



2026-27 YEAR 11 NEXT STEPS GUIDE

**A practical guide for students,
parents and carers.**

Post-16 choices • Applications • Careers • Support

Sixth form | College | Apprenticeships | Training | Careers

**Your next step doesn't have to be your final
destination.**



Welcome to your Year 11 Next Steps Guide

Year 11 is an important year. Alongside preparing for your GCSEs, you will begin making decisions about what comes next.

You may already know exactly what you want to do. You may have several ideas. Or you may have no idea yet.

All three are completely normal.

This guide is here to help you and your parent or carer:

- understand the different options after Year 11
- explore courses, sixth forms, colleges and apprenticeships
- understand applications and key deadlines
- prepare for GCSE Results Day
- think about careers and future opportunities
- know where to go for advice and support.

Remember: Your first post-16 choice does not have to determine your whole future.

There are many routes forward and you can change direction as you learn more about yourself, your interests and the opportunities available to you.

Our Careers, Sixth Form, SEND and Pastoral Teams are here to help you make an informed choice.



Your Post-16 Options

There is no single "best" route after Year 11. Different pathways suit different interests, learning styles, ambitions and circumstances.



A Levels

Academic qualifications that allow you to study a smaller number of subjects in greater depth. They can lead to university, apprenticeships, employment and further study.

Think about: Do you enjoy academic study, independent learning and written assessment?



Vocational qualifications

Career-related courses that combine subject knowledge with practical and applied learning. Depending on the qualification and course, they can lead to further study, university, apprenticeships or employment.

Think about: Would you prefer to learn through projects, practical tasks and applied study?



Employment With Training

Paid employment combined with structured education or training towards a recognised qualification or occupational standard.

Think about: Are you ready to enter the workplace while continuing to develop your skills and qualifications?



Apprenticeships

You work for an employer, earn a wage and complete training towards a recognised qualification.

Think about: Would you like to learn in a workplace while continuing your education and training?

Important: Apprenticeships can be competitive, so apply for sixth form or college as well.



T Levels

Technical qualifications designed with employers and including a substantial industry placement. T Levels include a minimum of 315 hours of industry placement, although some courses have different requirements.

Think about: Would you like to develop technical skills alongside classroom learning and experience a real workplace?

There is more than one route to a successful future.

The right question isn't:

"Which route is best?"

It is: "Which route is right for me?"

Which pathway is right for you?

There are no "right type of student" boxes.

You might enjoy academic subjects but prefer practical learning. You might want to go to university but choose a vocational route. You might be interested in an apprenticeship but also want to apply to college.

Use these questions to help you explore — not to rule options out.

Your Decision Guide

Work through each question honestly. There are no right or wrong answers — the goal is to find the pathway that helps you thrive and achieve your ambitions after Year 11.



01

What kind of learning do you enjoy?

Academic study

Do you enjoy theory, reading, writing, problem-solving and independent study?

Practical or applied learning

Do you enjoy projects, practical tasks and learning how things work?



02

What environment would suit you?

School/college-based learning

Would you prefer most of your learning to take place in a classroom or college?

Workplace learning

Would you enjoy spending significant time in a workplace?



03

What are you interested in?

Think about:

- Subjects you enjoy
- Activities you enjoy
- Problems you like solving
- Skills you already have
- Areas you would like to explore.



04

What do you want to keep open?

If you're unsure about your future, consider which courses give you several possible next steps. Which option keeps the opportunities I care about open?

Still not sure? That's okay.

Speak to your Careers Team. Exploring your options is part of making a good decision.

Your Year 11 Journey

September-October

- Explore options
- Make a shortlist
- Attend open events
- Check entry requirements

November-December

- Submit applications
- Keep copies
- Ask for help if you're unsure

January-March

- Attend interviews
- Compare offers
- Continue researching apprenticeships

Spring-Summer

- Focus on GCSEs
- Keep applications/backup plans active
- Ask what happens if results differ from expectations

August

- Results Day
- Confirm your place
- Contact providers if you miss requirements
- Use school support if you need it

At an open event, ask...

- What are the entry requirements?
- What will I study?
- How is the course assessed?
- What support is available?
- What do students do after this course?
- What happens if I narrowly miss the entry requirements?
- What transport options are available?
- What does a typical week look like?

