

WHICH WAY NOW?

2010-2011

**PARENTS
& CARERS
SUPPLEMENT
INCLUDED**

**How to choose
your key stage 4
options**

Help

Support

Advice

Your choices

Your future

Name

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Introduction

Congratulations! You've reached the next stage of your education journey and it's time to choose your key stage 4 options.

You probably feel as though you have only just got used to life at secondary school and now someone is asking you to choose your key stage 4 options. How will you choose what subjects to study? How will you decide which courses are right for you?

Don't panic. **Which way now?** is full of information, ideas and action points to help you choose well. To get the most from it, use it as a workbook. Start at the beginning and work through it from cover to cover.

Don't forget ...

There's help at hand

Careers lessons. The careers resource centre. Options events. Course tasters. Progress reviews. Online prospectuses. Subject teachers. Careers advisers. They are all there to help you with your decision making. Make the most of them so that you choose options that work for you.

The law has changed

Your education and training will continue until you are 17, helping you to gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications you need to get a job you enjoy in the future. Your key stage 4 option choices are important but you don't have to have a career in mind at this stage. Concentrate on choosing options that suit your abilities and interests and that give you plenty of choice post 16.

Involve your parents

Your parents or carers want the best for you but things have changed a lot since they went to school. Help them to understand what you are doing and how they can help you. Show them the parents and carers pages at the end of this booklet.

Who can help you?



Everyone needs a bit of help with decision-making. Make sure you get all the help and support you need – your option choices are too important to leave to chance!

Who knows you really well?

Talk to your parents or carers and subject teachers. Speak to the people who are helping you with other parts of your life – like friends, mentors, coaches, learning support staff and careers advisers. They want the best for you. They will tell you if they think that an option will suit you and explain why. They will also help you to explore and think about the alternatives.

Who knows what you need to know?

Don't let teaching methods, workload and assessment come as a surprise. Find out what an option is really like, where it leads and how it could help you in the future. Check that it suits your abilities and interests. Read all the information you get. Browse your local online 14-19 prospectus if available. Go to options events. Sign up for taster activities and visits. Talk to the people running the courses and the students doing them.

Who can give you expert help if you're confused?

Speak to the people in charge of careers work in your school – your **careers adviser** or **careers co-ordinator**. They know a lot about what each option involves. They can tell you how it could help you in the future and where to get more information and help.

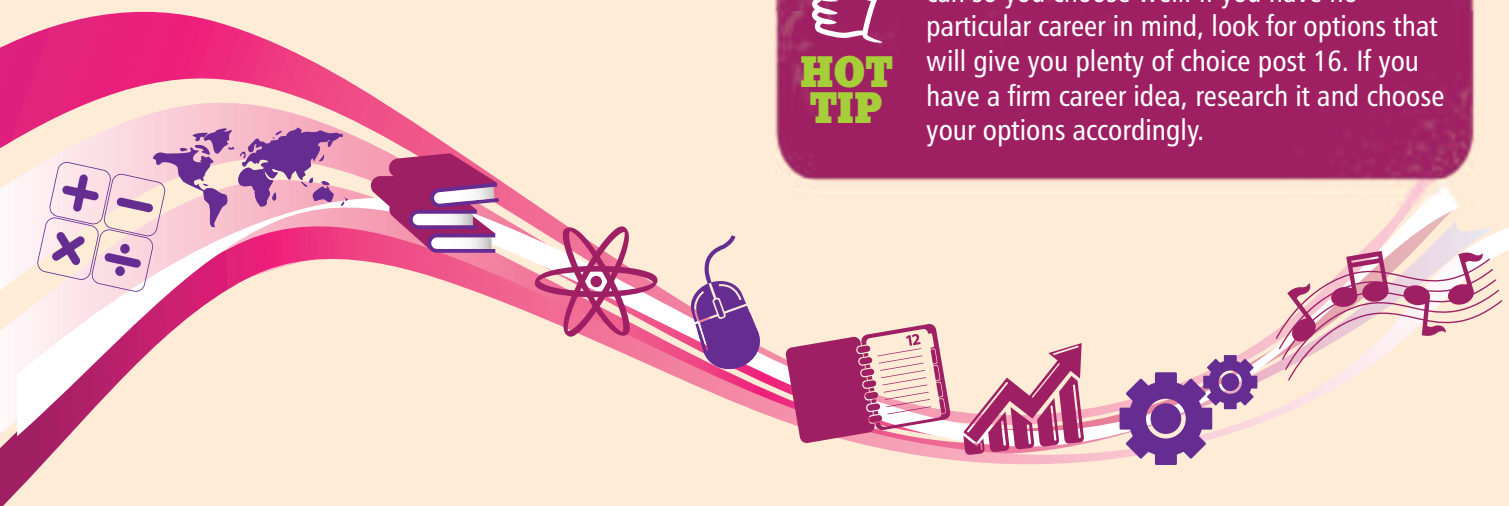
Where should you look for information and advice on the internet?

