

THEIR NEXT STEPS

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**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND
CARERS OF GCSE STUDENTS
ABOUT POST-16 CHOICES**

What happens and when?

What can I do to support them?

**What help and advice is there for
parents and carers?**

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Top 10 Key Terms

Apprenticeship a course that anyone over 16 can study while working. **Page 10**

College a post-16 provider of vocational courses. **Page 5**

Entry Requirements the grades or experience needed to start a course.

Kent Choices a website with a list of courses and help and advice. **Page 7**

Level The level of difficulty of a course. After GCSEs, this may be level 1-3 **Page 5**

Morrisby students have an account online where they can research careers and more

Open Evening the opportunity to visit a provider and ask questions **Page 11**

Sixth Form a provider of level 3 qualifications where they can study a range of subjects **page 8**

Study Programme a personalised curriculum at a smaller provider. **page 9**

Vocational Course a course (level 1-3) that applies learning to the world of work (at sixth form or college)

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN THIS PROCESS?

HOW MUCH SHOULD I HELP?

This might be the first time your young person is taking the lead and making a big decision about their future. They still need your help, but your role may be a bit different now.

They may want more freedom and to make some choices on their own. Because of this, some parents and carers feel like they should step back or think they're not needed anymore. But that's not true. A recent study showed that 66% of Year 11 students still look to their parents for help with career choices.

Your job is to support them in making informed choices. Ask questions and let them talk through their ideas with you. Try asking things like, "Why did you decide not to choose X?"

You also have an important role in helping with the practical tasks. Year 11 can get very busy, so you can help by keeping track of applications, going to interviews with them, and checking if they've answered offers.

SUPPORT AND CHECK IN

- Has your young person researched routes into careers using Morrisby? The 'My Choices' section has up to date information on so many careers!
- After open evenings - help them reflect. What was their impression? Do they have further questions?
- When making applications and receiving offers. Do they need to talk anything through? Can you help them with any sections of the application?

DON'T WORRY IF YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING!

We often rely on our own experiences when giving advice, but it is important for parents and carers to make sure that you have up to date information.

Post-16 **options have changed a lot** - even over the last 5 years - and there are tools and guides in different formats that can help.

WHERE CAN I UPDATE MY OWN KNOWLEDGE?

1. There are lots of highly recommended tools and parent/carer guides on **our careers website**. [Click Here.](#)
2. The Education People host live online parent podcasts at key points in the year - it's all on **Kent Choices**. [Click Here.](#)

If you feel that your young person might have additional barriers and/or you have some questions, please contact
ahollinshead@wrotham.kent.sch.uk



FIVE

WAYS TO HELP YOUR YOUNG PERSON MAKE

INFORMED DECISIONS

1

THINK ABOUT THEIR CAREER GOALS

Think about their ambitions, interests and strengths. Do they have a dream job with a specific route? Do they want to keep options open?

Morrisby can help with this.



2

KEEP THEIR MINDS (AND EYES) OPEN

Young people can feel pressured to make a decision quickly because feeling uncertain might be new to them. Give them the space (and permission!) to explore and change their minds

3

ATTEND OPEN EVENINGS

Make sure they have someone with them to help them ask questions (and remember the answers!)

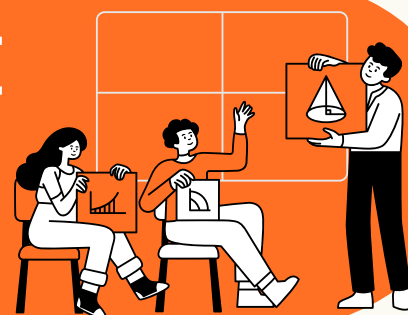
See our guide on page 11

4

HELP THEM CREATE A TIMELINE

This might be decided by external deadlines, or it might be as simple as making sure they have an offer before their exams start. Each young person is different.

See our timeline on page 6



5

SUPPORT THEM IN MAKING SURE THEY HAVE A PLAN B

They're encouraged to make more than one application and to hold more than one offer **more on page 9**



WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTS THAT I NEED TO KNOW?

CAREERS SUPPORT

First, you are not alone in this. Mrs. Hollinshead is our trained careers advisor, and she is here to help your child - and you too. If you have any questions, please ask her.