Open Events

Provider	Date and Time	Type of Open Event
City College Norwich	Friday 2 October 4pm-7pm	Open Evening
	Saturday 3 October 10am-1pm	Open Day
Easton College	Friday 9 October 5pm-7.30pm	Open Evening
	Saturday 10 October 5pm-7.30pm	Open Evening
Wymondham College	Thursday 8th October 5pm-7.30pm	Open Evening
Taverham Sixth Form	Thursday 8th October 6.30pm	Open Evening
Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form	Tuesday 13th October 5.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
Jane Austen College	Tuesday 13th October 5.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
Thorpe Sixth Form	Thursday 15th October 6.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
CNS Sixth Form	Thursday 15th October 5.30pm	Open Evening
Access Creative College	Saturday 17th October 10am-12pm/1-3pm	Open Day
Dereham Sixth Form College	Tuesday 20th October 5.00-8.00pm	Open Evening
Lord Nelson Sixth Form at Ormiston Victory Academy	Thursday 22nd October 5.00pm-7.00pm	Open Evening
Wymondham High Sixth Form	Tuesday 3rd November 5.30pm-7.30pm	Open Evening
Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form	Wednesday 4th November 5.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
Jane Austen College	Wednesday 4th November 5.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
Hellesdon Sixth Form	Wednesday 4th November 6.30-8.30pm	Open Evening
Notre Dame Sixth Form	Thursday 12th November 5.00pm-8.00pm	Open Evening
Access Creative College	Saturday 28th November 11am-2pm	Open Day

Applying for Post-16 Study

You don't need to make the perfect decision straight away. The aim is to research carefully, apply on time and keep realistic options open.



1

Research

Compare:

- Courses
- Entry requirements
- Assessment
- Transport
- Support
- Progression
- Student destinations



2

Visit

Attend open evenings, open days and taster events where possible.

Take questions with you.



3

Apply

Check each provider's deadline.

Follow the application process detailed on their website.

Apply to more than one provider where appropriate.



4

Compare Offers

Look beyond the course title.

Ask:

- Is this course right for how I learn?
- Does it support my future plans?
- What happens after the course?
- What support will I receive?
- What happens if I don't achieve the required grades?

If you don't get the grades you expected

Don't panic.

Speak to your chosen provider, your school and the Careers Team. There may be alternative courses, different entry points, resits or other progression routes available.

GCSE Results Day is not the end of your options.



Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship lets you earn a wage while training towards a recognised apprenticeship standard or qualification. You work for an employer, receive on-the-job training, and study part-time with a college or training provider. Apprenticeships are available at Intermediate (Level 2), Advanced (Level 3), Higher and Degree Apprenticeships — making them a genuine alternative to the traditional classroom route.

Benefits, Opportunities & Application Tips

An apprenticeship means...

You are applying for a job.

You will need to:

- find vacancies
- complete applications
- prepare for interviews
- demonstrate your skills
- meet the employer's requirements
- continue learning while working.

Apply for apprenticeships alongside sixth form and college — not instead of them.

Apprenticeship vacancies can be competitive and recruitment dates vary. Do not wait until you know your GCSE results before exploring (and applying for) other options.

Supporting Your Child

You don't need to be a careers expert. Your role is not to choose your child's future for them. Your role is to help them explore, ask questions, stay organised and make an informed decision.

You can help by:

- Asking what they enjoy and what they are interested in
- Encouraging them to explore more than one pathway
- Attending open events together
- Helping them check entry requirements
- Keeping track of application deadlines
- Encouraging them to speak to the Careers Team
- Helping them prepare for interviews
- Keeping copies of applications and offers
- Helping them keep a realistic backup option
- Reminding them that changing direction is normal



Your Parent Support Checklist

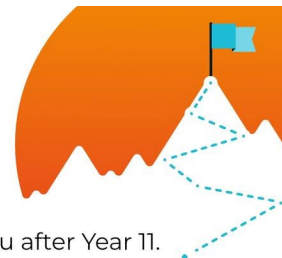
-  **Encourage research into all post-16 options**
A Levels, T Levels, apprenticeships and more
-  **Attend open evenings together**
including Lord Nelson Sixth Form on 22nd October
-  **Discuss your child's goals and interests**
help them reflect on what they enjoy and what motivates them
-  **Monitor application deadlines**
check providers' closing dates and help them stay organised
-  **Check Entry Requirements**
Review predicted grades and encourage realistic course choices, with backup options where needed.
-  **Book a careers guidance appointment**
Contact the Careers Team at careersguidance@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk



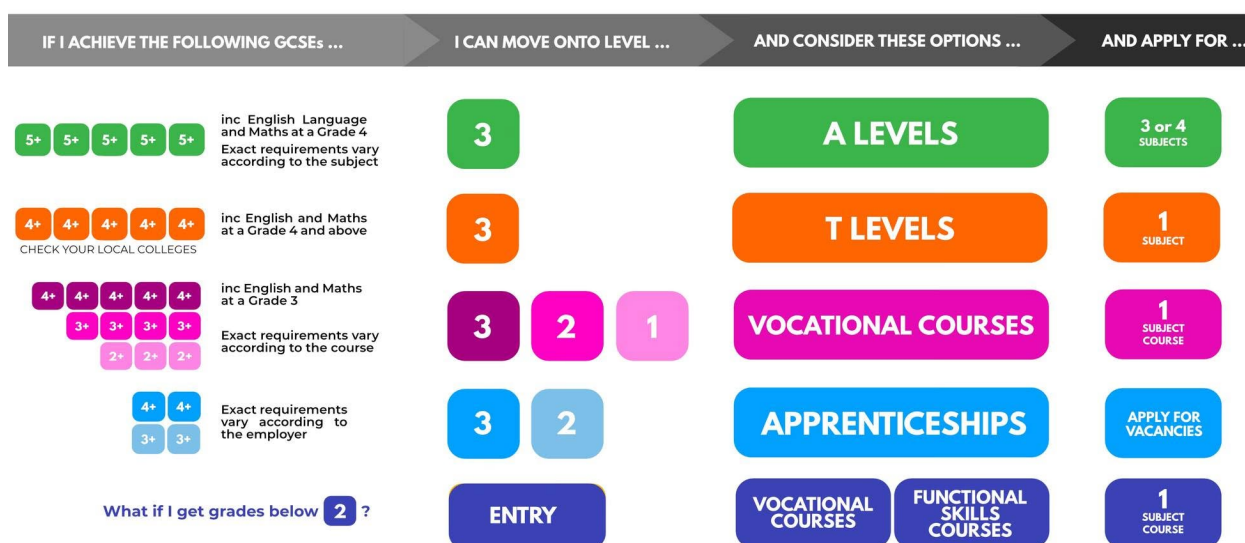
Understanding Qualification Levels

Post-16 courses are offered at different qualification levels. Your GCSE results will affect which courses you can enter immediately, but they do not define your future.

POST 16 OPTIONS MADE SIMPLE



Use the information below to help you understand the options available to you after Year 11.



Higher education / Higher & Degree Apprenticeships / Employment / Further training:

Not everyone follows the same route or moves through every level in exactly the same way

If you're achieving Grades 5–9: You may be able to enter Level 3 study, depending on the provider and course requirements.

If you're achieving Grades 3–4: You may have a range of Level 2 and some Level 3 options, depending on your subjects, grades and the provider's requirements. Some students may also combine further study with GCSE resits.

If you're achieving Grades 1–2: There are still routes forward.

Depending on the provider and your individual circumstances, these may include Entry Level or Level 1 programmes, further English and maths study, vocational learning and progression to higher levels.

The important message: Your results affect your next step — they do not determine your destination. Always check the specific entry requirements for the course you are considering.

Supporting Students with Additional Needs

Every young person deserves a pathway that helps them succeed. Many post-16 providers offer a wide range of support for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including learning support, study skills assistance, mentoring and transition programmes.

Support Available After Year 11

- Additional learning support
- Exam access arrangements where appropriate
- Dedicated SEND teams in colleges and sixth forms
- Transition visits and familiarisation events
- Specialist courses and supported learning programmes
- Supported internships for some learners

Top Tip: If your child receives SEND support, contact providers early and ask to speak to their Learning Support Team. Open evenings are a great opportunity to discuss support arrangements before making applications.

Need advice? Contact our Careers Team or SEND Department, who will be happy to discuss suitable progression routes and support available.

Questions to ask providers:

- Who will be my child's main contact?
- What support can you provide?
- What information do you need from us?
- How will transition be managed?
- Can we visit before the course begins?
- What support is available with independent study?
- How are access arrangements handled?
- What happens if my child's needs change?
- What support is available during work placements?
- Add a parent reassurance

For students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Year 11 reviews and transition planning help identify suitable next steps and enable the receiving setting to plan appropriate support. Ask your SENCO and the receiving provider how your child's individual support will be planned and delivered.

Maximising Your Options

If you are achieving highly, you may have a wide range of opportunities available to you. The important thing is not simply to choose the most competitive or prestigious route. Choose a pathway that gives you the right level of challenge, support and progression for your ambitions.