Use the websites signposted in **Which way now?** Explore your local online 14-19 prospectus if available and your school's website. Bookmark and browse the 'Young people' pages on **www.direct.gov.uk**. They have information and advice about education and training opportunities and careers written especially for you, with links to other useful websites.



HOT TIP

Get as much information and support as you can so you choose well. If you have no particular career in mind, look for options that will give you plenty of choice post 16. If you have a firm career idea, research it and choose your options accordingly.



✓ ACTION POINT 1

Plan how to get help and support

What is the name of your careers co-ordinator?

What is the name of your careers adviser?

When is your careers adviser in school?

What kind of help do you need?

Who can you ask for this help?

Where can you go to get this help?



IZZY

CASE STUDY 1

Research your options carefully

Izzy is in Year 12 and plans to study medicine at university. However, at key stage 4 she was unsure about her career path.

'I had no idea what career I wanted when I was 14 so I kept my options open. I chose subjects I enjoyed and

was good at. My favourite subject was science and that was a core subject. My options included GCSEs in German, music and geography.'

All of the option subjects were assessed partly by coursework and partly by exams. She has since found that she performs better in exams and this informed her post-16 choices.

'I'm now studying physics, chemistry, biology and maths at A Level. After the sixth form I want to go to university to study medicine and become a doctor. Since medicine is very competitive I'm also considering related courses such as pharmacology or anatomy and human biology.'

'Make sure you research your options carefully. Don't choose a course just because your friends are doing it. Check out what topics the course includes to make sure you are interested in them. Finally, talk to older students who have studied the courses you are looking at, because they will be able to give loads of advice.'



HOT TIP

Write some questions or make a list of things you want to find out in your careers education lessons and at options and careers events so that you get the information you need.



Your local choices

No two schools are the same, so every school offers something different at key stage 4.

What subjects are compulsory?

You can do very little in life without a good grasp of English, mathematics and science so everybody must study these subjects.

You will also do courses and activities that will help you understand the world around you and develop the knowledge and skills you need for adult life – subjects like ICT, PE and PSHE for example.

Many schools make other subjects like modern foreign languages compulsory too, so read your options information very carefully.

What can I choose to study?

Read your school's options information carefully and, if you have one, explore your local online 14-19 prospectus using Action point 2 to help you.

Whatever key stage 4 options you choose, you will be able to change direction at the end of Year 11. Remember though that all choices have consequences. What you choose to study at key stage 4 could make a difference to what you can do later on. So don't close off options. Choose courses that give you the broadest range of options later on.

Use the information in **Which way now?**, your careers education lessons and the information, advice and guidance you get from your careers adviser and others to help you think about the possible consequences of your choices. Pay particular attention to:

- how well an option fits your abilities and interests
- where an option leads – what you can do next
- if an option will help you to meet the entry requirements for higher-level courses and jobs that interest you.

✓ ACTION POINT 2

Explore your local prospectus

Do you have access to a local online 14-19 prospectus?

What is your prospectus called?

What is the website address?

What information is in the prospectus? (tick all that you find)

- ☐ details of 14-19 courses and where you can do them
- ☐ course entry requirements
- ☐ what students think of their courses
- ☐ Apprenticeships
- ☐ common application process (CAP), if available
- ☐ open days and events
- ☐ labour market information
- ☐ useful links
- ☐ other

What topics does the information offer advice on? (tick all that you find)

- ☐ different types of qualifications
- ☐ making choices
- ☐ money matters
- ☐ transport
- ☐ volunteering
- ☐ work experience
- ☐ getting a job
- ☐ how your parents can help you
- ☐ where you can get extra support if you need it – for example, young parents, young people in or leaving care, young offenders, young disabled people or those with special educational needs
- ☐ other

Do your research

When you know exactly what your options are, you can research those that interest you. Use our checklist to make sure that you don't forget anything.



✓ ACTION POINT 3

Research checklist

To do Done

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read all the options information school gives me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Check what subjects are compulsory – the ones I have to do |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talk to the teachers to see if they think that it is a good idea for me to do their course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talk to people who are taking the courses that interest me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talk to my parents and find out what options they think I should do and why |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go with my parents to information and other events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sign up for a taster activity or visit to find out what an option will really be like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Look up the careers that interest me in the careers resource centre and find out what subjects, qualifications and grades I will need for these careers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use online prospectuses to get more information about local opportunities and see what subjects, qualifications and grades I need for the post-16 courses that interest me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Find out what Apprenticeships could offer me at age 16 or older, and what I would need to get one – see www.apprenticeships.org.uk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Look up higher education courses that interest me on http://unistats.direct.gov.uk or www.ucas.com and see what subjects, qualifications and grades I will need to do these courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Speak to my careers co-ordinator or careers adviser about my option choices and career ideas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ask my careers co-ordinator or careers adviser who I should speak to if I think that I will need extra help with my key stage 4 courses |



HANIFA

CASE STUDY 2

Unsure about your future

Hanifa is in Year 9 and recently spent some time thinking about her option choices. She wanted to find out as much information as possible and went to the options fair at school, discussed the subjects with her teachers, and talked to her parents. She was

keen to choose subjects that would be useful for the future and would suit her interests and abilities.

