



Post-16 Options

A Guide for Families



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Introduction

Thinking About What Comes After Year 11 at Parkside

What your child decides to do after Year 11 can make a big difference to their future. The choices they make now can affect how easy it is for them to get a job or continue studying later in life.

When they turn 16, there are two main options:

1. Stay in full-time education – like going to sixth form or college.
2. Start working and study part-time – like doing an apprenticeship or training while working.

There are a few important things for your child to think about when making their decision:

- What kind of qualification they want to get.
- How they learn best – in a classroom or through hands-on experience.
- Which subjects or activities they enjoy most.

Many students at Parkside choose to attend a 6th form or go to college to study A levels or BTECs. These are great for students who enjoy classroom learning.

If your child prefers learning by doing, they might enjoy T Levels or an apprenticeship more. These options can lead to great results and open doors to good careers too.

It's important not to ignore an option just because it's new to you. In this guide, we will explain:

1. What choices are available after Year 11
2. Which types of students suit each choice
3. What qualifications they lead to
4. What opportunities come next
5. Where your child can study
6. What support (money and help with learning) is available



Finally, remember: whatever your child chooses after GCSEs, it's not set in stone. It may shape what comes next, but it won't block their future. If they change their mind later, there are always ways to change direction.

Our Commitment



At Parkside Community School, we recognise the crucial role that parents and carers play in supporting their child's career development and future planning. We are committed to ensuring parents and carers are informed, engaged, and empowered throughout their child's careers education journey from Year 7 to Year 11 and beyond.

Our Careers Programme is fully aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks, and parent/carer involvement is a key element across all areas.





Student Entitlement Statement

Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

As a student at Parkside Community School you have the opportunity to receive the following: –

- **ACCESS** to impartial advice and information about all career and progression options available to you
- **SUPPORT and GUIDANCE** to help you make choices and complete a career plan for the future, at the appropriate time
- **HELP** to decide what options to pursue at year 9, year 11 and year 13, including information about further learning, training or employment
- **A PLANNED PROGRAMME** of careers education helping you to develop skills and knowledge to enable you to make choices and the transition into work or learning.
- **ACCESS** to a range of online (and paper based) resources to help you to plan your next step, including labour market information, higher education and apprenticeship providers and career planning tools

You will also have the opportunity to: –

- **EXPLORE** the world of work via access to a range of opportunity providers including – employers, voluntary organisations, further and higher education.
- **ATTEND** events giving information on future learning opportunities within further and higher education
- **BE INVOLVED** in making decisions about things that affect your learning and future career options.



What Happens After Year 11 at Parkside Community School?

All young people must continue in education or training until they are 18.

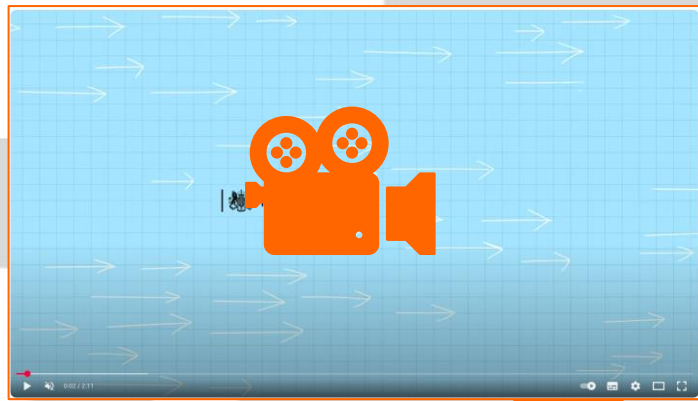
This doesn't mean your child has to stay at school or go to college. They can get a job, but it must include some training – like an apprenticeship or a course. They can't work full-time without doing some kind of learning.

What Are Their Options?

At 16, your child can:

- Study academic qualifications like A levels, BTECs, T Levels, or the IB (International Baccalaureate).
- Do vocational training like an apprenticeship, traineeship, or a job with training.
- If they didn't get the results they hoped for at GCSE, they can do a traineeship or internship to build up skills and experience.

Post-16 Options



T-LEVELS
THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION



Thinking About the Future

If your child already has an idea of what they want to do after age 18, it can help guide their choices now. For example:

- If they want to become a dentist, they'll need to take science subjects.
- If they're good at and enjoy languages, they might choose to focus on those.



What Happens After Year 11 at Parkside Community School?

What If They're Not Sure Yet?

Many students don't know what they want to do at 18 – and that's completely normal.

In that case, it's a good idea for your child to keep their options open. They can choose a mix of different subjects to help them find out what they enjoy most. This will give them more choices in the future.



Learning Styles Matter

Everyone learns differently, and this should help shape your child's decision:

- If they enjoy practical work or coursework, they might like BTECs, T Levels, or apprenticeships.
- If they prefer listening to lessons and taking exams, they might prefer A levels or the IB.



Why it is important to aim for Level 3 courses

At Parkside Community School, we encourage all students to think about moving on to Level 3 courses after their GCSEs. These courses, like A-levels, BTECs, or T-levels, help you learn more and prepare for the next steps in your future. Studying at Level 3 gives you better chances to get into university, start an apprenticeship, or find a good job. It also helps you build important skills like problem-solving and independent learning. Choosing to progress to Level 3 is a smart way to keep your options open and work towards your goals.

Remember

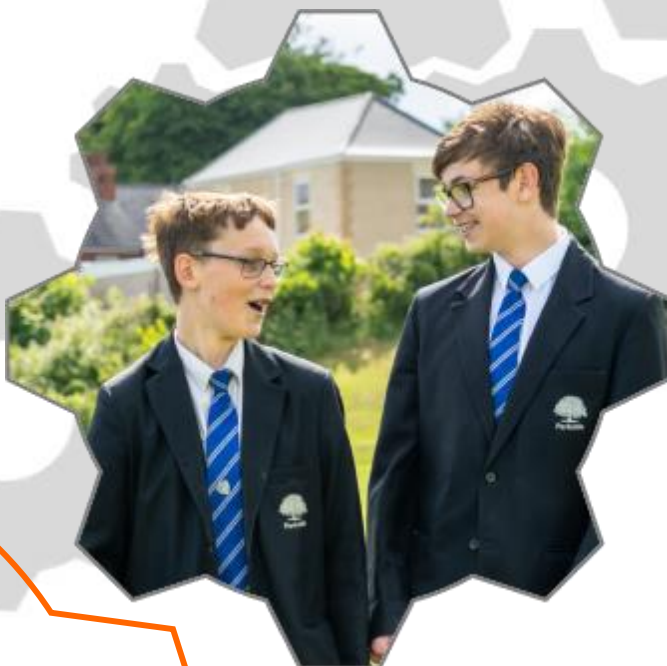
There are many different ways to reach the same career goals.

