

Information and Guidance for Students and their Parents/Carers in
Preparation for Making Applications and Decisions for Post-16 Education
or Training in 2025-2026

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Introduction

This resource is designed to provide up-to-date information for Year 10/11 students and their parents/carers, as they begin to consider the options available for their next steps in education or training. This is usually referred to as 'post-16' or 'further education'.

The [Raising of the Participation Age law \(2013\)](#) means that all young people must be enrolled on an education or training programme until they are 18 years old. This can include one of the following options: **sixth form, college/training provider** or an **apprenticeship**.

Each of these options are explained over the following pages as well as the support and guidance available at The Carlton Academy.

This chart shows the different levels of qualifications available for the 3 different educational routes. Post-16 options will be focused on Level 3 qualifications and below.

Level	Qualification / educational routes			
8	Doctorate (PhD)		NVQ 8	
7	Masters degree (MA)		Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc			
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
4		Higher National Certificate (HNC)		
3	A levels Grades A-E	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)		BTEC first diploma	Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2
1	GCSE Grades 1- 3 (D, E, F or G)		Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications	Traineeship / NVQ 1
	Academic route		Vocational route	Applied / work route

Sixth Form

Qualification levels available: Level 3

Qualifications available: Normally, three subjects are studied over a period of two years.

A Levels are level 3 academic subject-based qualifications similar to GCSE options. These are usually assessed by exams at the end of the course. **Vocational / technical / applied** qualifications are also usually available at most sixth forms. These can be taken alongside one or two A Level subjects and are a more practical qualification. These are assessed by a combination of exams and course work. Examples include: Applied Science, Business, Food Science and Nutrition, Health and Social Care, IT, Music and Sport.

Entry requirements: Usually, sixth forms require students to gain five GCSEs at grade 4/5 or above, including one of either maths or English language, or both. This can vary from place-to-place and subject-to-subject so carefully check sixth form websites and predicted grades before applying. For example, it is common to require a grade 5 (or higher) in GCSE maths to be able to study maths or science subjects at A Level.

Advice: Students considering sixth form should consult their school's Careers Advisor about what subjects they intend to take, as this can impact on future career and higher education options.

College/Training Provider

Qualification levels available: Entry Level, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3

Qualifications available: One course is taken over a period of one or two years.

Vocational / technical / applied qualifications are more practical and focus on a job role or industry area. Examples include: hair and beauty, childcare, construction, motor vehicle, business, IT, performing arts, photography, sport and many more. These courses are mainly assessed by completing relevant tasks or coursework and less so by exams. **T Level** courses are a relatively new two-year Level 3 technical qualification with an assessed industry work placement, which is worth 20% of the qualification (approx. 45 days).

Entry requirements: These vary depending on the level of the course and the college/training provider. Entry Level courses are the lowest level and Level 3 is the highest available for post-16 students.

Advice: Students should consult their school's Careers Advisor about what qualification level(s) are most appropriate for them. However, this can be researched independently by comparing most recent predicted grades against course entry requirements. These are displayed on all college/training provider websites.

Apprenticeship

Qualification levels available: Level2(Intermediate)and Level3(Advanced)

Qualifications available: An apprenticeship is a full-time employment / training programme. The qualification is linked to the job role and usually takes at least 12 months to complete.

Vocational / technical qualifications via apprenticeships are usually assessed by occupational competency related activities.

Examples include: observations in the workplace, professional discussions and portfolios of work product. Usually, one day a week (approx. 6 hours) is spent undertaking training towards the qualification. Typically, this day is away from the workplace, for example at a local college or training provider.

Entry requirements: These vary depending on the level of the qualification attached to the job role and are ultimately at the discretion of the employer. Employers outline the required skills and personal qualities they are looking for within the job advertisement.

Advice: Students considering an apprenticeship should consult the school's Careers Advisor for support with searching vacancies, writing a CV and making applications. They should also make additional applications to colleges/sixth forms as apprenticeship vacancies can be fiercely competitive. Vacancies can be searched [here](#). Pay and conditions can be found [here](#).

Researching and Making Applications

Researching Attending sixth form / college open evenings is considered **vital** to enable students to fully understand the options and learning environments available to them. It also allows students to find out about the wider opportunities and support available for any unique circumstances or interests. Open evenings are a great opportunity to meet the staff involved and ask questions to help make good and informed decisions.

Making Applications All students will **need** to make post-16 applications as part of their legal requirement [Raising of the Participation Age law \(2013\)](#). Applications are usually completed online via sixth form or college websites. All post-16 providers can support applications being made over the phone or in person at open evenings if this is preferred.

Local Post-16 Providers

Sixth Forms

- [The Carlton Academy - Sixth Form](#)
- [Home - Bilborough College](#)
- [High Pavement Sixth Form \(Nottingham College\)](#)

As well as located at most other local secondary schools

Colleges

- [Nottingham College](#)
- [Confetti College](#)
- [Brackenhurst College](#)
- [Inspire College Vision](#)
- [West Notts College](#)

Training Providers

- [Access Training](#)
- [Sports Gateway](#)
- [Draper Norton Football Academy](#)
- [Midlands Academy of Dance & Drama](#)

The above is not an exhaustive list.