Since Hanifa had no career ideas at this stage, she chose to use a career guidance computer program to help her

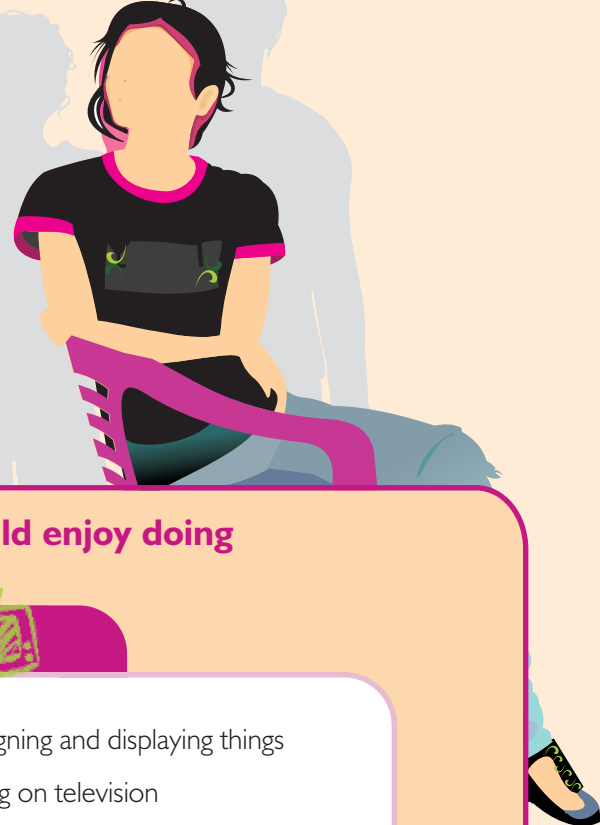
with her choices. From this, she found she was quite interested in accountancy and beauty therapy, but decided that she wanted to keep her career options open.

As a result, in addition to her compulsory subjects, Hanifa opted to do the Foundation Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies, and GCSEs in child development, additional science and business studies. She plans to go on to college afterwards, and will probably do A Levels.

'Make sure you find out about the subjects before you choose them. Also, ask your teachers whether they think you would be suited to the subject. Mostly, make sure you choose what you want to do, and don't just go for subjects because your friends are doing them.'

Put yourself first

It is important to choose options that interest and motivate you. What interests you? What makes you work hard? Do our quiz to find out.



✓ ACTION POINT 4

Tick anything you enjoy doing or think that you would enjoy doing

A



- ☐ building things
- ☐ being active and working outdoors
- ☐ making and fixing things
- ☐ using tools and machines
- ☐ solving problems

B



- ☐ designing and displaying things
- ☐ being on television
- ☐ writing a book
- ☐ playing in a band
- ☐ doing a makeover

C



- ☐ helping people
- ☐ sorting out arguments
- ☐ showing people what to do
- ☐ looking after people
- ☐ doing voluntary work

D



- ☐ finding out how things work
- ☐ doing experiments
- ☐ researching and testing ideas
- ☐ designing a new computer game
- ☐ doing calculations

E



- ☐ organising parties and other social events
- ☐ buying and selling things
- ☐ running a business
- ☐ entering competitions
- ☐ campaigning for change

F



- ☐ making plans
- ☐ using a computer and calculator
- ☐ arranging things over the phone
- ☐ putting CDs/DVDs into the right order
- ☐ organising your money

Check out your scores

How many ticks did you get in each section? Write your scores in the boxes below. Most people have more than one interest so check out any score of three or over.

A

Mostly As

You seem to like practical work. Look for options where you can use your practical skills, do something active and work on different types of projects.



Subject ideas:

Construction and the built environment, design and technology, engineering, food technology, hair and beauty, manufacturing, physical education, public services, sport and active leisure.

B

Mostly Bs

You sound creative. Look for options where you can express yourself and work on new ideas.



Subject ideas:

Art, creative and media, dance, drama, hair and beauty, hospitality, music, photography, textiles.

C

Mostly Cs

You seem to be a sociable person. Look for options where you can work with other people and find out more about how society works.



Subject ideas:

Citizenship studies, creative and media, hospitality, religious studies, retail business, society health and development, travel and tourism.

D

Mostly Ds

It seems that you like investigating things. Look for options where you can use your number and thinking skills to find out more about why things are the way they are.



Subject ideas:

Biology, environmental and land-based studies, chemistry, geography, history, mathematics, physics, statistics.

E

Mostly Es

You sound like an enterprising person. Look for options where you can use your energy, communication, number and thinking skills to test your ideas about how to improve the world.



Subject ideas:

Business studies, citizenship studies, economics, information technology (IT), modern foreign languages, psychology, retail business.

F

Mostly Fs

Being well organised seems important to you. Look for options where you can use your planning, communication and computer skills to find out more about the systems and structures that keep the world working properly.