It's better for your child to choose a path that matches how they learn and what they enjoy, rather than pick something just because they think they have to.

Choosing the right option for them will give them a better chance of success and happiness.



Post-16 Qualifications



Levels of Qualifications

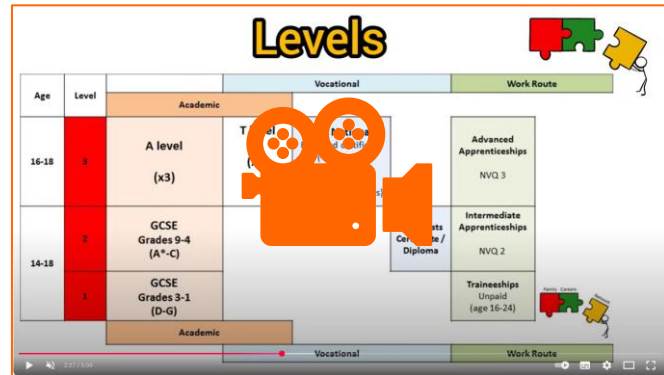


Understanding Qualification Levels

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, qualifications are grouped into levels from Entry Level up to Level 8.

- Entry Level is for people who are just starting out.
- Levels 1 to 3 are the ones most students work towards at school or college.
- The higher the level, the more advanced and challenging the qualification is.

Qualifications Explained



What Do These Levels Mean?

There are lots of different types of qualifications, so it can be confusing to know what they all lead to.

To help make it easier, we've put together a simple guide to show:

- What each level means
- The different types of learning – academic, vocational, and work-based
- How each route can lead to higher education or a future career
- Remember, GCSEs are a Level 2 qualification. To progress further and gain more skills students should aim for level 3 qualifications where possible.



Level	Qualification / educational route				
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)			
4		Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4		
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC 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





What are A-Levels?



A levels (Advanced Level qualifications) are courses where students study a subject in more detail over two years. At the end of the two years, there is an exam to test what they've learned.

Most learning is done in the classroom, with support from teachers.

How Many A Levels Do Students Take?

- Most students take three A levels.
- Some may take four, but only the top three grades count when applying to university.
- These grades are turned into UCAS points, which are used by universities to offer places on courses.

UCAS points for A levels range from 16 to 56 points, depending on the grade your child gets.

Choosing Subjects

There are more subjects available at A level than at GCSE – so your child might pick something they haven't studied before.

If they find they don't enjoy it or it's not what they expected, most schools and colleges will let them change subjects in the first term. Usually, your child will need at least a Grade 6 at GCSE in a subject they want to continue at A level – though sometimes exceptions can be made.

What About AS Levels?

If a student chooses to study a subject for just one year (Year 12), they can take an AS level.

- An AS level is worth 40% of a full A level.
- It still gives UCAS points – from 6 points (E grade) up to 20 points (A grade).
- Not all schools and colleges offer AS levels, so it's important to check.

What are A-Levels?



Qualification type

General Certificate of Advanced Level qualification

Type of learning

Mostly theory

Qualifications needed to sign up

At least 5 GCSEs grades 4 - 9 and at least a grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level (requirements may vary between schools)

Subject choices

Three subjects

Length of commitment

2 years full time

Tuition costs

Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

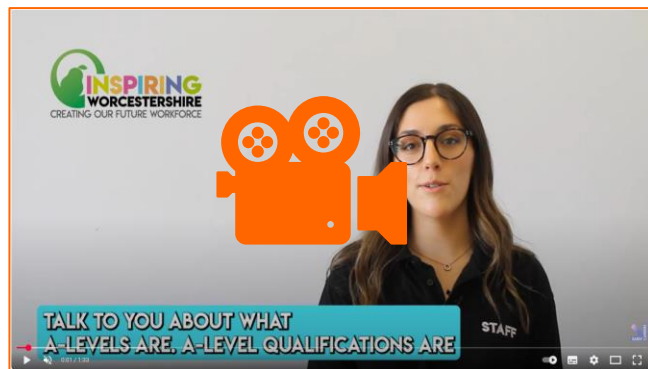
UCAS points awarded for passing

56 points – A*
48 points – A
40 points – B
32 points – C
24 points – D
16 points – E

Can lead to

University, further study, training or work

What is an A-Level?



Useful Links

UCAS



If your child wants to benefit from different learning styles, some schools offer the option to take a combination of A levels with BTEC.





The Extended Project Qualification

What Is the EPQ?

At some 6th Forms students may take an extra qualification called the EPQ – the Extended Project Qualification.

This is a research project that your child chooses and works on mostly by themselves. It can be:

- A long essay (dissertation)
- A creative project
- A product with a written report

It's worth between 8 and 28 UCAS points, depending on the grade they get.

What Makes the EPQ Different?

The EPQ is very independent – your child will:

- Pick their own topic (something they're interested in)
- Plan and organise their time
- Do their own research
- Meet deadlines on their own
- Create the final project

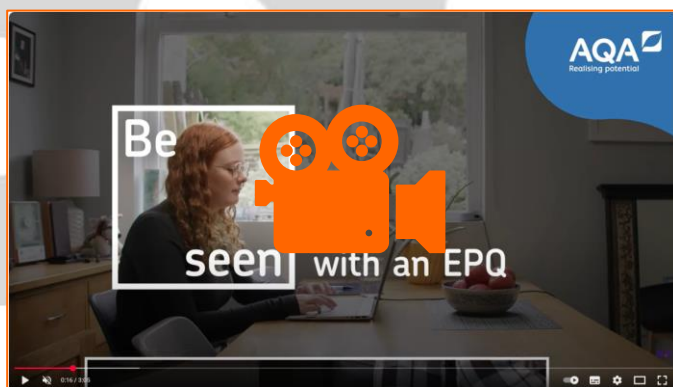
They'll get some support from a teacher, but not a lot – just guidance now and then.

