

# STEPS TO SUCCESS



Planning your future through  
Key Stage 4 and beyond  
a guide for parents, carers and young people

# LET'S GET STARTED

## Welcome to Key Stage 4 in York

**T**his stage of education is all about option choices within your son or daughter's school. Our aim is to help you and your son or daughter to start making course choices for Years 10 and 11 together.

The number and variety of courses have been growing over the last few years: there are new qualifications, new subjects and new ways of learning. This booklet provides easy-to-follow information that will get you started, and shows you where to go next for more advice and guidance.

You can find out much more by attending the **Steps to Success Event** for Year 9 students, parents and carers: **Tuesday 21 October 2014, 3:30pm–8:00pm, in the Ebor Stand at York Racecourse.**

This booklet sets out:

- What's available?
- Making choices
- What about the future?
  - Education and training options after Year 11
  - Employment and the job market
  - Thinking about Higher Education?
- Further help and advice: where to look, who to talk to
- Get in touch in York

### Raising the participation age

**Participation in education and training** is rising, and current legislation sets out an aspiration that your son or daughter will continue until at least their 18th birthday. This means that everyone has to participate throughout Year 12 and into Year 13.

This will help ensure that every young person has the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications that help them to progress to higher education, work and adult life; enabling them to succeed in the modern, fast changing world.

**Whatever you need to know,  
there's someone who can help.**

# WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

## The options your son or daughter might take

The range of choices for your son or daughter can seem complicated. That is partly because you might hear them referred to in different ways: by a subject (History or Engineering), by a type of qualification (GCSE or BTEC), by an exam body (OCR or Edexcel), by a general term ('Work Related Learning') or by a level (Entry Level, Level 1 or Level 2).

So, over the following few pages, we've tried to give you a simple explanation of the main options, describing the qualification types and levels for Year 10 and 11.

Remember that your son or daughter will be studying some core compulsory subjects, which usually include English, Mathematics and Science. Other options are then added to these core subjects. In addition there is a range of enrichment opportunities available to your son or daughter, which may be extra-curricular in nature, including enterprise competitions, fundraising activities, volunteering, clubs and societies, leadership courses etc. These provide excellent opportunities to develop skills, interests and self-confidence. Please check with your individual school for details.

### Options for Key Stage 4: a summary

#### **Qualifications**

- GCSEs (Levels 1–2)
- Vocational qualifications (Levels 1–2)
- Foundation Learning (Entry Level and Level 1)

#### **Delivery**

- Some qualifications may be delivered in partnership with other schools, colleges or other providers, or with input from employers.
- There may be delivery away from the usual school site.

## GCSEs (Levels 1–2)

Many of you will be familiar with GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). The majority of Year 10s will be following this pathway. The government has announced major changes to the examination system which will be brought in from September 2015. The changes will initially affect only English, English Literature and mathematics.

### New GCSEs from 2015

GCSE courses starting in September 2015 in English, English Literature and mathematics will be sharply different to those we have become used to. The grading system will run from 1 (low) to 9 (high). These courses will be assessed entirely by exams at the end of the course. In English and English Literature all pupils will take the same exams, but in mathematics there will be tiered papers covering different ranges of grades (Foundation: grades 1 to 5 and Higher: grades 4 to 9). A grade 4 will be equivalent to the existing grade C (a 'good' pass). From September 2016, GCSEs in a much wider range of subjects will be in this format.

### Existing GCSEs

All other GCSE courses starting in September 2015 will remain in their current format. This means that they will be assessed by exams and controlled assessment. Controlled assessment is similar to coursework and gives students an opportunity to show what they know about a certain topic or area of subject. It is controlled because it has rules which determine how and where assessments are completed and what resources can be used.

Teachers prepare students for the controlled assessments and give any advice and support that is needed, such as how and where to research information. They will also explain how assessments have to be completed – this will differ from subject to subject and in many cases will be in 'exam conditions'. There may be some courses which are 'double GCSEs' and are twice the size in terms of content and teaching time. Sometimes a "GCSE short course" is available, such as Religious Education, which will be half the normal size in terms of content and teaching time.