Subject ideas:

Business, administration and finance, business studies, economics, history, hospitality, information and communication technology (ICT), law.



Take the first steps

Choosing well means thinking hard about:

- what you are like
- how different subjects might help you in the future
- the questions you should ask about the subjects you have to do (compulsory courses) and the options that interest you.

✓ ACTION POINT 5

Use this activity to help you organise your ideas

ME....I AM

<input type="checkbox"/>	practical
<input type="checkbox"/>	creative
<input type="checkbox"/>	sociable
<input type="checkbox"/>	investigative
<input type="checkbox"/>	enterprising
<input type="checkbox"/>	organised

I LEARN BEST BY

<input type="checkbox"/>	seeing and reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	listening and talking
<input type="checkbox"/>	touching and doing
<input type="checkbox"/>	doing projects
<input type="checkbox"/>	doing tests

MY OPTIONS

Subjects I have to do:

Subjects I don't like and why:

Subjects I like and why:

New subjects I'd like to try and why:

CASE STUDY 3

Thinking ahead

Jenny is in Year 9 and has a long-term interest in forensic science. She spent time researching what the work involves and the entry requirements. She initially used the internet and from her research found she was particularly attracted to forensic anthropology. From this, she thought about the best options to take at key stage 4.

She spoke to her careers adviser at school to find out the entry requirements and training for forensic anthropology and discussed her ideas with two of her teachers who previously had worked in relevant areas in industry. She looked at further and higher education

requirements and careers information and based her choices on the information she found.

'I've always enjoyed science, and knew that I would have to do science-based subjects for forensic anthropology. I therefore decided to choose additional science as well as the core science at GCSE. I found out that most forensic anthropologists are self-employed and decided to choose business studies to help me with this. For my other options I chose subjects that I like and am good at.'

Jenny is happy with her choices and is looking forward to studying science further. In the future she would like to work in the USA where there would be greater opportunities in her chosen career.

✓ ACTION POINT 5 continued...

MY FUTURE

Career ideas and interests:

Subjects I need to do this:

Subjects that will give me plenty of post-16 choices:

MY QUESTIONS

Things I want to find out before I make my choices:



When you are choosing your options, remember that you don't have to have a career in mind at this stage – you just need to choose a broad range of subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.



Qualifications

Do you understand qualification levels? Do you know how qualifications can help you in the future? Find out here.

Qualification levels

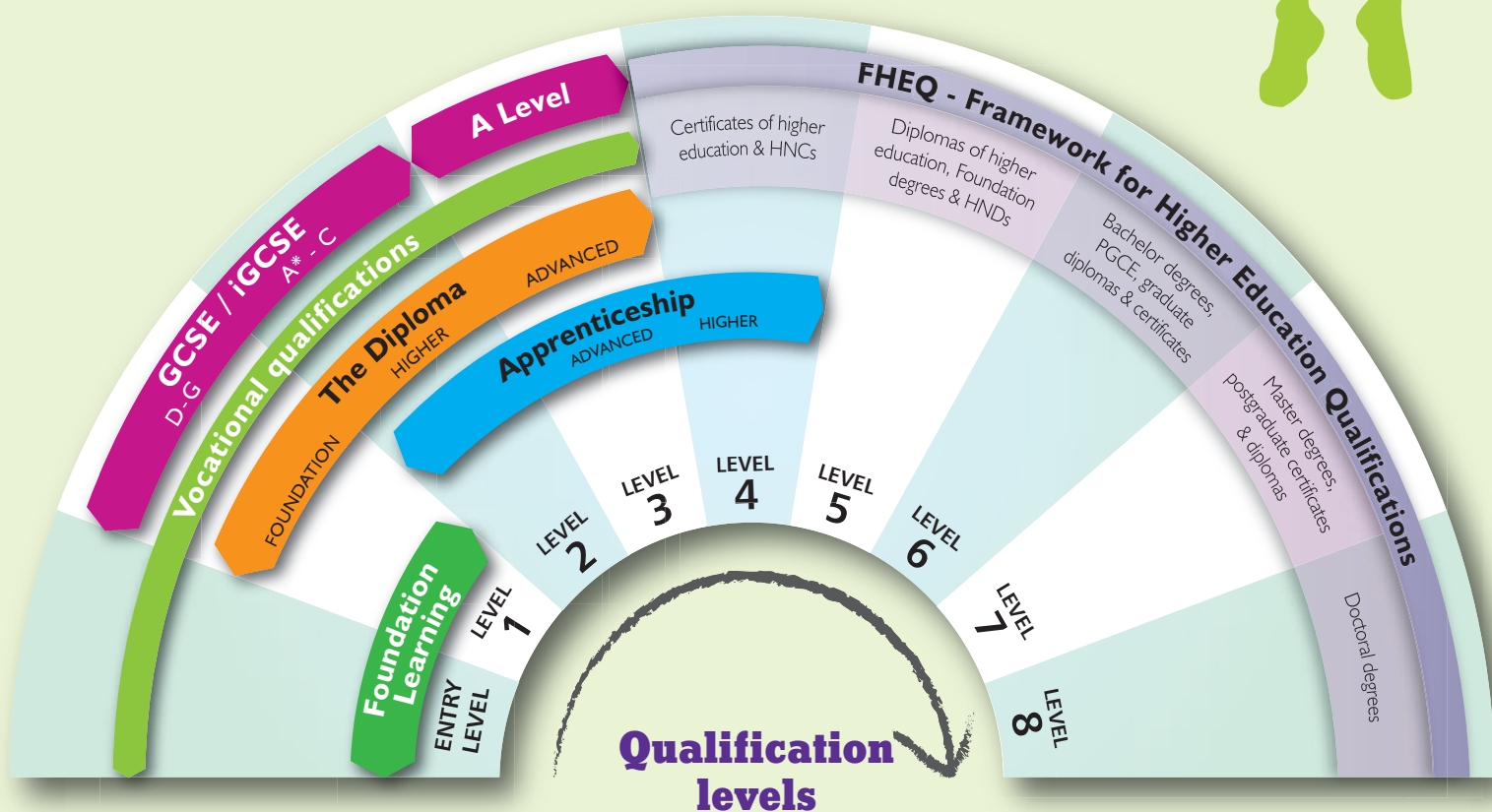
Whatever you want to do in life, there is a qualification to help you do it. The important thing is to choose the right ones at the right time. To do this you need to understand qualification levels.