This style of learning is more like university or the workplace, where students are expected to manage things themselves.

It's great preparation – but it's not for everyone.

Make sure your child is happy working on their own before choosing this option.

What Is the EPQ?





The Extended Project Qualification

How Does It Help With University?

The EPQ is worth half an A level. Unlike a fourth A level, the UCAS points from the EPQ are added on top of the points from their three main A levels.

This means an EPQ could help boost your child's UCAS points and improve their chances of getting into university. Some university may even lower their typical offer to a student who achieves a certain grade in their EPQ.

Some universities even give two offers:

- One without the EPQ (e.g. BBB)
- One with the EPQ (e.g. BBC plus a pass in the EPQ)

This can give your child more flexibility when applying.

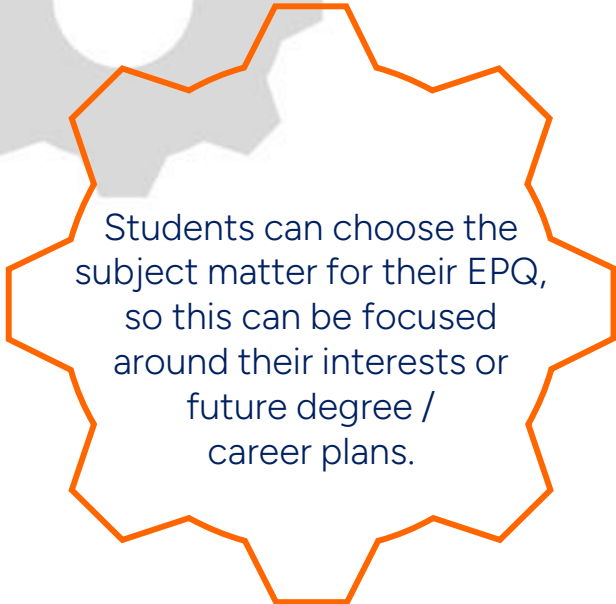
Useful Links



What Skills Will They Learn?

By doing an EPQ, your child can develop really useful skills, such as:

- Time management
- Doing research
- Summarising large amounts of information
- Staying motivated
- Giving presentations
- Reflecting on their work
- Working independently
- Handling feedback
- Learning from mistakes



Students can choose the subject matter for their EPQ, so this can be focused around their interests or future degree / career plans.

These skills are great to talk about in university personal statements or job interviews.



What are BTEC Nationals?

What Are BTECs?

BTECs at Level 3 are qualifications that are similar to A levels, but focus more on practical, work-related subjects. They are a great option for students who learn best by doing rather than just sitting in a classroom.

Types of BTEC Qualifications

There are three types of BTECs your child can take at sixth form or college:

- Subsidiary Diploma – equal to 1 A level
- Diploma – equal to 2 A levels
- Extended Diploma – equal to 3 A levels

They are studied over two years, just like A levels.

How Are BTECs Taught and Graded?

- Students learn through a mix of practical tasks and theory (classroom work)
- They are assessed mostly by coursework, with a final exam that makes up 40% of the final grade

UCAS Points and University

BTECs can earn your child UCAS points – just like A levels.

- A subsidiary diploma can earn 15 to 56 points, depending on the grade
- A diploma is worth double, and an extended diploma is worth three times as much

This means your child can still go to university with BTECs – but they should check if their chosen course or university accepts them, as some prefer A levels.

Mixing BTECs and A Levels

Many schools (including Parkside) allow students to combine A levels and BTECs. This gives them a mix of classroom and practical learning.

Important to Know

From 2024, the Government is reducing funding for qualifications that are not:

- A levels
- T Levels
- Apprenticeships

This means that BTECs may be phased out over time. If your child is interested in BTECs, it's important to speak to their school or college about what's still available and how this might affect future choices.



BTEC

What are BTEC Nationals?

Qualification type

Business and Technology Education Council Diplomas
(Level 3 are similar standard to A Levels, with subsidiary diploma equivalent to one A level, BTEC diploma equivalent to 2 A levels and extended diploma equivalent to 3 A levels).

I Choose BTECs.



Type of learning

Combination of practical and theory
Qualifications needed to sign up
Up to 5 GCSEs

Subject choices

Up to three vocational subjects

Length of commitment

2 years full time

Tuition costs

Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing

56 points – D* (distinction)

48 points – D

32 points – M (merit)

16 points – P (pass)

BTECs offer the chance of earning the same points for UCAS as A levels and provide a way to learn through practical application and coursework.

Can lead to

University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Useful Links



What are T-Levels?



What Are T Levels?

T Levels (Technical Level Qualifications) are a new type of qualification, introduced in September 2020 by the Government.

They are designed with the help of real employers to give students the skills and experience they need to go straight into work, further training, or university.

Key Facts About T Levels

- A T Level takes 2 years to complete
- It is equal to 3 A levels
- You'll learn in the classroom and also spend time in a real workplace
- You can earn between 72 and 168 UCAS points, depending on your grades

What Makes T Levels Different?

T Levels combine classroom learning with an industry placement – this is a real job in a real company.

- The placement lasts for 315 hours (about 45 days)
- That's around 20% of the whole course
- Some students are even offered a job afterwards!

The work experience is also great to show universities or future employers.

T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

What Can You Do After a T Level?

After finishing a T Level, your child can:

- Go straight into a skilled job
- Apply for a higher apprenticeship
- Go to university (if they meet the entry requirements)

T Level Transition Programme

If your child isn't quite ready to start a T Level straight after GCSEs, they can take the T Level Transition Programme – a one-year course that helps them prepare.

