

# STARTING OUT

Newsletter 2015/2016 edition

*Starting Out is a newsletter for parents and carers of year 8 and year 9 children attending schools across Suffolk. The aim of this publication is to explain how you can access relevant information and support to guide the decisions that your child will make over the coming years.*

## It's decision time!



Very soon your child will be starting the process of choosing the subjects they will be studying for the next few years. For most young people, these subjects will be the ones they will take for their GCSEs at the end of Year 11.

This is a very important time in their education and it is essential that they get all the help and support they need.

This leaflet will give you some ideas of the things you could do to support them at this time.

You might also look out for the "Getting Started" booklet. This booklet is produced by Suffolk County Council and sent to all mainstream schools to give to students or put on their website.

The booklet explains about the qualifications and pathways available to young people. It also encourages them to think about the skills that employers will value in the future and how to develop them.

### GCSE Reforms

New grading scales have been introduced for GCSEs. Instead of having grades A\*- G, there will now be numbers ranging from 1-9, with 9 being the highest.

The government has introduced these changes as they believe there are currently too many students receiving middle/higher grades. The new system will make it harder to achieve the top grade, because an extra grade has been added. This will create greater difference between students and reduce 'bunching' of grades.

### Other changes to GCSEs include:

- Most assessment will occur at the end of Year 11
- Courses are no longer divided into modules
- The vast majority of courses will be assessed by exams
- There will no longer be coursework for most subjects

Students will also be required to retake maths and English when they leave secondary school if they fail to achieve a 'pass'. The benchmark for a pass (currently a C) will be a minimum of a Grade 4.

### What can my child do after year 11?

*All young people are now required to stay in some form of education or training until they are 18 in order to help them prepare for future learning or employment..*

### A levels

Students can choose to study more 'traditional' academic subjects, as well as some work-related subjects. School sixth forms, sixth form colleges and some FE colleges offer A level courses.

### Apprenticeships

These allow a young person to earn a wage by working with an employer to gain job-specific skills, and receive dedicated time for training through a training provider. Training can take place during the day or in the evening. There are three apprenticeship levels – intermediate, advanced and higher (some universities accept the higher apprenticeship as entry into higher education).

### Life skills

Life skills courses also called Study Programmes provide an

opportunity to develop skills for work and independent living, as well as improving basic skills in maths, English and ICT. Sixth form colleges and FE colleges often run such courses.

### Traineeships

For young people aged 16 and older, traineeships are a new way for a young person who is almost 'work ready' to get a job or an apprenticeship. They provide work preparation training, maths and English and work experience. Traineeships can last between six weeks and six months.

### Vocational qualifications

These range from general qualifications where it is possible to learn skills required for a particular industry, to specialist qualifications designed for a specific job. Most sixth form colleges, FE colleges and some school sixth forms run vocational qualifications

For more information on opportunities after your child leaves secondary school please visit [www.thesource.me/learning](http://www.thesource.me/learning)

### Quick guide to ...

## useful sources of information and advice

### Alternative formats

If you would like a copy of this newsletter in a larger print or in another language, call 01473 260180.

© Suffolk County Council 2015, all rights reserved.

*The Source – advice about careers, learning, apprenticeships, housing and other lifestyle issues for young people in Suffolk*  
[www.thesource.me.uk](http://www.thesource.me.uk)

*UCAS Progress - post-16 courses, qualifications and training*  
[www.ucas.com/progress](http://www.ucas.com/progress)

*Icanbea – see the range of local employers offering opportunities for young people and hear from current employees, apprentices and graduates sharing their stories about how they got into their jobs and what they love about them.* [www.icanbea.org.uk](http://www.icanbea.org.uk)

*Plotr – is a website that provides young people with the information to explore their careers ideas and get insight and guidance from industry* [www.plotr.co.uk](http://www.plotr.co.uk)

*National Careers Service – advice about future skills, support with developing your careers ideas, all available by phone, email, web chat and online*  
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

*National Apprenticeship Service – everything you need to know about apprenticeships, case studies from current and past apprentices and live apprenticeship vacancies*  
[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

*Access Unlimited - Information on services and support for young people with additional needs and disabilities*  
[www.access-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.access-unlimited.co.uk)

# MAKING CHOICES



*It may sound obvious but one of the most effective ways you can help is by encouraging your child to think more deeply about why they want to choose particular courses.*

*Use some of the questions below to start a conversation, so that when they finally submit their choices both you and your child can be confident that it's a decision your child is happy with.*

- What subjects do they enjoy or are good at? Experience shows that children succeed in lessons they find stimulating and interesting.
- Have they picked the subjects that they need for their career ideas?
- Have they looked at the options booklet so that they understand what's involved in their preferred subjects?
- Would they like to try a new subject or do something more practical?

## So what support is available from my local school?

Good question. Your school should offer lots of support to you and your son or daughter at this important time. Schools have a duty to deliver impartial advice and guidance to their pupils. Here are a few examples of what may be available to you. Don't be afraid to ask for advice and support.

**Options evenings and progression events** are a great opportunity to find out more about the options available for your son or daughter at Key Stage 4. Go prepared with some questions to ask the subject teachers or the head of year.

Schools should offer a **careers education programme** that will help them explore the world of work, understand employability skills and think about what

kinds of future career and learning pathways will suit them. It may be a separate careers lesson or could form part of personal, social, health and development lessons (PSHE) or Life Skills lessons or tutor time.

Schools should offer face-to-face careers advice and guidance, either from a teacher or a specialist careers adviser.

Schools should be signposting students to high quality websites such as The Source,

the National Careers Service, and icanbea.

Using these sites your child will be able to find out more information about routes and qualifications needed for different careers..

They might also be able to use specialist software to explore their skills and qualities, such as: Kudos, U-Explore or Fast Tomato which are some of the most popular used in Suffolk schools.

## FAQs

### What if my child doesn't know what they want to do for their GCSEs?

Make sure they choose a broad range of subjects and go for subjects that they think will give them the best chance of success. Grades are usually more important than the specific subjects.

### Are some subjects rated more highly

### by universities and employers?

Getting good grades in core subjects; English, maths and science are most important. Some universities and employers might prefer a language but only if this is achieved at a grade 4 or higher..

### My son / daughter wants to follow a career in science?

For students who enjoy science and think it is something they might want to study at a higher

level or use in a later career, it's important that they think about taking three separate science subjects if this is offered.

### What if the school has no careers adviser to help?

Schools now have a legal responsibility to provide careers guidance, so you can ask the head teacher why there is no support in place. You can also contact the National Careers Service for general advice on career routes and qualifications.

### My child struggles at school and is already getting worried about his/her GCSEs

Ask the school what alternative options are in place to help your son/daughter develop confidence, literacy and numeracy and other life skills. There may be options to attend a local college or skills centre where they can get extra help and support. If your son/daughter has an Education, Health and Care Plan, this should be discussed at their review meeting.

## What subjects can my child choose?

Rather than giving young people a completely free choice of subject, your school may encourage your child to choose subjects that offer a broad and balanced curriculum at KS4 and are highly regarded as offering a core foundation for their future learning. These are English, mathematics, sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages.

Your child will be encouraged to take as many of these subjects as a qualification as well as high-value arts or vocational qualifications.

You might hear this choice of subjects referred to as the EBacc (This stands for English Baccalaureate).

## Finding out about the World of Work.

Contact with employers is an extremely useful way for young people to find out more about jobs, careers and employability. The school should be offering opportunities for students to meet with employers from a range of different backgrounds. This might be through work experience, work tasters, employer led projects or careers events. The school might also be working with a local employer or Enterprise Adviser to support them to develop more opportunities for this type of work.

## What if my child has additional needs?

If your child has additional needs, you need to be aware of the recent reforms affecting children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

The new system means that Statements of SEN and learning difficulty assessments are being replaced with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) over the next two years.

You do not need to do anything, and you will be notified when your child's statement is being transferred into an EHCP. Having an EHCP also means you can apply for a personal budget for any support required, giving you more freedom over the provision your child receives.

These changes also set out the need for a Local Offer, which outlines services and support available in Suffolk to children and young people with SEND. Local authorities must respond to local need and provide information, advice and guidance to families. For more information on the Local Offer and the transfer to EHCPs, visit [www.access-unlimited.co.uk/send-reforms](http://www.access-unlimited.co.uk/send-reforms).

# LEARNING ROUTES & QUALIFICATION LEVELS

*How many GCSEs have you got or will you be getting?*

*Type of learning*

*How long will it take?*

*At least 4 GCSEs at Grade 5/4 or above or equivalent (old grade C)*

**LEVEL 3**  
AS/A level courses  
BTEC National and other vocational level 3 courses  
Apprenticeships

**2 years**

*4 GCSEs at Grade 3/2/1 or equivalent (old grade D/E)*

**LEVEL 2**  
Level 2 courses including Study Programmes

**1 - 2 years**

*Some GCSEs at Grade 3/2/1 or equivalent (old grade D/E/F)*

**LEVEL 1**  
Level 1 courses  
Study programmes  
Traineeships

**1 - 2 years**

*No GCSE passes*

**ENTRY LEVEL**  
Foundation courses  
Study programmes  
Traineeships

**1 - 3 years**