There are nine qualification levels. Entry level is at the bottom and level 8 is at the top. Every level includes different types of qualifications. Some are subject-based. Some are work-related. Some are job-related.

The level tells you how hard a qualification is – the higher you go, the harder the qualification.

- Most employers ask first-time job applicants for level 2 qualifications (for example GCSEs at grades A* to C) – but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.
- You need level 3 qualifications to get on to most university courses. You generally need a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics too.

To find out more about qualification levels see the diagram below.



How qualifications can help you in the future

There are six good reasons why you should take qualifications seriously.

- 1 To give you a choice of jobs** – the number of jobs you can get without any qualifications is shrinking quickly. If you want a choice of jobs, you need good qualifications.
- 2 To make sure you don't spend your life in a dead end job** – without qualifications, it is hard to move on from a low paid, low skilled job.
- 3 To improve your earning power** – there is a big pay gap between people with qualifications and those without them. If you want a well-paid job, you need good qualifications.
- 4 To show other people what you can do** – qualifications show employers, universities and colleges that you have the attitudes, skills and knowledge they value. They tell them what you already know and can do. They also give them an idea of how well you might do in the future.
- 5 To prove to other people that you can learn** – qualifications show people that you want to learn and that you can learn. Employers, universities and colleges look for people like this.
- 6 To show yourself what you can do** – gaining qualifications boosts your self-confidence and self-awareness.



✓ ACTION POINT 6

Explore your interests

Choose one career or job that interests you. Look it up in your school's careers information resources and list the subjects and qualifications you will need to do it.

Career/job:

Subjects and qualifications needed:

Now use the chart opposite to match the qualifications you need to their level.

Levels 4-8

Level 3

Level 2

Level 1

Entry level

GCSEs

GCSEs are a key element of a broad education up to the age of 16. Find out more about them here.



FACT FILE

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Some schools may offer iGCSEs in some subjects.

Qualifications

- GCSE – one full GCSE
- GCSE Short Course – half a full GCSE
- GCSE Double Award – equivalent to two full GCSEs

Subjects

Schools decide what subjects to offer. They can choose from over 50 different subjects. These range from English, mathematics and science to archaeology, citizenship studies and work-related subjects like leisure and tourism.

Learning

Mostly classroom learning. Mix of theory and subject-based investigations. The amount of practical work depends on the subject.

Assessment

- Mix of written examinations and internal assessment.
- Achievement is graded A* to G.
- Some subjects have two tiers of assessment: Foundation and Higher. Your school will decide which tier you should do. Foundation tier leads to grades C to G. Higher tier leads to grades A* to D.

What next

GCSEs will help you whatever you plan to do after key stage 4. You can use them to meet the entry requirements for level 3 courses, an Apprenticeship and other form of job with training. Having 5 GCSEs at grades C and above (including English and mathematics) gives you a much bigger choice of post-16 options. Plans have also recently been announced to recognise with an 'English Baccalaureate' certificate the achievement of a core of GCSEs in English, mathematics, a humanity (history or geography), the sciences and a language.

A taste of GCSEs ...

English Language and Literature

Developing and using speaking, listening, reading, writing and critical analysis skills. Applying knowledge and skills to express yourself creatively and imaginatively and communicate confidently and effectively in different situations. Essential for further learning, employment and wider adult life.