This programme includes:

- Introductory lessons in their chosen subject
- Work experience
- Extra support with English and Maths (if they didn't pass them at GCSE)

It's a great way to build confidence and skills before starting the full T Level.

T Levels are a good option for students who enjoy hands-on learning and are ready to gain real experience in the working world.



What are T-Levels?



Qualification type

Technical Level Qualification

Type of learning

Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)

Qualifications needed to sign up

Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs

Subject choices

As of September 2024 there will be over twenty subjects available including accounting, engineering, digital business services, education and childcare, finance, health, law, management, on-site construction and science.

Length of commitment

2 years full time

Tuition costs

Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing

168 points – Distinction*

144 points – Distinction

120 points – Merit

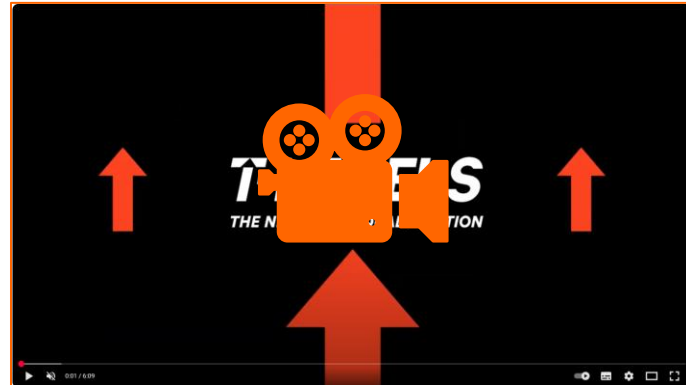
96 points – Pass (C or above)

72 points – Pass (D or E)

Can lead to

University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

What are T-Levels?



Useful Links

T-LEVELS

First-hand work experience is hugely beneficial to students, enabling them to get a feel for what it's like in the world of work and whether they like the industry sector they've chosen – it's not too late to make a change post-18 if they don't!

Apprenticeships



What Are Apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are real jobs that also include learning and training. Your child works for an employer while also studying at college, university, or with a training provider. They are a great choice for students who want to earn money, gain work experience, and learn practical skills at the same time.

Apprenticeships were designed to help fill skills gaps in UK businesses and are a good way to build professional skills that are useful in many jobs.

How Apprenticeships Work

- Your child works for an employer, doing a real job
- They also study part-time to gain qualifications
- They get paid while they learn
- The training can happen at a college, university, or training centre.

Starting an Apprenticeship at 16

At 16, students can apply for:

- Level 2 Apprenticeships – for students with few or no qualifications
- Level 3 Apprenticeships – usually need 5 GCSEs, including English and Maths

There is no Level 1 Apprenticeship, but students without qualifications can do a traineeship or internship first to help them build the skills they need



Apprenticeships

What Qualifications Will They Get?

Apprenticeships lead to recognised qualifications. For example:

- A Level 3 Apprenticeship gives your child a qualification equal to 2 A levels
- They might earn National Certificates, National Diplomas, or NVQs

These qualifications can help them move on to higher education, further training, or a job when they turn 18.

Can They Continue After the Apprenticeship?

Yes! Many apprenticeships allow students to progress to a higher level. After finishing a Level 3 Apprenticeship, your child might be able to start a Level 4 or 5 Apprenticeship. These are called Higher Apprenticeships, and some even lead to a degree.

Not all employers offer this, so it's important to check with the company before applying.

Apprenticeships are a strong choice for those who enjoy hands-on learning and want to work as they learn.



Apprenticeships



Qualification type

Advanced Level 3
(equivalent to 2 A levels)

Type of learning

Work based including off-site learning

Qualifications needed to sign up

Advanced Level 3 - depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs. Students need to show they can complete the programme

Subject choices

Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job
Offered

Length of commitment

1-2 years

Tuition costs

Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

Can lead to

Further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Apprenticeships Explained



Useful Links



Unlike BTECs, which are studied at school or college, apprenticeships also include an element of study at work, so there is a real-life component to the course.

Levels of Apprenticeships

Level 2

Intermediate

Typical length

12-18 months

Entry requirements:

None or few

Qualifications obtained:

GCSE, BTEC or equivalent

Who's it for?

Mostly for 16-year-olds with limited or no academic qualifications.



Level 3

Advanced

Typical length

12-24 months

Entry requirements:

Usually 5 GCSEs

Qualifications obtained:

A levels or equivalent

Who's it for?

Mostly for 16-year-olds with reasonable academic achievements but who don't want to study in sixth form.

Typical length

3-5 years

Entry requirements:

A levels or equivalent

Qualifications obtained:

Higher national diploma / foundation degree

Who's it for?

Mostly for those who want to qualify for professional career paths without attending university or college.

Level 4/5

Higher

Typical length

3-7 years

Entry requirements:

At least 2 A levels or equivalent

Qualifications obtained:

A BA or BSc degree or higher

Who's it for?

Mostly for those with excellent sixth form results that want to study for a degree or similar whilst working.



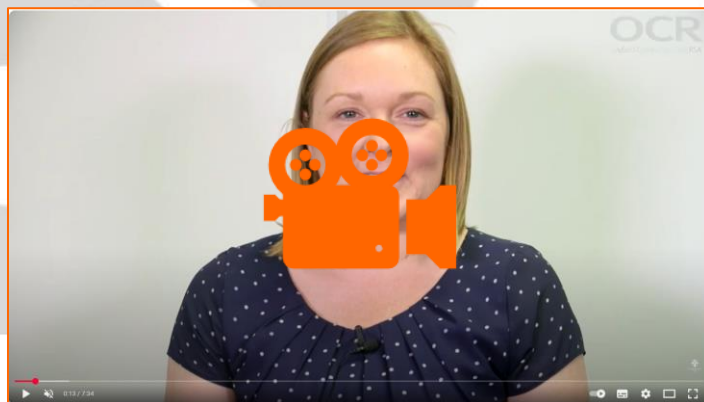
Other Qualifications

Other Qualifications

Other qualifications you can take include Cambridge Technicals, City and Guilds, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and the Tech Bacc (which is similar to the International Baccalaureate). These are all vocational courses, which means they focus on skills and knowledge for specific jobs. They are a good option for students who already know what kind of job they want after school, or for those who prefer learning in a more practical, hands-on way, while still doing some classroom work.

Cambridge Technicals

Cambridge Technicals are split 50% coursework and 50% exams. They offer a very practical way to learn. To do well, students need to be well-organised, able to work on several projects at the same time, and meet deadlines.



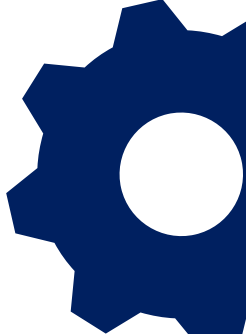
In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but these qualifications provide an excellent route into industry.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)

NVQs are a work-based way of learning. There are no exams. Instead, students are assessed on how well they can do specific tasks. Although NVQs are job-focused, they can be studied at school, college, or in the workplace.



Other Qualifications



Qualification type

City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Tech Bac (similar to International Baccalaureate)

Type of learning

Dependent on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training

Qualifications needed to sign up

Usually 5 GCSEs grade 4 - 9, but check individually

Subject choices

Range of vocational subjects

Length of commitment

2 years (level 3)

Tuition costs

Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing

In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but there are some exceptions.

Can lead to

Further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Useful Links



CAMBRIDGE
TECHNICALS



City &
Guilds

UCAS

Options Summary

	A levels	International Baccalaureate	BTEC Nationals	T-Levels (England only)
Qualification type	General Certificate of Advanced level qualification	International Baccalaureate Diploma	Business and Technology Education Council Diplomas <i>(Level 3 are similar standard to A Levels, with subsidiary diploma equivalent to one A level, BTEC diploma equivalent to 2 A levels and extended diploma equivalent to 3 A levels).</i>	Technical Level Qualification
Type of learning	Mostly theory	Mostly theory, some practical	Combination of practical and theory	Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE grade 4 – 9. At least grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level	Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs
Subject choices	Three subjects	Up to six subjects (three standard level and three at higher level plus some compulsory modules including an extended essay)	Three vocational subjects	One industry field, such as construction or Education
Commitment	2 years full time			
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	56 points – A* 48 points – A 40 points – B 32 points – C 24 points – D 16 points – E	56 points - Higher Level 7 48 points - Higher Level 6 32 points - Higher Level 5 24 points - Higher Level 4 12 points - Higher Level 3	For subsidiary diploma: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass) <i>Points are doubled for diploma and tripled for extended diploma</i>	168 points - Distinction* 144 points - Distinction 120 points - Merit 96 points - Pass (C or above) 72 points - Pass (D or E)
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

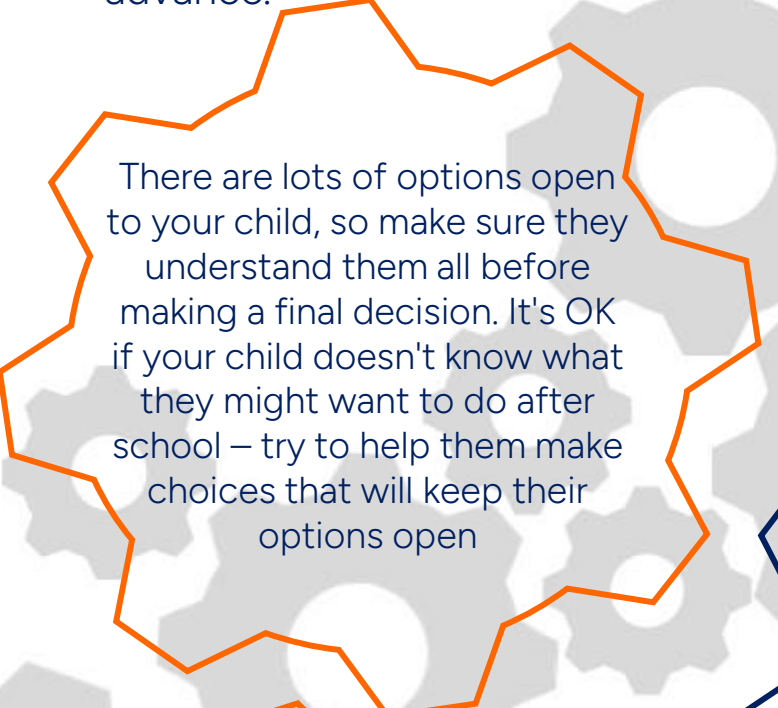
	Cambridge Technicals	Other qualifications	BTEC apprenticeship	Other options
Qualification type	A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to an A level) or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to x2 A levels)	City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Tech Bac (similar to Baccalaureate)	Advanced Level 3 (equivalent to x2 A levels)	Traineeship / Volunteer with training / internship – all to help your child get enough skills to take on an apprenticeship or other form of qualification if they do not already have the minimum qualification requirements.
Type of learning	Practical course with lots of coursework based on real life case studies	Dependent on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training	Work based including off-site learning	Work based
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE passes	x5 GCSE passes	Advanced Level 3 - depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs	None
Subject choices	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered
Commitment	2 years	2 years (level 3)	1-2 years	6 weeks – 6 months
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	Cambs Tech level 3: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)	In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but there are some exceptions.	n/a	n/a
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	Further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training or work	Further study, apprenticeships or job offers



Advice for Parents: **Part One**

There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed GCSEs, so make sure they know what's on offer.

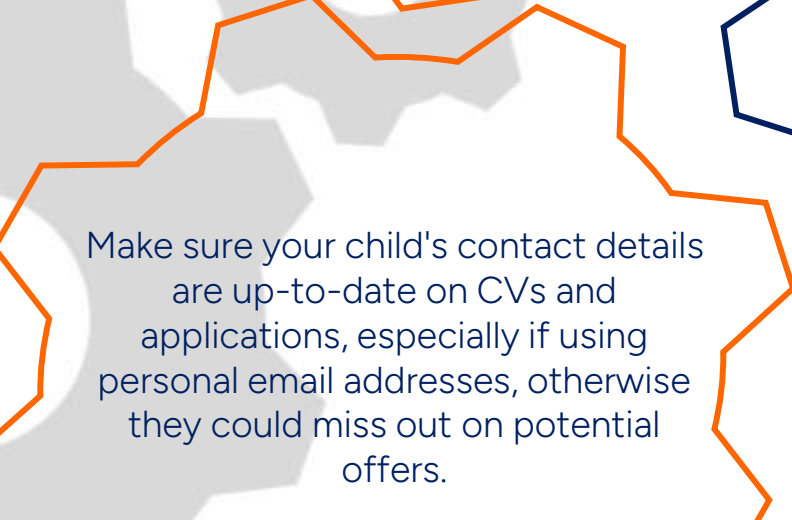
- A level and IB are more suited to theoretical learning;
- BTECs and T Levels are great for those who enjoy practical experience and coursework;
- EPQ offers the chance to earn more UCAS points as well as undertaking a project centred around your child's personal interests;
- Apprenticeships, traineeships and internships provide on the job training and valuable experience. ensure your child prepares in advance.



There are lots of options open to your child, so make sure they understand them all before making a final decision. It's OK if your child doesn't know what they might want to do after school – try to help them make choices that will keep their options open



Attend open days to get first hand experience of the atmosphere at different learning providers if your child is thinking of making a switch from school. Finding the right learning environment is very important for their future success.



Make sure your child's contact details are up-to-date on CVs and applications, especially if using personal email addresses, otherwise they could miss out on potential offers.



Informed Choices





Making the Right Choice

For some students at Parkside Community School, deciding what to study after GCSEs is simple. For others, it can be more difficult to choose the right subjects. If your child needs help making this decision, here are some important things to think about:

What your child is good at and enjoys

We usually do better at things we enjoy. If your child likes certain subjects and does well in them, these could be strong choices for sixth form. It's also important because they will be spending a lot of time studying each subject, so it helps if they're interested in it. GCSE results can give a good idea of how well your child might do at A-level or in other post-16 courses. If they haven't studied a subject before, it's a good idea to speak to their teachers at Parkside for advice.

For example, if your child wants to study a new language that wasn't offered at GCSE, look at how well they did in the language subjects they *did* take.

Also, think about whether your child prefers practical work (like projects or hands-on tasks) or theory-based learning (like essays and written exams). This can help guide the decision.





Making the right choice

What your child wants to do in the future

If your child already knows what job or career they want, or what they want to study at university, their subject choices may be more obvious.

For example:

- To become a pharmacist, your child will need Chemistry, and at least one of Biology, Physics, or Maths.
- To study engineering, they will most likely need Maths.

Sometimes a student really wants a certain career, but struggles with the subjects they need to get there. In this case, vocational courses or apprenticeships can be a better fit.

For example:

- A student who wants to go into business but finds A-level Economics too focused on maths might prefer a BTEC in Business Studies.
- Another option could be an apprenticeship in an area like hospitality or leisure, where they can learn on the job while working.



At Parkside Community School, we encourage all students and families to talk to teachers and career advisers. Making the right choice after GCSEs is important and we're here to help guide you through it.



Thinking About University

If your child is thinking about going to university after sixth form, it's important to know that each university is different. They have different entry requirements, which means they expect students to take certain subjects and get certain grades.

If your child has a university or course in mind, you should check the university's website to find out exactly what they need. Sometimes, even courses at the same university ask for different subjects or grades. If you're unsure, it's okay to phone the university and speak to their admissions team.

Not All Qualifications Are Equal

Some top universities don't treat all sixth form qualifications the same. For example:

- Some universities don't accept T Levels or BTECs for certain courses.
- Some A-levels are seen as more important than others.

To keep as many university options open as possible, it's a good idea for your child to choose a mix of well-respected subjects. These are often called "facilitating subjects", and include:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- English
- Geography
- History
- Maths
- Modern or Classical Languages
- Physics.

These subjects are recommended by the Russell Group – a group of 17 leading UK universities known for academic research and high entry standards.

Where to find out more

- Speak to your child's current teachers;
- Speak to sixth form teachers;
- Speak to other students;
- Read subject guides;
- Review university websites – or speak to admissions;
- Check text books and reference books;
- The Parents' Guide to website





Making the Next Step After Year 11



The years between 16 and 18 are an important time for teenagers. It's when they start moving from being a child to becoming an adult. If your child wants to stay in full-time education (instead of going straight into work, an apprenticeship, traineeship, internship or volunteering), it's important to think carefully about where they will study next.

At Parkside Community School, we support our students in making the best decision for their future – whether that means staying on at school (if available), moving to a different sixth form, or choosing college.

Going to a Different School's Sixth Form

Moving to a sixth form at another school can be a great middle ground between staying at the same school and going to college. If that school offers the right subjects or courses, it can be a smart choice.

Your child will:

- Meet new teachers and students
- Get used to a new environment and daily routine
- Still benefit from smaller class sizes and more support than in college
- Start building confidence and independence



Some sixth forms may be more academic, while others may offer extra activities like sports, music, drama or outdoor education – which could help with job or university applications later on.

Sometimes a fresh start in a new place helps students feel motivated, focused, and ready for their next steps.

At Parkside Community School, we encourage students and families to explore all the options carefully. Whether it's moving to another sixth form, or taking a different route entirely, we're here to help your child find the path that's right for them



Making the Next Step After Year 11

Going to College After Year 11



Colleges can be a great next step for many students after Parkside Community School. They offer a huge range of courses, both academic and vocational (work-related), so there's usually something to suit every interest and career plan.

Unlike schools, colleges only focus on young people aged 16 to 19. This means all the facilities, support, and teachers are aimed at helping students in this age group. Staff are usually specialists in the subjects they teach and have lots of experience working with students in post-16 education.

What's Different About College?

Colleges are often bigger and more like a university than a school. They offer more freedom, but that also means more responsibility. Students are expected to:

- Manage their own time
- Meet deadlines without reminders
- Organise their studies without being chased up

For students who are already quite independent, this can be a great fit. But for those who need more help staying on track, the environment might feel challenging.

Your child should ask themselves:

- Will I be okay with new teachers and new classmates?
- Am I confident starting over in a new place?
- Can I keep up with work without being reminded?

Some students thrive with this independence, while others may find it overwhelming, especially at first.



 Chesterfield College





Making the Next Step After Year 11

Other Learning Options

Independent Learning Providers

It's not just about choosing between school and college. There are independent training organisations that offer:

- Entry-level qualifications
- Courses that help students prepare for work
- Training in practical skills

These are often good choices for students who want to focus on getting a job, building confidence, or learning in a different environment.

Vocational Learning & Apprenticeships

If your child chooses a vocational route, like an apprenticeship, their training location will usually be chosen by the employer. This might be at a college, training centre, or local school. Your child won't usually get to choose the location themselves, but it will be arranged to fit the job role.

Creative Courses (Art, Media & Design)

If your child wants to study creative subjects such as:

- Art
- Design
- Photography
- Media
- Illustration

They'll need to prepare a portfolio – a collection of their work that shows their talent and creativity. This is important for applying to creative colleges or courses.

At Parkside Community School, we encourage students to explore all available options after Year 11. College can be a brilliant step forward – as long as it suits your child's goals, learning style, and confidence level. We're here to help them make the best choice.





Behaviour and Attendance



It's not uncommon for teens to think that poor behaviour and attendance won't have a lasting impact.

Help them be aware!

Not only is it more likely that students that behave poorly won't do as well in their GCSEs, but behaviour counts too. Low attendance also has a direct impact on a teens ability to succeed in their GCSEs. If they are not in school, they are not learning the information they need in their exams.

Some schools, whether the school they're already at or a different one, won't accept students into sixth form if they have regular records of poor behaviour and attendance.



What If GCSE Results Aren't What You Expected?

When GCSE results come out in August 2026, some students at Parkside Community School might find they didn't get the grades they hoped for, especially in the subjects they planned to study at sixth form.

If this happens, it's really important for parents and carers to stay calm, supportive and reassuring. Try not to show anger or frustration, even if you feel like saying, "I told you so!"

A positive attitude helps your child move forward and find new opportunities faster.



Can They Still Study Their Chosen Subjects?

Low grades don't always mean your child has to give up on the subject they wanted to study. In many cases:

- They might be allowed to start the course anyway
- They could be given the chance to resit the GCSE while beginning the sixth form subject
- Or, they may need to consider a different subject that better matches their skills

Sometimes GCSE results give a clear sign about whether a subject will be too difficult going forward. If your child has struggled in that subject, it might be best to look at alternative options. Speak to their teachers at Parkside and ask for advice on the best path forward.

What If GCSE Results Aren't What You Expected?

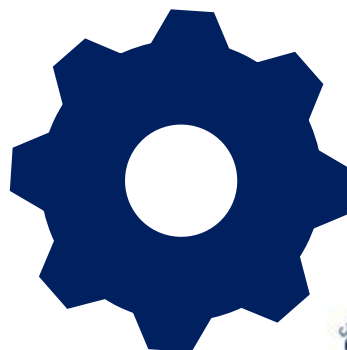
What Are Their Options If They Didn't Do Well?

Here are some possible next steps:

1. Talk to the sixth form or college they applied to.
 - They might still accept your child, even without the required grades.

Some will allow them to start the course if they agree to do extra work or show they're committed.
2. Retake GCSE subjects they didn't pass
 - This can happen alongside starting a new course.
3. Study somewhere else
 - Another school or college might offer a similar course without requiring a resit.
4. Do a traineeship, internship or volunteer placement
 - These give your child real-world experience and help them show they've got the skills to continue studying or working in a specific field.
5. Start an apprenticeship
 - This lets them earn while they learn, gaining work experience and qualifications at the same time

At Parkside Community School, we understand that not every journey is the same. If results day in August doesn't go to plan, we're here to help your child explore all their options and support them in making the right decision for their future.



Advice for Parents: Part Two



Choosing the next steps after GCSE should be given plenty of thought

- Are they academic or practical?
- Do they thrive on independent learning or do they need more help and guidance?
- Do they want to stay in full-time education or are they keen to go out in the workplace?
- Will their choices put them on the right path for their future?
- Do their choices reflect their passions and interests?
- Plans might change on results day but there's no need to panic.

Try not to let your child's decisions be based on what their friends are doing or where their friends will be – get them to think about what's really right for them – even if this might seem like a tougher challenge initially.

After GCSEs is a great time to think about whether a change in environment would be a good thing. Staying at the same school may be an easy option but it's not right for every child.

There's something for everyone – no matter what your child's ability, there will be further education options to help them move on to the next stage of learning or work.



Additional support



Support for Students with SEND After Year 11



If your child has SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disabilities) and they're moving to a new school, college, or education provider after Parkside Community School, it's important to let the new place know as early as possible. This gives them time to plan the right support or get extra help if needed.

Ongoing Support and Monitoring

The new school or college should:

- Regularly check how your child is doing
- Keep written records of reviews and support plans
- Talk directly with your child about their needs

As a parent or carer, you should agree with your child and their new setting about how you'll stay updated, so you can continue to give the right support at home too.

Finding Local Help

Every local authority (like Derbyshire County Council, which covers Chesterfield) must offer free information and advice to support young people with SEND. This is called the Local Offer.

You can find this information:

- On your local council's website
- By calling their SEND support team
- Or by speaking to someone face to face

The Local Offer tells you about services available for education, health, and care in your area.

You can also ask for help from:

- Your child's current school (Parkside)
- Your GP
- Charities and support organisations that work with young people who have additional needs

Support for Students with SEND After Year 11



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans)

If your child has an EHC Plan, it will still apply when they move on to sixth form or college (but it won't usually carry on into university or higher education after age 18).

If your child needs extra help beyond what the school or college can provide, you may be able to ask for a Personal Budget. This can help with costs like therapy, equipment, or transport. You'll need to apply through the local authority, and each request is considered individually.

If your child doesn't have an EHC Plan but you think they need one, you (or your child themselves) can ask for an EHC needs assessment.

All Further Education providers should have a named individual in charge of SEND provision.

At Parkside Community School, we work closely with families to make sure students with SEND are supported during this important transition. Whether your child is staying on in education or moving somewhere new, it's vital that the right support is in place and we're here to help you navigate that process.

Useful Links



DERBYSHIRE LOCAL OFFER

Benefits

If your child has SEND they might get some help during exams, such as more time, permission to use technology (such as being able to type a paper rather than handwrite it), a reader, a scribe, rest breaks and even a separate room. However, they will have to demonstrate a history of need.



Money Matters

After Year 11, your child can continue their education or training for free, as long as they're not going to a private school. This applies to sixth forms, colleges, and most training providers.

Child Benefit and Other Support

If you currently claim:

- Child Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Universal Credit for your child



These payments usually stop when your child turns 16 — *unless* they stay in full-time education or training.

To keep receiving these, you must tell the relevant department (e.g. HMRC or DWP) that your child is still studying. These payments can then continue until your child turns 19.

What Other Help Is Available?

Free School Meals

If your family is on a low income, your child might be able to get free meals while studying.

To qualify:

- They must be studying at a school, college, or training centre funded by the government, like those supported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

You can ask Parkside Community School or the sixth form/college your child is going to for help applying.

Help With Living Costs (Residential Bursaries)

If your child has to move away from home to attend a specialist course, they might be able to get money to help with accommodation. This is called a Residential Bursary.

It's designed to support students who need to live elsewhere to study the right course for their career.



Money Matters

Extra Help for Vulnerable Students

Some students can get up to £1,200 per year through a special bursary

if they are in a vulnerable group, such as:

- Being in care or leaving care
- Getting Income Support or Universal Credit themselves
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

This bursary can help pay for travel, food, books, or equipment.

At Parkside Community School, we encourage all students and parents to ask about financial support early. Whether it's help with meals, travel, or bursaries, there's often more support available than people realise, and we're here to help you find it.

Extra Financial Help for Students (2026 Onwards)

There is extra support available for students who may need financial help while continuing their education after Year 11; even if they don't qualify for the main bursaries.

Discretionary Bursary

If your child doesn't qualify for the vulnerable student bursary, they may still be able to get a discretionary bursary.

This is decided by the school, college or training provider and can be used for things like:

- Travel to and from school or college
- Course equipment or uniform
- Meals
- Books or materials

The amount given depends on your child's situation and what they need to help them stay in education.

You can ask the sixth form or college your child plans to attend.





Money Matters

Grants from Charities

Some charities also offer small grants to help with the extra costs of studying. One example is the Family Action Trust.

These grants can help cover:

- Course-related clothing or uniforms
- Equipment (e.g. art supplies, tools, protective gear)
- Travel costs
- Exam fees
- Laptops or computers for learning

These grants are often based on family income, so it's worth looking into if your child needs help.

Care to Learn – For Young Parents

If your child is under 20 years old and has a child of their own, they may be able to get help with childcare costs while they study.

This is called the “Care to Learn” scheme. It provides up to:

- £160 per week for childcare (outside London)
- £175 per week (in London)

This support is given through the Student Bursary Support Service, and it helps young parents continue their education without worrying about childcare costs

Useful Links

16 to 19 Bursary Fund

At Parkside Community School, we encourage students and families to ask about all available financial support early — especially if cost could become a barrier to learning. There's often help out there, and we're here to point you in the right direction

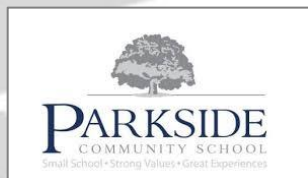
**National
Careers
Service**

Helping you take
the next step

Local Information and Links



Local Information and Links



Parkside Community School



BROOKFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

Brookfield Community School



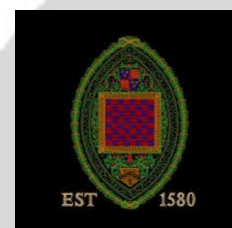
St Mary's Catholic High School



Highfields School



Outwood Newbold Academy



Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School



Chesterfield College



Tupton Hall School



Sheffield College

UCAS

UCAS



DERBYSHIRE LOCAL OFFER

Derbyshire Local Offer



EMBARK FEDERATION

Further Information and Guidance



Please see below for resources and links that can offer you further information on careers guidance and future pathways:



TalkingFutures.org.uk

Talking Futures will help you have informed and constructive career conversations with your child about their academic and professional future.



Successatschool.org

Career advice for schools and students aged 13-19. Search jobs, advice & find out about employers, work experience, courses, career choices and apprenticeships



Apprenticeshipguide.co.uk

With over 600 apprenticeships on offer, use this site as a tool to discover your perfect role by searching through the 18 different industry sectors



Nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

We provide careers information, advice and guidance. We can help you make decisions at all stages in your career.



Lmiforall.org.uk

The LMI for All portal provides high quality, reliable labour market information (LMI) to inform careers decisions.



Feedback and Involvement



We actively seek feedback from parents and carers to help shape our CEIAG provision. We welcome:

- Parent participation in employer panels and events
- Offers of work experience placements.
- Feedback through surveys and informal discussion.
- Suggestions for improving communication and support.



Contact Us

If you would like more information, or want to get involved in our Careers Programme, please contact:

Careers Lead: Mr Hoben, Senior Leader for Ebacc and Personal Development

Email: info@parkside.derbyshire.sch.uk

Telephone: 01246 273458



Closing Statement

Final Thoughts

Choosing what to do after Year 11 is a big step; but you're not alone.

There are lots of different paths your child can take, including sixth form, college, apprenticeships, or training. Some students know exactly what they want to do, while others need more time to decide; and that's completely okay.

Whatever your child's strengths, interests, or needs, there are opportunities and support available across Derbyshire to help them move forward with confidence.

At Parkside Community School, we are proud to help our students and their families explore their next steps. Whether your child is staying on in education, moving somewhere new, or taking a different route, we're here to offer guidance, advice, and encouragement.

Remember: This journey is about finding the path that's right for your child; one that helps them grow, succeed and feel positive about the future.



