. Keeping communication open can help them feel more confident about their decisions.

Research Options Together

Attend open evenings, visit provider websites and explore different pathways together. Speaking to staff and current students can help provide a clearer understanding of what each option involves.

Encourage Early Applications

Many providers begin accepting applications early in the academic year, and some courses can fill quickly. Encouraging your child to apply early can help keep future options open.

Help Them Stay Organised

Support your child in keeping track of:

- Application deadlines
- Interviews
- Open events
- Course information
- Emails from providers

Keep Options Open

Students can apply to more than one provider while deciding which option is right for them. Having several applications submitted can reduce pressure later in the year.

Encourage Independence

While support from home is valuable, encourage your child to complete applications themselves where possible. This helps develop important skills that will benefit them in further education and employment.

THORNS COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Support Available from School

We are committed to supporting all students as they consider their post-16 options and prepare for the next stage of their education or training.

Form tutors are on hand to support students throughout the application process, helping them explore their options, keep track of deadlines and complete applications where needed.

If parents or carers have any questions regarding post-16 pathways, applications, apprenticeships, colleges, sixth forms, or training opportunities, these can be directed to the Careers Lead, who will be happy to provide advice and guidance.

We are also fortunate to work closely with Wendy Lowe from Dudley Careers Service, who will be in school regularly over the coming months. Wendy will be meeting with Year 11 students to provide impartial careers guidance, discuss post-16 options and support them in making informed decisions about their future.

Together we want to ensure that every student secures a suitable post-16 destination that matches their aspirations, interests and abilities.

Thank you for your continued support as we help our young people prepare for the next stage of their journey.

Yours Sincerely,

A.Roberts

Miss Roberts
Careers and Work Experience Lead