Post-16 Open Days, Evenings and Events

- TheCarltonAcademySixthForm-[TheCarltonAcademy - AdmissionsandProspectus](#)

The Sixth Form Open Evening is on Wednesday 1st October 2025

Online booking is usually required via the links below for:

- Nottingham College - [Open Events | Nottingham College](#)
- West Notts College - [Open events, tours and tasters - West Notts College \(wnc.ac.uk\)](#)
- Confetti College - [Open Days - Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies](#)
- Brackenhurst College - [Open days and events | Nottingham Trent University](#)
- Bilborough College Sixth Form - [Open Days - Bilborough College](#)
- Inspire College - [Inspire College Open Days | Inspire - Culture, Learning, Libraries \(inspireculture.org.uk\)](#)

Timeline for Applications

Year 11	Application Processes / Information and Advice
October / November 2025	<p>Sixth form and college applications begin to open. Open days are advertised on sixth form and college websites along with any booking instructions required. Some apprenticeship providers will begin to advertise vacancies if they have lengthy recruitment systems and processes. Check individual company websites for this.</p> <p>Some sixth forms and colleges may close applications early. It is worth checking with each provider you are interested in applying for and make early applications (before January ideally) to avoid disappointment.</p>
January 2026	<p>Students begin to receive invitations for sixth form and college interviews. Sometimes these are called 'Meet the Tutor Events'.</p>
January - March 2026	<p>Students begin to receive and accept 'conditional offers'. This means the offer is based on the student meeting the entry requirements for that specific course. This will be determined on GCSE results day in August.</p>
February - May 2026	<p>Apprenticeship vacancy numbers begin to rise at this time of year. Year 11s can begin working with an employer full time from the first Monday after the last GCSE exam date is scheduled. This is usually in the last week of June or the first week of July. Students can enrol onto their chosen course on or after GCSE Results Day if their conditional offer has been met.</p>
August 2026	

Personal Career Guidance and the Support Available



Stephen McArdle RCDP
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Yasmin Moon RCDP
Registered Career Development Professional
SEND and Inclusion Specialist
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The Carlton Academy provides students and parents with access to Registered Career Development Professionals who work in accordance with the Career Development Institutes [Code of Ethics](#). This means they are highly trained and impartial in their work.

Details of how they work and their availability is outlined on the next few pages.

Personal Career Guidance is [#SoMuchMoreThanTalkingAboutJobs](#)

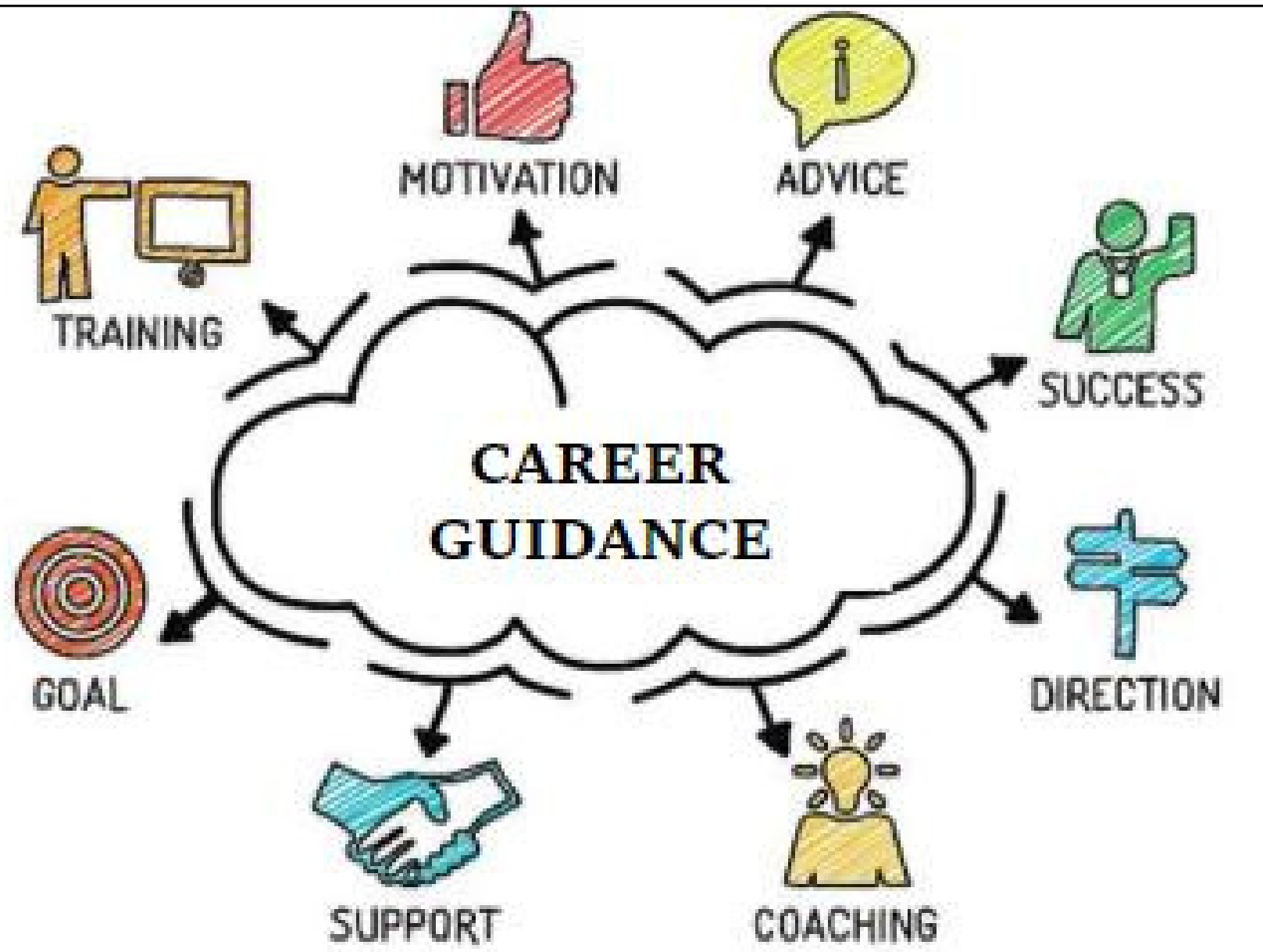
It's about:

- Helping each student to feel empowered to take full ownership and responsibility for the choices they make now and into the future.
- Supporting good and informed decision making from the options available.

We do this by:

- Giving students the time and space to reflect on their interests, preferred learning/working styles and environments to enable the development of self-awareness.
- Asking questions, supporting action setting and sometimes giving advice to aid the development of opportunity-awareness.

We understand that post-16 decision making can be a confusing and challenging time and process. Therefore, each student will be met with empathy and compassion. All students will receive at least one 1:1 appointment and written action plan to support them with their post-16 options and career-related planning.



Careers Advisor Availability (2025-26)



Referrals should be made to: s.mcardle@theacademycarlton.org

Career Guidance Opportunities	Year Groups	Duration	When / Where
<p>1:1 Personal career guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss interests and explore options • Reflect on experiences and strengths • Create a tailored action plan for your next steps in education, training or future employment 	<p>10 11 12 13</p>	<p>60 mins</p>	<p>Year 10 - Spring and Summer term Year 11 - Autumn and Spring term Year 12 - Spring and Summer term Year 13 - Autumn and Spring term</p> <p>During the school day Careers Office</p>
<p>Drop-in after the bell!</p> <p>.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course / apprenticeship search • Application making / CV writing • Interview preparation • Quick questions • Any confusion, worries or concerns 	<p>10 11 12 13</p>	<p>Upto 60 mins</p>	<p>All year round Fridays 15:10 – 16:10</p> <p>After school Careers Office</p>

Drop-in after the bell!

What support is available at the drop-in?

- Sixth form / college / university course search and applications
- Apprenticeship and job vacancy search and applications
- CV writing and interview preparation
- Any confusion, worries or concerns!



Who? Year 10, 11, 12, 13

When? Fridays 15:10– 16:00

Where? Careers Office



Stephen McArdle – Careers Advisor
s.mcardle@theacademycarlton.org



Useful Websites

[Careers advice - job profiles, information and resources | National Careers Service](#)

[Explore careers | National Careers Service](#)

[Prospects.ac.uk](#)

[About – CARE4Notts](#)

[UCAS | At the heart of connecting people to higher education](#)

[The Buzz Quiz - North East Ambition](#)

[Sign In – Unifrog](#)

[Find an apprenticeship \(findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Apprenticeship resources for schools, teachers, parents \(amazingapprenticeships.com\)](#)

FAQs

How many courses can students apply for?

- Students can apply for and accept as many courses and conditional offers as they want. It is general advice that students apply for more than one course and at different levels (i.e. Level 2 and Level 3) so they have multiple options available if entry requirements are not met or, are exceeded on GCSE results day.

How can I help my child?

- Encourage your child to find out about their options by visiting local open evenings in October and November. Some colleges offer more flexible and accessible options such as virtual open days, which can be helpful if physically attending is not possible.
- Discuss with your child their future interests or plans. Let them figure out which route is best for them. Encourage your child to access the career guidance opportunities available in school.

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Requesting Further Support / Feedback and Making Referrals

Please contact our Careers Advisor on the email address below if you require further information, support, have any concerns or to provide feedback on the information provided.

s.mcardle@theacademycarlton.org