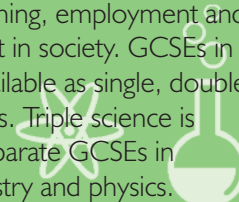
Mathematics

Developing and using knowledge and skills for working with numbers, measures, shape and space, data, statistics, algebra and probability. Improving problem-solving skills. Acquiring the tools to help you understand science, engineering, technology and economics. Vital for employment, business and finance, and personal and public decision-making.



Science

Developing and using knowledge and skills in biology, chemistry and physics. Using practical, enquiry and other skills to consider data, evidence, theories and explanations. Developing a critical approach to scientific evidence and methods. Investigating how science works and its essential role in society. Essential for further learning, employment and taking a full part in society. GCSEs in science are available as single, double or triple awards. Triple science is awarded as separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics.



A taste of GCSEs ...

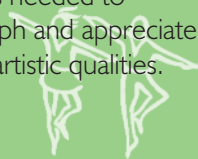
Classical civilisation

Learning about Greek and Roman civilisation, their literature and their historical context.



Dance

Learning about and developing the knowledge and skills needed to perform, choreograph and appreciate dance, including its artistic qualities.



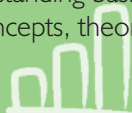
Design and technology

Creative and practical work with different tools and materials. Using planning, designing, making and evaluation skills.



Economics

Learning about personal, national and global economic issues in a modern industrial society. Understanding basic economic principles, concepts, theory and institutions.



French

Developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Using these skills in different situations such as being on holiday in or travelling on business to France, or welcoming French visitors or business people to England.



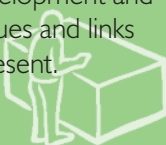
Geography

Learning about the relationship between people and the climate, environment, water, landforms, places, work and development.



History

Learning about key individuals, societies, events, development and understanding the issues and links between past and present.



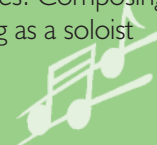
Information and communication technology (ICT)

Learning how ICT systems work, how to store information and how to help people solve problems. Exploring new developments in technology and different ways to use ICT.



Music

Listening to and learning about a variety of musical styles. Composing music and performing as a soloist and in a group.



✓ ACTION POINT 7

Explore GCSEs

Choose a GCSE subject that interests you from the options your school offers.

Look this GCSE up in your school options information and in your online prospectuses.

Now look at a careers database. Type the subject into the job search box and see what careers this GCSE could help you with.

Vocational qualifications

**Do your options include vocational qualifications?
Find out more here.**

These are work-related qualifications. Your school may offer them alongside your GCSEs, as part of Foundation Learning or as part of the Diploma.

FACT FILE

Qualifications

Awarding bodies offer many different vocational qualifications that employers and professional bodies helped to design. Examples include BTECs, City & Guilds qualifications and OCR Nationals. They cover a broad area of work and develop the knowledge and skills that employers look for. Schools decide which qualifications to offer and at what level. At key stage 4, most students study for Entry level, level 1 or level 2 qualifications (see [page 10](#)).

Subjects

Schools decide which subjects to offer. They can choose from a wide variety ranging from agriculture and beauty therapy to music and performing arts.

Courses

All courses develop knowledge and understanding of an industry sector. They also develop practical skills relevant in the workplace such as communication, team working and problem solving.

Learning

Mix of theory and practical activities. Mostly classroom based. May include some work experience.

Assessment

Mix of projects, written assignments and practical tasks. Achievement is graded pass, merit or distinction.

What next

Vocational qualifications prepare you for further learning and for entry to work. You can go on to study for higher-level qualifications or apply for an Apprenticeship or other form of job with training.



HOT TIP

Your options may include qualifications like BTEC First Certificates and BTEC Diplomas, OCR Nationals and City & Guilds awards. These are work-related vocational qualifications. Some schools offer them alongside GCSEs and as part of Foundation Learning and Diplomas. They may also be offered as part of Apprenticeships post 16.



The Diploma

Do your options include the Diploma?
Find out more here.

FACT FILE

Qualification

At key stage 4, you can do a:

- Foundation Diploma – this is a level 1 qualification
- Higher Diploma – this is a level 2 qualification.

Subjects

Schools and colleges decide what subjects to offer. They can choose from 14 subjects ranging from Engineering to Travel and Tourism.

Course

Diplomas have three parts:

- Exploring your Diploma subject
- Developing the skills you need for everyday life, in learning and at work
- Studying additional, optional subjects that help you understand more about your Diploma subject.

Learning

Mix of classroom learning, practical hands-on experience and project work. Includes at least 10 days working with an employer. May also involve studying at another school or a college.

Assessment

- Mix of written examinations and internal assessment, including practical tasks.
- You must pass all parts of your Diploma to gain the qualification.
- You will get a transcript showing your overall grade and your achievements in each part of your Diploma. You will also get separate certificates for each qualification you gain.

What next

Diplomas do not qualify you to do a specific job. They can help you move on to level 3 qualifications, an Apprenticeship or other form of job with training.

CASE STUDY 4

A Diploma student

In Year 9, Ollie opted to do a Higher Diploma in Information Technology (IT) as he was interested and motivated to learn by both practical and classroom based tasks. He has always enjoyed working on, and building computers, aiming to pursue a career in programming one day.

'I am doing the IT Diploma which is challenging, though it is fun as you experience both classroom work and practical IT outside of the classroom. One day a

fortnight we have our lessons at the local college where we learn using equipment that the school doesn't have. I like programming, networking and taking computers apart and rebuilding them, which you never do in a normal classroom.'

Ollie will gain a nationally recognised qualification and plans to continue with his studies in computing at college after Year 11. He will also gain his Functional Skills qualifications in maths, English and ICT.

'I would definitely recommend the Diploma – it is a really fun way to learn and I have enjoyed doing the practical things at college that I wouldn't be able to do in school. I am looking forward to the work placement I will do next year as part of the course.'



HOT TIP

Find out more about these at
www.direct.gov.uk

Foundation Learning

Do you need a bit more time to build your confidence and gain qualifications to move onwards and upwards?

FACT FILE

Foundation Learning

Foundation Learning is specially designed to meet your needs. Your school will help you to think about what you want to do post 16. Then it will organise lessons and give you support to help you get where you want to be. Foundation Learning can last a term, a year or even two years. It gives you time to grow in confidence and lets you build your skills and knowledge at a pace that suits you.

What you learn

Your school will help you choose courses that meet your needs. You will learn:

- functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the skills you need to organise yourself, to work with other people and to get better at what you do
- work related or subject learning that will help you in the future.

You could study some of the subjects you do now. You could also take some new subjects. The new subjects could show you what the world of work is like and help you with your personal and social development.

Examples

Caring for children
Citizenship studies
Creative craft
Employability and work skills
Personal development and effectiveness
Retail skills
Vehicle maintenance

Qualifications

Your school will advise you about qualifications that might suit you. Most people take GCSEs alongside other qualifications. These could be Functional Skills qualifications at Entry level or level 1, or an ASDAN, BTEC or OCR qualification at Entry level or level 1.

What next

You could study for more GCSEs or other level 2 qualifications. You could apply for an Apprenticeship or other form of job with training. You could also take courses that help you prepare for supported employment and/or independent living.

Your school/provider might have a different name for this learning route but they will offer something like it. To find out more speak to your teachers, learning support staff, parents/carers and your careers adviser.



Assessment

Assessment is part of all courses that lead to a qualification. Knowing what to expect and how best to approach it can help you to choose your options and to get higher grades.

You will come across three main types of assessment at key stage 4:

- **internal assessment** – often called controlled assessment, this includes research and other projects done in school under exam conditions
- **portfolios of evidence** – collecting and presenting evidence that demonstrates your knowledge and skills
- **examinations** – tests that take place at a set time and assess how well you understand a subject.

Tips for managing internal assessments

- Choose the task or topic that interests you most so that you stay motivated.
- Read all instructions carefully and ask for help if you don't understand.
- Organise yourself – plan your work and pay careful attention to deadlines.
- Don't copy from the internet, books or other people – the examiners want to know what **you** know. (It's also illegal to copy stuff and you could be barred from getting a grade for the course.)

- Make an effort with your presentation and double check your spelling and grammar.
- Check that there are no important details missing – like your name!
- Act on any feedback you get – use the expert advice to help you improve your performance and reach your target grades.

Tips for managing exams

- Check the dates and times of your exams very carefully.
- Make a revision plan and stick to it – include revision classes, revision clubs and relaxation time in your plan.
- Act on any feedback you get so that you improve your performance and get closer to your target grades.
- Revise using memory aids that fit your learning style – graphics, flowcharts, highlighted text, summary notes, cartoons, sound recordings, key point cards. You could revise with your friends too.
- Sleep and eat well before an exam and prepare any equipment you need beforehand – don't leave it until the last minute.
- Learn some relaxation techniques to help you stay calm during an exam.
- Once an exam is over, try to put it out of your mind and concentrate on the next one – it's too late to change anything although you can always learn from your mistakes. Work out what you could have done better and aim to change things next time.

ACTION POINT 8

Think about assessment What type of assessment suits you best?

☐ internal assessment ☐ building a portfolio of evidence ☐ examinations

Look at the key stage 4 options that interest you and then fill in this table.

Option	Type of assessment	Suits me	Does not suit me

List four things you can do to organise yourself so that you cope well with internal assessments and portfolios of evidence:

1.
2.
3.
4.

List three memory aids you find helpful:

1.
2.
3.

List two relaxation techniques that could help you stay calm in an exam:

1.
2.

Finding good information sources

**Good information is the key to choosing well.
Do you know where to get good information?
Find out here.**

Where to look

A great place to start looking for information is in your school's careers resource centre. It should have:


- people who can tell you where to find the information you want
- printed and multi-media information about careers and other things that affect your life
- the contact details of people and organisations who can give you expert help
- computer programs to help you work out your career interests and find courses and careers that might suit you
- internet access so you can use online prospectuses and databases, and the 'Young people' pages on www.direct.gov.uk

Use the icons

The careers resource centre uses colour coded icons to make it easy for you to find the information you want.