Grading is from G to A\*, with grade C often known as a 'good' pass. Ranges of grades are referred to as Levels:

- Level 1 = grades G to D
- Level 2 = grades C to A\*

Some subjects have 'tiers' (called Higher or Foundation) which cover different ranges of grades (Foundation: grades G to C and Higher: grades D to A\*). Some subjects may be offered as Applied GCSEs, which usually means much of the learning is related to 'real life' tasks; for example, in Applied Business, using case studies about an actual company.

Pupils can usually choose from a selection of subjects and most of the ones on offer will be familiar from Years 7–9. There may be some new ones (Business Studies, for example). Some GCSEs involve more practical work than others, but pupils choosing practical subjects like Physical Education or Food Technology will find they will contain a lot of classroom based work as well. Schools may offer other qualifications which take up the place of one or two GCSE choices. An example is the Cambridge National in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Generally, whatever GCSEs your son or daughter chooses, there will still be a wide range of pathways open to them after Year 11. There are, however, some advanced level courses where they may be required to have taken the same subject (or a related subject) at GCSE and achieved a 'good' pass or specified higher grade. Some Higher Education courses also specify certain GCSEs as entry requirements, particularly in the areas of Science and Engineering. Clearly, as the GCSE system changes, for the next few years pupils will end up with mixed collections of 'old' and 'new' GCSEs with lettered and numbered grades respectively.

## IGCSEs

Some schools may also choose to use IGCSEs (the 'I' stands for international). These qualifications have the same standing as GCSEs and are widely used around the world. They use the lettered grade system (G to A\*).

## Vocational qualifications (Levels 1–2)

**Vocational subjects:** Many schools enter some students for vocational qualifications which can include core subjects (like Science and IT), to young people who learn better in a more practical setting. Sometimes these are provided in partnerships and delivered at a different school or college. These include:

- Cambridge Nationals
- BTECs in a variety of subjects
- Specialist programmes organised by your school with local colleges or the Danesgate Skills Centre.

### **Preparation for Employment qualifications include:**

- ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness
- Work Skills

Vocational qualifications can lead to further study, an Apprenticeship or employment. With further study you can move on to a vocational qualification at a higher level in the same or a related area. Vocational qualifications do not provide a direct route onto A Level study.

## **Foundation Learning (Entry Level and Level 1)**

Foundation Learning provides a personalised, tailored programme of qualifications. It enables students to build up credits of achievement at Entry Level or Level 1, and may be taken alongside GCSEs and other vocational qualifications.

The programme usually comprises three distinct elements:

- Vocational or subject learning, eg Catering, Hairdressing, Construction, Childcare and Working with Animals. This will vary from school to school.
- Qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT.
- Personal and Social Development learning: activities that will help develop skills such as team building, creativity and decision-making.

Learning takes place in various locations: some of it may be outside the school, at other schools or colleges, at Danesgate Skills Centre, with work related learning providers, in the workplace with a local employer, or on a community-based volunteering project.

Programmes are designed to support young people to progress at their own pace, build confidence and progress towards their next goal, whether that be Further Education, an Apprenticeship, supported employment or independent living.

Your school will work with you and your son or daughter to ensure that the programme is appropriate and meets the aspirations that your son or daughter may have.

# MAKING CHOICES

When choosing options it's important to have as much information as possible to make an informed decision. Choices made could affect enthusiasm to study, grades and career aims or plans.

Although this is an important time in your son or daughter's life, there are not many options now that will prevent him/her from changing direction or their qualification pathway post-16, after Year 11. However there are a few courses at university that do prefer, or in some cases require certain GCSEs. For further information see the Higher Education section on page 15.

## What you can do

- **Find out** all the information regarding option choices specific to your son or daughter's school from events and booklets.
- **Encourage** your son or daughter to talk to the subject teachers to find out more information about course content, assessment and ways of learning.
- **Ensure** that your son or daughter understands the different qualifications available to them, which subjects are compulsory / core and which are optional.
- **Ask questions:**
  - What information, advice, guidance and support is available in school about all options? Encourage your son or daughter to talk to a tutor or adviser about this.
  - Schools deliver a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance programme to help your son or daughter make decisions. Have a chat with them about this.