The SEND team, Year 11 tutors, and subject teachers also have lots of experience. They will support your child all the way through.

HOW MANY SUBJECTS?

Some courses only let students study one subject. This can be a good choice for someone who already knows what job they want to do – like learning a trade. They can pick a second subject as a back-up, but they will only study one in the end.

For some young people, choosing just one subject can feel like a lot of pressure. If they're not sure yet, it might be better to pick something that gives them more time to find out what they enjoy and what they're good at. For example, sixth form lets them choose three subjects to study.

EXTRA SUPPORT

Everyone should be able to talk to you about how they might support your child if they have specific needs. This may be due to **SEND** or perhaps they are a **YOUNG CARER** or **CARE EXPERIENCED**.

DO THEY HAVE TO STAY IN SCHOOL?

Not exactly. Young people must stay in **education or training** until 18, but this isn't at school. They get 3 years of free education after GCSEs. This could be at sixth form (which is different to school as they know it now), college, or with a smaller training provider (**see page 9**). **They must apply, even if they want to stay at the same place.**

Apprenticeships also count as training and are free for anyone over 16 (**see page 10**).

COURSE LEVELS

Most courses will tell you what level they are - usually 1-3. Which one young people choose can depend on how well they expect to do at GCSE and/or whether it's something that they need to build up to.

Level 1 = equivalent of grades 1-3 (D-G) at GCSE.

Level 2 = equivalent of grades 4+ (C and above) at GCSE

Level 3 = equivalent of A level (usually need level 2 first)

TOP TIPS!



HELPING YOUR YOUNG PERSON RESEARCH OPTIONS

ASK ABOUT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

BE CONFIDENT

Your child's future will be different to their friends and that of their siblings, so encourage them to look at options THEY are interested in!

BE OPEN-MINDED

Very few careers have only one route young people can follow. Help them look into the different pathways and routes they could follow to get there!

CAN THEY APPLY TO MORE THAN ONE?

Yes – this is a good idea. They can apply to as many places as they want, but most people choose 2 or 3 (each should need different grades). Too many interviews can feel stressful, especially when they're also studying for exams.

COLLEGE AND SIXTH FORM - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Colleges tend to offer **vocational** courses and sixth forms tend to focus on **academic** courses (some sixth forms **offer a mix, like Wrotham's**). This video explains the difference. [Click here](#). Sixth forms tend to offer more support (e.g. with study, wellbeing, and careers like university or apprenticeship applications)



WHAT HAPPENS AND WHEN?

(THIS LOOKS GREAT ON THE FRIDGE!)

YEAR 10-11 TIMELINE

TERM 6 OF YEAR 10

- Young people consider the different routes in Progress Time and assemblies
- Discussions to shortlist providers at home
- Work experience is a chance to test interests
- Priority one-to-one support (e.g. for students with EHCPs or in care)
- Apprenticeship Academy - Summer cohort **page 10**

TERM 1 OF YEAR 11

- With tutors - recap and exploring post-16 option knowledge
- **One-to-one interviews** with Mrs Hollinshead - discuss plan A and B
- **Open evenings** for most providers (including Wrotham School pages 8 & 11)
- Apprenticeship Academy - Autumn cohort
- Make applications for level 2 courses

TERM 2 OF YEAR 11

- One-to-one interviews continue
- Some remaining open evenings
- Students get Kent Choices log-ins and support in school with applications **see page 7**
- PPEs

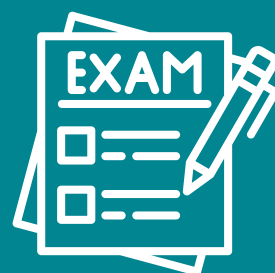
TERM 3 AND 4 OF YEAR 11

- **Interviews** for sixth form and some college courses
- Young people receive offers
- Young people are asked for preference (this can change later)
- Final PPEs
- Apprenticeship Academy - Spring cohort



TERM 5 AND 6 OF YEAR 11

- Exams start
- Introduction to The Education People (who offer extra support over the summer for young people who may need it)
- (After exams) young people are invited to induction and taster days to help them confirm their preferences
- **RESULTS DAY**



WHAT IS KENT CHOICES?

