



# Duston Careers

## Getting prepared for Post 16

What are your options?

- Duston 6<sup>th</sup> form
- Other 6<sup>th</sup> form
- College
- Apprenticeship



# 6<sup>th</sup> form



- You will study three to four subjects at A Level (exam based) or BTEC (coursework based).
- You pick subjects based on what you enjoy, what you are good at or what interests you (for new subjects).
- If you have a particular career in mind, check that the subjects you are choosing match what is required.
- Entry requirements vary depending on which school you apply to but you will need to pass at least **five** GCSEs including Maths and English.
- You will need 5 GCSEs at grade 5 and higher grades for subjects you want to study (eg grade 6 for any core subjects).

# What is 6<sup>th</sup> form like?

- You have a smaller timetable (around 5 hours of lessons for each subject).
- You need to spend at least the same amount of time doing independent study for each subject on top of any homework.
- Study is a lot more intense than what you have been used to at GCSE.
- You need to be in school full time.
- You don't need to wear uniform.
- You can get involved in extracurricular activities (eg clubs, mentoring, EPQ, Duke of Edinburgh).

# What are the Pros?



- Familiarity with the school environment.
- Very supportive learning environment.
- Opportunity to learn in depth around subjects you choose.
- Opportunity to become more responsible for your own learning.
- A way of keeping options open if you are unsure of a future path.
- Good preparation for university courses.
- Essential if you are thinking about medicine, veterinary or dentistry.

# What are the Cons?



- You have to be in school full time.
- You have to find at least three subjects that interest you.
- You still need to comply with the usual school rules.
- A Level learning style may not suit you.
- Most subjects are exam based.
- It's a two year process and if you don't complete it, you will have no level 3 qualifications.

# What to do if you are interested in 6<sup>th</sup> form

- Will you get the minimum entry requirements? If there is **any** doubt you should have a plan B.
- Make sure that you continue to apply yourself throughout year 11. One thing we have learned from COVID is that students need to be prepared!
- Research your chosen subject areas. Speak to other students in 6<sup>th</sup> form and to your teachers, they know what you are capable of.
- If you like the idea of 6<sup>th</sup> form but want a change, look at other schools as well. Go to open events and make sure you apply in good time.

# College



- A very different environment to school, there are many more students compared to 6<sup>th</sup> form.
- You study **one** subject only.
- BTEC qualifications which are heavily coursework based.
- You can learn trades and skills not offered at schools.
- Practical learning with extensive opportunities for work experience.
- You only have to be in college when you have lessons (usually 3 days).
- The opportunity to take a one year level 1 or 2 course if you don't get high enough GCSE grades and Maths / English retakes.



# What are the Pros?



- A change of environment if you have not enjoyed school.
- The chance to learn in a practical way if exams don't suit you.
- Much more independent learning.
- Opportunities for work experience related to your course.
- Excellent facilities.
- A chance to concentrate on one subject that interests you.
- An Extended Level 3 BTEC is equivalent to three A Levels.
- Good preparation for university, apprenticeship or employment.

# What are the Cons?



- You have to keep on top of coursework.
- Less structured learning environment.
- New environment can be daunting.
- Can be difficult to choose just one subject.
- Can feel like you are closing your options.
- More difficult if you are not organised and self motivated.
- Sometimes some stigma around college from parents / carers.

# What to do if you are interested in College

- Research is key – have a look at local college websites:
  - <https://www.northamptoncollege.ac.uk/>
  - <https://wcg.ac.uk/page/94/rugby-college>
  - <https://www.moulton.ac.uk/>
  - <https://www.tresham.ac.uk/>
- Go to open events, many are holding virtual ones over the summer and they all have strong social media presence, especially Facebook and Twitter.
- Make sure you apply to any courses that interest you (you can apply for as many as you like and decide when you get your GCSE results).

# Apprenticeships



- These are full time jobs alongside training for a vocational qualification – you can also retake Maths / English if you need to.
- You get paid for an apprenticeship. Current minimum wage is £4.15 per hour but many companies pay more than this.
- They are offered at different levels depending on your qualifications and experience (from intermediate up to degree/Masters level).
- They last for 12-18 months for intermediate up to 4-6 years for degree levels.
- The training costs are covered by your employer.

# What are the Pros?



- You get paid.
- All of the training is free.
- You get the same benefits as the company's employees.
- If you know what you want to do and like practical learning, it can be the best of both worlds.
- Most apprentices stay with their employers beyond the apprenticeship (or at least have this option).
- Develops your employability skills giving you an advantage in the competitive job market.

# What are the Cons?



- It's a big commitment – a working week is very different to education (the biggest change is your holiday entitlement which can be 4-5 weeks as opposed to 12 weeks at school / college).
- Working and training is not easy and the higher the apprenticeship level, the harder it is. This is not the **easy** option!
- They are very competitive.
- Opportunities can be limited at post 16 as you need to think about location and how you will get to work every day.

# What to do if you are interested in an apprenticeship

- You can't start an apprenticeship until you've finished your GCSEs so there is no point applying until you are ready to start.
- You can prepare in the meantime— part time jobs and work experience all look good on an application.
- Networking is key – ask family / friends if they know anyone in the industry you're interested in. Let people know that you want to take this route.
- Register your details on the government portal and set up an alert to notify you of future opportunities <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>.
- Speak to Mrs Cottom to get more support
- There are no guarantees that you will get an apprenticeship so it is essential to have a back up plan (college or 6<sup>th</sup> form).

# What's next ...?



- Consider ALL options.
- Do your research so that you can make an INFORMED decision.
- Always have a back up plan.
- Think about what is right for YOU and YOUR future.
- The good news is that you can apply to as many courses / 6<sup>th</sup> form places as you like. You make your final decision when you get your GCSE results.
- If in doubt or if you have any questions, email the careers adviser  
MRS COTTOM [hcottom@thedustonschool.org](mailto:hcottom@thedustonschool.org)