Opportunities to explore

- Academic scholarships
- Sixth forms and colleges with specialist subjects
- University outreach and summer schools
- University outreach and competitive university programmes, including Oxbridge
- Medicine, dentistry and veterinary pathways
- Degree apprenticeships
- Specialist technical routes
- Subject-specific competitions and enrichment
- Work experience and employer programmes.

At open events, ask:

- How are students challenged?
- What enrichment is available?
- What support is available for ambitious university applications?
- What destinations do students progress to?
- Are there opportunities for independent research or wider reading?
- What careers or higher-level apprenticeships do students progress into?

Remember: High grades give you options. Your interests and ambitions should help you decide between them.

Exploring Future Careers

You do not need to know your exact career at 16. Instead, start by understanding yourself, your options and the world of work.

1. Understand yourself

Ask:

- What subjects do I enjoy?
- What am I good at?
- What activities do I enjoy?
- Do I prefer people, ideas, technology, information or practical work?
- What kind of environment would suit me?

2. Explore careers

Look beyond job titles.

Find out:

- What does the job involve?
- What skills are needed?
- What qualifications are required?
- Where could you work?
- What are the possible progression routes?

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3. Get experience

Where possible, consider:

- work experience
- volunteering
- part-time work
- employer visits
- workplace encounters
- taster days
- careers events.

4. Connect careers to courses

Once you have identified areas that interest you, ask:

Which post-16 courses could help me move towards these opportunities?

Remember: Your first career idea does not have to be your final career.

The aim is to make an informed next step — not to predict your entire working life at 16

Need help exploring careers? Book a careers guidance appointment.

Understanding Entry Requirements

Every provider sets its own entry requirements, so always check individual websites for the latest information. The examples below are intended as a general guide only.

These are broad examples only. Requirements vary significantly by provider, course and subject. Always check the individual course requirements before applying.

A Levels

Typical Requirements:

- Five GCSEs at Grade 5 or above
- Grade 5 or 6 in subjects you wish to study
- Grade 4 or above in English and Mathematics

T Levels

Typical Requirements:

- Five GCSEs at Grade 4 or above
- Providers may also consider your suitability, commitment and readiness for the demands of the course.
- Specific subject requirements may apply

Level 3 Vocational Courses

Typical Requirements:

- Four or five GCSEs at Grade 4 or above
- Some courses may accept a mixture of Grade 4s and Grade 3s

Level 2 Courses

Typical Requirements:

- Predominantly Grade 3s and above
- Suitable for students building towards

Level 3 study

Entry Level and Level 1 Courses

Typical Requirements:

- Open to a wide range of learners
- Designed to support progression and confidence building

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS VARY

These are examples only. Always check the individual provider's current requirements before applying.

Always check provider websites for exact entry criteria.

Common Post-16 Myths

"I need to know exactly what career I want now."

You can explore different options and change direction as you learn more about yourself.

"Apprenticeships are only for practical jobs."

Apprenticeships exist across many sectors and at different levels.

"You can only get to university through A Levels."

There are multiple routes into higher education, depending on the course and university.

"If I don't get the grades I want, my future is ruined."

Your GCSE results may change your immediate options, but there are progression routes at different levels and opportunities to resit qualifications where appropriate.

"I should choose the same provider as my friends."

Your friends' choices do not have to be your choices. Consider the course, environment, support and progression opportunities that suit you.

"If I get a Grade 3 instead of a Grade 4, I've failed."

A particular grade may affect entry to some courses, but one grade does not define your ability or your future. Ask providers what alternatives and progression routes are available.

"If I don't get an apprenticeship, I've failed."

Apprenticeships are competitive. Applying to sixth form or college as well gives you another route forward.

"Parents need to know all the answers."

You don't. Ask questions, explore options together and use the support available from school and providers.

Who Can Help Me?

If you need help with...	Get in touch with...
Choosing a course, College applications, Apprenticeships	Mr Arger, Careers Leader careersguidance@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
Curriculum choices	Mr Duncan, Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Achivement p.duncan@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
Lord Nelson Sixth Form applications	Mr Willis, Senior Assistant Principal for Outcomes headofsixthform@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
SEND support / EHCP	Dr Allen, Director of SEND victorysend@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
Pastoral concerns	Mrs Metcalf, Head of Year 11 Pastoral year11pastoral@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
Application deadlines	Contact the provider directly.
Examinations / Results Day	Mr Jepp, Data & Examinations Manager victorydata@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk
Changing your mind	Mr Arger, Careers Leader careersguidance@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk