



Guide for Pupils, Parents and Carers to Year 9 Option Choices



The options that young people have after year 9 can be confusing. There are many different routes and pathways that young people can take and options have to be carefully made.

Gathering information about different options available is an essential part of this process. This guide is an overview that I hope will help you through the process. I have referenced information from both the National Careers Service website www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk and www.parentalguidance.org.uk

Further information / support on option choices can be found in the **Careers Section of the school website**. Each pupil has access to Kudos (careers software) this allows them, and you, to explore careers linked to their option choices. This can be accessed from home via the internet. Pupils will need their user name and password.

Should you require any further information or advice please contact me on the usual school number.

Penny Hudson.

Careers Advisor



Support for Option Choices at Hurworth School

Hurworth School detail the options available at Key Stage 4 in their Booklet “The Options Booklet” This information was made available at options evening.

Careers lessons in Year 9 focus on developing the skills to gather information and make informed decisions. The lessons provide pupils with an awareness of qualifications and future paths that can be taken and the support networks available. Pupils use New Kudos careers software and the National Careers Service; these workshops enable pupils to match skills, abilities and interests to different career pathways. Action plans are developed.

Careers Interviews with Penny Hudson: These start in February.

For those pupils identified as having special educational needs, Mrs H Whitten or Mrs M Pitchford will arrange meetings with parents/carers and pupils in the February / March of Year 9 . This will provide an opportunity to enable the pupils to make an informed choice and provide partnership working between home and school. The school is able to consider the offer of alternative courses of study through the Unit Award scheme accredited by AQA. These options can be discussed on an individual basis.

Year 9 participate in several enrichment days. STEM Day (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) introduces pupils to the importance of these subjects and the career opportunities available. Year 9 pupils will also attend Step into College Day & World of Work Day



Making Subject Choices at Age 13/14

www.parentalguidance.org.uk

In Year 9/KS3, perhaps for the first time in their lives, your son or daughter will have to make important subject decisions. For some young people it's easier than for others, but because their choices can impact on their future, they need to take time to consider all their options.

The facts

- Schools have to ensure that all young people take a range of subjects so, although there will be some choice, your child will have to continue with certain core disciplines
- To achieve the English Baccalaureate, students have to gain GCSEs at grades A*-C or 9-4/5 in English, Maths, a Language, History or Geography, and the Sciences/Computer Science
- Some subjects can be picked up at a later stage in your child's education, but for others (e.g. Languages) they will usually need the GCSE/National before progressing
- It may be possible to take a short course or double award in certain subjects
- Some schools and colleges offer GCSEs in work-related subjects and/or vocational programmes, such as those leading to OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National and V.Cert Level 1/2
- Some reforms to GCSEs have already been made, and further changes (including a new 9-1 grading system in England) will be phased in for students starting courses from September 2015
- Key stage 4 options are offered by local University Technical Colleges and some vocational opportunities are available at local Colleges of Further Education



The Decision

Encourage your son or daughter to ask themselves some searching questions.

- Which subjects are they good at? Which subjects do they enjoy? (The two don't necessarily go hand in hand)
- What assessment methods suit them?
- Do they have a particular career in mind? If so, have they investigated which subjects are required or preferred?
- Are there any subjects they'd like to study at level 3 (e.g. A level) or beyond?
- What wider interests do they have? Subjects such as Art, Music and PE can be taken as school subjects or just continued as hobbies
- If they have already decided on some subjects, on what are they basing their decisions? Check that they are choosing subjects for the right reasons and not because they feel pressured, like the teacher or because their friends are doing them
- Are they choosing a broad enough range of subjects to keep as many options open as possible?

The Research

Your son or daughter's teachers can tell them more about what they will learn by doing the courses on offer at their school. Information about the subjects needed or preferred for any careers of interest can be found at: [National Careers Service \(England\)](#)



The National Careers Service offers the following guidance:

Choosing your GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.

- usually do this in Y9 but can be as early as Y8
- English, Maths and Science are compulsory – your school may have more
- your choice may be from GCSEs, BTECs, V.Certs or Cambridge Nationals
- Some may be subjects you don't know much about - for example, Engineering and Health and Social Care.

Different types of Qualifications

- NCFE V.Cert qualifications (Technical Awards) have been developed in-line with the new Department for Education measures as to what meets GCSE equivalency. V Cert qualifications are graded and contain both internally and externally assessed elements. Each Level 2 V.Cert qualification is equivalent to one GCSE.
- Cambridge Nationals were launched in 2012 and designed specifically for students aged 14–16. They're industry-relevant, geared to key sector requirements and very popular with schools and colleges because they suit such a broad range of learning styles and abilities and are an excellent start for vocational study. Cambridge Nationals are equivalent in size to GCSE and are included on the Key Stage 4 performance tables.

How your option choices affect your future: A levels:

- Some A Levels need a GCSE in the same subject - for example, Art or French
- A Level Maths requires the GCSE at Higher tier
- Taking Maths or a Language a year early (Year 10) may result in a lower grade than if you did it in Y11 – this could be a problem if you want to study these at A level where a 'B' is usually needed.
- You usually need Dual Award Science or Separate Sciences to study A level Sciences.



University:

- Most university degrees require five GCSEs grade A* to C including Maths and English – some will accept alternatives like BTECs, others may not – so check course entry requirements carefully. This can be done on the UCAS website www.ucas.com
- The Russell Group of Universities (24 leading Universities in the UK) issue guidance for selecting pre-16 qualifications. This guidance can be found in their booklet “Informed Choices” and is available at <http://russellgroup.ac.uk>

Bear these in mind when choosing:

- no subjects are ‘easy’ – find out exactly what you’ll be studying if you’re unsure
- Choosing subjects just because your friends are doing them isn’t a good idea – they may have different aims than you – and you may well be put in different sets.



The following websites provide a range of information that will help you look at jobs, what they involve, skills needed, entry requirements, qualifications, training and wages

www.direct.gov.uk/NationalCareerService	National Career Service: This replaces Next Step. An interactive website plus free help line 0800 100 900
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COLLEGE AND COURSE INFORMATION

www.carmel.org.uk/sixthform	Carmel RC College
www.darlington.ac.uk	Darlington College
www.geliz.ac.uk	Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
www.edhcc.ac.uk	East Durham College / Houghall College
www.stockton.ac.uk	Stockton Riverside College
www.bacoll.ac.uk	Bishop Auckland College
www.ccad.ac.uk	Cleveland College of Art & Design
www.mbro.ac.uk	Middlesbrough College
www.askham-bryan.ac.uk	Askham Bryan College
http://www.polamhall.com	Polam Hall
www.utcsouthdurham.org	UTC South Durham

APPRENTICESHIPS

http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk	The National Apprenticeship Service
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SUPPORT FOR YEAR 9 OPTIONS\USEFUL LINKS

www.Icould.com	iCould (Choosing your options advice)
www.direct.gov.uk/NationalCareerService	National Careers Service (aged 13-16)
www.brightknowledge.org	Brightside (GCSEs explained/What subjects should I choose?)
www.plotr.co.uk	Plotr (Choosing GCSE options/Guide to making the right choice)
www.futuremorph.org	Future Morph (information about taking Maths and Science at KS4 and beyond)
www.parentalguidance.org.uk	Parental Guidance (information for parents)

VOLUNTEERING AND JOB PREPARATION

www.do-it.org.uk	Volunteering Opportunities
www.direct.gov.uk/NationalCareerService	Advice on CVs and getting your first job
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/	Information on the minimum wage

HIGHER EDUCATION

www.ucas.com	Lists University courses and Tariff Points
www.russellgroup.ac.uk	Guide for Informed Choices at pre and post 16
www.prospects.ac.uk	Your options after your Degree.
www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk	All you need to know about student finance