## Key points to encourage your son or daughter to think about

- Which subjects they are good at
- Not choosing a subject just because they like the teacher or their friends have chosen it
- Choosing subjects they will enjoy - this will help motivate them to learn
- Taking into account their preferred learning style. How is the subject taught? Is it practical? Does it involve writing essays? Does it involve using research or statistics?
- Think about the career or higher education areas they might be interested in, in the longer term, and start to research information about any specific entry requirements and training that may be involved

## The English Baccalaureate

When choosing GCSE subjects, one possibility is to pick a combination which meets the specification of the English Baccalaureate performance measure (EBacc). This is not a qualification in itself; it recognises the success of those students who attain GCSEs at grade A\* to C across a core of five academic subjects:

- English
- Mathematics
- A humanity (History or Geography)
- Two Science GCSEs, which may include Computer Science
- A language

It is important that there is an emphasis on a broad and balanced core of learning, and your son or daughter should be able to undertake a combination of both academic or vocational subjects if they wish to.

Please note: The EBacc is not a requirement for entry to higher education.

# WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

## Education and training options after Year 11

Generally, whatever options your son or daughter chooses, there will still be a wide range of pathways after Year 11.

Your son or daughter will not always be limited to continuing with the same subjects or type of course. A pupil taking a vocational Level 2 course for example, may decide to progress on to a Level 3 Apprenticeship, and someone taking GCSEs may decide not to progress on to A Levels, but to do an Apprenticeship or vocational course. There are, however, some Advanced Level courses where they may be required to have successfully studied the same subject at GCSE or one closely linked to it.

Achieving a 'good' pass (for courses starting from September 2015 and exams taken from summer 2016 this will be a grade 4 or better) in English and mathematics is recognised as being very important and means that a greater range of progression opportunities are available. Anyone not achieving this at the end of Year 11 is required to continue to study these subjects post 16.

Post-16 options are available at different levels. What is right for your son or daughter will depend upon the grades or level they achieve at the end of Year 11.

### Options after Year 11: a summary

#### **1. Full-time education at school, college or with a training provider**

- AS and A Levels (Level 3)
- An Applied General Qualification (including BTECs and other Diplomas) or Tech Level (Level 3)
- Other vocational and general qualifications (Level 1–3)
- Foundation Learning Programme (Entry Level – Level 1)

#### **2. Apprenticeships and Traineeships**

- Apprenticeship training (Level 2–3) combined with a job.
- Traineeships (Level 2 and below), which prepare young people for an Apprenticeship, employment or further education and training. They consist of substantial work experience, English, mathematics and employability skills.

#### **3. A flexible package of working and participation**

- Participation in education and training, combined with options such as volunteering and paid work.

## Employment and the job market

Many young people have no firm career plans on entering Key Stage 4 but it is important to start thinking about options which might affect choices and skills development at this stage.

Better qualified and more highly skilled people generally earn more money and have more job options. With the fast pace of change in business and industry today, they need to put themselves in the best position to meet the needs of employers in the future.

Apprenticeships give young people the opportunity to be in paid employment, while gaining a national recognised qualification. Apprentices work with experienced staff to gain job-related skills. They may attend college or a training provider, on a day-release or block-release basis, to gain off-the-job training. An Apprenticeship can also be a route into higher education.

City of York Council has recently set up an *Apprenticeship Talent Pool*. By joining the talent pool young people will be kept up to date with the latest Apprenticeship information including vacancies with employers across the city, not just the Council. For further information ask your son or daughter to contact **[york.apprenticeships@york.gov.uk](mailto:york.apprenticeships@york.gov.uk)** a few months before they leave school.

If your son or daughter decides to live and work in York, they need to know about the nature of the local economy and jobs market. In the last 20 years, manufacturing in the York area has declined, but many other sectors have grown. York's employment rates are high, with strong demand in:

- Business, finance and professional services, including insurance
- York's visitor economy, which covers retail, hospitality, catering and tourism attractions
- Science and environmental technologies
- Creative and digital businesses

There are also opportunities in areas like health, care, education and advanced engineering. Most employers in York are small to medium sized companies, often overlooked when people come to apply and search for jobs. Self employment is a growing trend and there is support for young people interested in this option.

Employers continue to value good basic skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and IT. But now they expect high level interpersonal skills, drive and ambition to ensure their business succeeds.

York's young people face competition for jobs from others outside of the city and may wish to consider travelling to work in neighbouring cities such as Leeds, where there are a broader range of opportunities available.

So, the message is: your son or daughter needs to make the most of their school, college or training provider and gain the most appropriate skills and qualifications to help them succeed.

Please note: Up-to-date information on employment, self employment, the labour market, advice about courses, qualifications and how to apply is available online at [yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me](http://yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me). There are links to information produced by Leeds City Region for young people on local employment trends and opportunities in 10 Yorkshire regions including York, Leeds and Harrogate. The Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance programme in your son or daughter's school will also offer relevant information.



## Thinking about Higher Education?

Nowadays, young people can progress to higher education (HE) with a range of qualifications, including:

- AS and A Levels
- BTECs and other Diplomas
- Apprenticeships

As stated earlier in this booklet, the English Baccalaureate is not a requirement for entry into HE. This is the position of universities nationally, though this will be kept under review. Details on the current view of universities are available on their websites. However it is important to bear in mind the importance of a broad and balanced programme of subjects, and that some degree courses, especially in the area of sciences, require particular GCSEs. Information is available on university and college websites.



York has two universities (the University of York and York St John University) and two colleges (Askham Bryan College and York College), which offer a wide range of HE courses, both academic and work-based (e.g. Foundation Degrees). So there is likely to be a programme suited to your son or daughter on offer locally. If they would like to go further afield, there are over 300 universities and colleges across the country offering over 43,000 courses (see UCAS details on page 15), so your son or daughter should be able to find a course that interests them!

### Costs and financial support

Universities and other HE providers in England are able to charge £6,000 to £9,000 fees per year to new entrants. (Tuition fees at private higher education institutions are not subject to this limit.) No fees are paid up front and fee loans are available. Graduates do not start repaying these loans until they are earning at least £21,000 a year.

In addition to applying for loans to cover tuition fees and living costs, there are a range of scholarships and bursaries available, as well as non-repayable maintenance grants for students from families with lower incomes.

## Higher Education: where to find out more

- For information about studying HE in York: **higheryork.org**
- For information about your options and help making a choice: **yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me**
- Universities and colleges in York offer a range of opportunities to find out more about HE both on their campuses and in school/college. In addition, there will be a series of presentations at the Steps to Success Event on 21 October, with question and answer sessions on HE and finances; and there will also be information stands.
- **gov.uk/studentfinance** contains information on the costs, financial support, and repayments including a simple repayments calculator (with payments based upon the starting salary of the selected career).
- To find out more about when Open Days are being held please check on the following websites:
  - York St John University: **yorks.j.ac.uk** (places must be booked online)
  - University of York: **york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/open-days/** (places must be booked online)
  - Askham Bryan College: **askham-bryan.ac.uk**
  - York College: **yorkcollege.ac.uk**
- For general information and advice on university:
  - **ucas.com**
  - **direct.gov.uk/unistats**
  - **university.which.co.uk** - information and advice on university; includes advice on GCSE and A level choices and implications for higher education.

Local universities and colleges support a range of activities to promote access to HE for all young people. It is important to consider the long term value of HE. Generally, total earnings over a lifetime are higher for graduates than those without HE qualifications and there are many additional positive experiences and benefits to be gained from studying at a university or college.

# FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE: WHERE TO

You should be involved in the decision-making process around your son or daughter's options and choices for Key Stage 4. But that doesn't mean you have to be an expert. Schools and colleges have teachers, members of staff responsible for progression and transition from school and/or Connexions advisers who can answer questions and give advice on which pathway is most suitable.

## Advice and Guidance and Connexions

Schools are responsible for information, advice and guidance about future options. Connexions works in partnership with schools to offer a higher level of support for those who need extra help with transitions, including young people with additional needs, looked after children and those disengaged from education. Get in touch through school or Connexions head office – see back cover for details.

## Youth Support and Activities

Communities and Neighbourhoods and Children's Services work with young people all over the city. Their offer includes youth club sessions and activities, support services, sport and leisure opportunities, the Duke of Edinburgh award and much more. Get in touch through one of the centres – see back cover for details.