A **course directory** that lists all of the main providers of post-16 education in Kent (and now Medway). It's updated in the **October half term every year** and gives key information about each course:

- the level (1-3)
- the content and what would be studied
- the entry requirements
- how it is assessed (e.g. coursework / examination)
- what it might lead to (although the quality of this varies, so I'd always recommend checking, perhaps on Morrisby)

On results day, they also show which courses have spaces left if plans have to change (New from 2025)

A time-saver for applications. Most providers list courses and accept their applications through Kent Choices - if they prefer a different method, then Kent Choices will tell you.

Young people will work (in school) to create their profile with:

- contact information,
- information about the qualifications they're studying,
- what work experience they have
- a chance to write a short personal statement about their future career goals.

Once that is complete, they can send this application form to several providers. It means that they don't need to keep filling in forms with this information and saves them time.

A website with resources and information for young people and their parents and carers. The Education

People have worked hard to include some great resources, including a live vacancies section for apprenticeships that is up to date and user-friendly. They also have a team who can help with specific enquiries for example if your young person has SEND or you want to take them on as an apprentice.

KENT CHOICES

DID YOU KNOW..?

- Young people are entitled to **three years** of free education after their GCSEs.
- At 16, they might take a level 2 course for one year and then level 3 for two years.
- At 18, they could study (for free) for an extra year at a range of providers.

They might use the full three years if:

- They didn't meet the entry requirements for level 3 and need to retake English or maths.
- They want to complete a free level 4 qualification before going to university (e.g. in creative subjects)
- They need a specific qualification for a job.
- They want to build some skills during a gap year.



Wrotham School Sixth Form

- Wrotham offers 22 different subjects. The list might be slightly different in 2026, so check at the open evening.
- Current students **don't automatically get a place** - they have to apply.
- The courses are a **range of A level and vocational** options (they can pick a mix if they like), and they usually **choose 3 subjects**. This is helpful whether they do or don't have a specific career in mind. **These are all level 3** qualifications, which are accepted by universities, apprenticeships and employers. **Some careers and degrees need specific A levels** - ask about these!
- **KEY FACT:** Young people can also **retake** English or maths GCSE at the same time as level 3. (**Not an option** with most sixth forms or college level 3 courses.)

Offer a mixture of vocational and A level courses, which suits more people.

One of the few football academies that lets them choose a range of subjects

Gives them the chance to study level 3 even if they need to retake maths or English

2025 SUBJECTS INCLUDE: Accounting - Art - Biology - Business - Chemistry - Criminology - Drama - English literature - Film - Geography - History - IT - Maths - Medical Science - Photography - Physics - Politics - Product Design - Psychology - Sociology - Sport - Wrotham Football Academy

ALEX: Not being 100% confident on what I wanted to do meant that choosing sixth form and taking 3 subjects instead of 1 specialist in college gave me time and opportunity to think about it longer.

ZEEL: I chose Wrotham School Sixth Form because I had really good support from the teachers there. It was important for me to have that kind of guidance as I moved into this next stage of my education.

HOW IS SIXTH FORM DIFFERENT FROM YEAR 10 AND 11?

Sometimes young people say they '**just want a change**' - check they know that the sixth form is a change too!

- **Classes are smaller** and they dive deeper into subjects that they enjoy, really exploring those interests.
- Young people choose three subjects and have **5 hours a week** in each.
- They don't have 'core' or compulsory subjects.
- Students have study periods; they **can be independent and have more control** over how they study and use their time. They can also qualify for home study.
- Students still have the **high quality teaching and support** and lots of personalised help with their future plans including university or apprenticeships.
- Students have **more opportunities** to develop skills outside of academics through enrichment.

WHY DO THEY NEED A PLAN B? HOW CAN I HELP?

It's **STRONGLY** recommended that all young people have a **plan B for results day**. We recommend that you help them ask the question **What If...**

What if they don't get the grades they need for their first choice?

- If your child's **first choice is Level 3** at sixth form or college, they should have a backup plan. This could be **another sixth form that asks for different grades**, or a course that lets them retake English or maths while studying level 3 (Wrotham is one of the few that does this — **page 8**). Their backup **might be a Level 1 or 2 course** that needs lower grades in English and maths.
- If their first choice is a college course, they **can apply for a second course** at the same time — but it must be a different subject. Help them choose a course where the **entry grades are easier to meet**, like a Level 1 or Level 2. These courses fill up faster than Level 3 ones, so don't wait until results day — apply early, even if it's just a backup.
- If they're trying to get an **apprenticeship**, they still need a backup plan at a college or sixth form in case they don't get one.

What if they're not sure which course to choose?

First, they need to find out the rules each school or college has for changing courses.

- Some places let students change courses in the first 3–4 weeks. This is called a 'grace period'. Encourage them to ask about this during interviews.

This doesn't apply to apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are more like jobs — if they change their mind, they would usually need to apply to a different employer.

What if they have extra needs or feel worried about going to a big college or sixth form?

Each school or college should be able to tell you how many students they have and how big the classes are. Some sixth forms can be very different sizes, so it's important to ask and compare.

If your child is very worried, there are smaller, specialist places that might suit them better. These can be a good backup option.



STUDY PROGRAMMES AT SMALLER PROVIDERS

- These smaller providers are usually specialists and offer a personalised programme of study that might better suit a young person who would have barriers to attending college or sixth form.
- Programmes usually include:
 - A single vocational course
 - The chance to retake English and/or maths GCSE or functional skills
 - Employability skills and/or work experience
- Local providers include Sports Connect, Reynolds, Catch 22, JGA Group, Kent Training and Apprenticeships, Runway Training.
- If you think that your young person may be more suited to something like this, please contact Mrs Hollinshead for a call or meeting.

WHAT IS THE APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY?



A **six-week online coaching programme** that helps young people from Year 10-13 find, apply and interview for apprenticeships. It **runs three times a year** (June, September and February) and students and their families are welcome to join when they feel ready. The **next programme starts** on Wednesday 17th June in weekly after school sessions on Zoom. Young people can choose to join at 4pm or 7pm. It's **free** for Wrotham School students and our sixth formers (e.g for degree apprenticeships that need level 3 grades first).

[Click here to register.](#)



The sessions are run by a qualified careers advisor. Throughout the programme, you will also have the opportunity to meet 6 current apprentices and employers.

This programme won't find an apprenticeship for you but it will provide you with everything you need to find an apprenticeship yourself.

- Week 1: What Apprenticeship am I looking for?
- Week 2: Where can I find apprenticeships?
- Week 3: How can I write successful applications?
- Week 4: What will the application process be?
- Week 5: What to expect at Interviews and assessments
- Week 6: How to manage my applications

The online academy is not the only way that they can get support with applying to apprenticeships. Every student gets one to one support from Mrs Hollinshead. Families also have access to the Apprentice Kent team that are part of Kent Choices.

Students with SEND can also qualify for help from the **supported employment team** that can help them with applications and support them through the transition to employment or apprenticeships. [Click here.](#)

TOP TIPS FOR FUTURE APPRENTICES

- Encourage them to **sign up for the Apprenticeship Academy** - they can sign up again later in the year or access recordings when they're ready to apply.
- Apprenticeships become available like jobs - at any point in the year! **Don't give up** if they don't see a vacancy straight away.
- There are **different levels** of apprenticeship - some are more suitable to apply when they're 18 and have A levels (e.g. solicitor apprenticeships).
- Check they're not feeling pressure to apply now - they can apply for most apprenticeships at any age; they only get access to **free full time education for three years** after their GCSEs.
- If you want to take them on as an apprentice then you can! Ask for more info.

Are You Open Day Ready?

Going to a School, College, 6th Form, or University Open Day? Check out our "killer questions" so you're best prepared for the event...

Killer Questions

- What facilities do you have?
- What equipment will I need for the course and can you (the college or school) help with the costs?
- What is the progression rate? E.g., "If studying carpentry how many students go on to become carpenters afterwards?"
- How many students do not finish or leave once starting their studies?
- How do you support students to find work experience?
- What support is available?
- What are the policies on dress code, attendance, and behaviour?
- What assessments or exams will I need to take?
- What is their deadline for applications?
- Will I need to build a portfolio (if taking art or media) or prepare an audition piece (if taking music or drama)?
- Am I allowed to have a part-time job during the week whilst at the school or college?

If you don't think you're able to remember these "killer questions", don't worry! Why not take a picture or screenshot of the poster with you. Good luck!

What are your options?