## Special Educational Needs

The Local Offer for York is set out on the YorOK website ([yor-ok.org.uk](http://yor-ok.org.uk)). This provides information for parents, carers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It provides details about health services and social and sporting activities as well as education and training opportunities. There are links to services and providers able to support young people and their families as they progress towards adulthood.

From this Autumn, Statements of Special Educational Needs and Section 139a Learning Difficulty Assessments will be phased out and replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans. These will have a broader focus and cover areas such as transition to adulthood, developing and maintaining friendships and becoming independent. Plans could be in place for young people up to the age of 25 and will be reviewed at least annually.

Some young people with higher level needs have additional support from the **Transitions Team**. If your son or daughter has high needs you may already be touch with them through school. To contact them directly see back cover for details.

## On the web and on the phone

### General help

**gov.uk/browse/education/find-course**

Information on education and training options, including Apprenticeships

**yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me**

All sorts of information on services for young people in York

**nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk**

Phone: **0800 100 900**

Careers information and advice online, by telephone and web chat

### Volunteering

**volunteeringyork.org.uk** and **yorkcares.co.uk**

Two local websites providing information about volunteering

**do-it.org.uk**

Search for volunteering opportunities internationally, nationally and locally

**vinspired.com**

Volunteering information for 14–25s

### Finding out about courses

**yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me**

To access information on courses across York.

Electronic copies of:

- *Steps to Success: Planning your Future through Key Stage 4 and Beyond*
- *Steps to Success: Planning your Future Post 16*

### Training and Apprenticeships

**apprenticeships.org.uk**

**Facebook: /yorkapprenticeships**

**Twitter: @yorkapprentices**

Information on Apprenticeships - how they work, how to apply and what opportunities are available locally

### Higher Education

**ucas.com**

Detailed information about all courses, institutions, tuition fees and application procedures, including deadlines

**higheryork.org**

Information about HE study in York

**gov.uk/studentfinance**

All aspects of student finance, including a calculator to provide an estimate of the financial support which could be received

**direct.gov.uk/unistats**

Official website to help you compare information on universities

**university.which.co.uk**

Information and advice on university; includes advice on GCSE and A level choices and implications for higher education

### Employment issues

**gov.uk/browse/working**

Wide range of advice on employment and rights relating to it

**worksmart.org.uk/rights/young\_workers**

Employment rights information for young workers, from the TUC

# GET IN TOUCH IN YORK

Information, advice, guidance and support is available from your son or daughter's school. There is also support from the Connexions service, Communities and Neighbourhoods and Children's Services based in the centres below:

## Castlegate

29 Castlegate • York • Y01 9RN  
01904 555400

## Transitions Team

for young people with disabilities

The Transitions Zone • Applefields School  
Bad Bargain Lane • York • Y031 0LW  
01904 552085

## Communities and Neighbourhoods

Moor Lane Youth Centre  
Wains Road • Dringhouses • York • Y024 2TX  
01904 551761

## Children's Services

West Offices • Station Rise • York • Y01 6GA  
01904 554565 or 01904 552350  
yor-ok.org.uk

An electronic copy of this booklet is available at  
[yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me](http://yor-zone.org.uk/futures4me) .

If you would like any additional information or would like to receive this information in an accessible format, for example in large print, Braille, or on CD, please contact Beverley Wills, 14–19 Support Adviser:  
email [beverley.wills@york.gov.uk](mailto:beverley.wills@york.gov.uk) or  
telephone **01904 553008**.

## About this booklet

This booklet was written by the Connexions team and the 14–19 team, on behalf of the 14–19 Partnership

Design & layout by  
[ewanyork.co.uk](http://ewanyork.co.uk)

We value your feedback.  
If you would like to share your thoughts about this publication, please visit  
[yor-ok.org.uk](http://yor-ok.org.uk)

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جا سکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

☎ (01904) 551550

## Information, advice and guidance from Connexions:

- is independent, impartial and client centred
- takes full account of factors affecting labour markets
- promotes equality of opportunity

The information in this booklet was correct at the time of printing, September 2014.  
Please verify details with the institutions concerned.