-  **Choices** (option choices, post-16 choices)
-  **Education** (further and higher education, qualifications, study skills, studying abroad)
-  **Free Time** (sport, leisure, voluntary and personal development activities)
-  **Health** (healthy eating, sexual health, mental health, personal safety, drugs and alcohol)
-  **Housing** (housing advice, leaving home)
-  **Law, Your Rights and Citizenship** (you as a citizen and you as a customer)
-  **Money** (financial support for learning, managing money, tax, national insurance and wages)
-  **Relationships** (bereavement, bullying and abuse, family, personal relationships, parenting, leaving care)
-  **Travel and Transport** (driving, travelling and timetables)
-  **Where to Get Help** (local and national helplines and organisations offering general and specialist help)
-  **Work and Training** (careers, training, work experience, part-time work, job hunting, your rights)



You can find information about jobs and occupations in the  **Work and Training** section of the careers resource centre. The information is organised into 23 job families:

-  **Administration, Business and Office Work**
-  **Building and Construction**
-  **Catering and Hospitality**
-  **Computers and IT**
-  **Design, Arts and Crafts**
-  **Education and Training**
-  **Engineering**
-  **Environment, Animals and Plants**
-  **Financial Services**
-  **Healthcare**
-  **Languages, Information and Culture**
-  **Legal and Political Services**
-  **Leisure, Sport and Tourism**
-  **Manufacturing and Production**
-  **Marketing and Advertising**
-  **Media, Print and Publishing**
-  **Performing Arts**
-  **Personal and Other Services, including Hair and Beauty**
-  **Retail Sales and Customer Services**
-  **Science, Mathematics and Statistics**
-  **Security and Armed Forces**
-  **Social Work and Counselling Services**
-  **Transport and Logistics**

Check the information you find before you use it

Getting information is step one. Step two is to check it before you use it. This is especially important if you use a search engine or a social networking service to find information. Ask yourself these questions to make sure that the information you have is trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date.

- **Source:** Who paid to publish it and why? Do you trust this source?
- **Purpose:** Does it give you the facts? Is it trying to persuade you to agree with a particular point of view? Do you think it gives you an unbiased picture?
- **Writer:** Who wrote it? Do you believe the author knows enough to give you accurate information?
- **Date:** When was it written, published or updated? Is it still up to date?
- **Relevance:** Does it answer your questions?

✓ ACTION POINT 9

Explore information sources

Where is the careers resource centre in your school?

When is it open?

Who is there to help you?

Go online and browse the **www.direct.gov.uk** website. Is the information on the site trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date? Why do you think this?

What information in the careers resource centre and on **www.direct.gov.uk** could you use to help you with your options choices?



DAMON

CASE STUDY 5

Benefiting from support

Damon has speech and communication difficulties and receives in-class support from a teaching assistant to help with his language and literacy skills.

Despite his difficulties, Damon studies a full curriculum and is hard-working and determined.

In making his option choices, Damon thought about his career ideas, his abilities, and the subjects he likes and dislikes. Since he finds written work particularly difficult, he wanted to choose lessons that would enable him to use his practical skills.

He was offered the opportunity to study an Increased Flexibility course at his local college once a week.

The courses available tend to be more practical than GCSEs and he decided to choose the ABC level 1 in Hospitality and Catering. In school, he opted for GCSEs in PE, drama and art, all of which involve a significant amount of practical work.

Damon is currently interested in careers in animal care and catering and wants to keep his options open. He plans to do work experience in animal care in Year 10 in order to test out his ideas. He hopes to progress to college when he leaves Year 11 and will continue to be supported with his language and literacy difficulties.

Taking control of your decisions



Are you ready to make your own decisions? Or are you tempted to follow the crowd? If you let other people choose for you, you could end up studying subjects or courses that suit them better than they suit you. Use these tips to make sure that this does not happen to you.

Choosing an option

- Research all your options before making a decision.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that some subjects are only for boys and some only for girls – this is not true.
- If you have a firm career idea, choose the subjects you need to meet the entry requirements for future opportunities that interest you, including higher education.
- If you don't have a firm career idea, choose subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.
- Make the most of your careers education lessons and ask for help from your family, friends, subject teachers, careers co-ordinator, careers adviser and others – you need good information, advice and guidance to help you choose well.



HOT TIP Your choices don't have to be job-related. It's fine to choose some simply because you enjoy or are good at them. But you should make sure that you choose a broad range of subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.



Do choose a course because:

- It fits your interests and abilities
- You are good at it and think you will enjoy it
- It goes well with your other choices
- It links to a career idea
- You think you might want to continue studying it post 16
- It will help you meet the entry requirements for the post-16 options that interest you
- It will help to give you plenty of choice post 16.



Do not choose a course because:

- Your friends have chosen it
- You think it will be easy
- You think it is a good course for a boy/girl to do
- Someone else thinks that it is a good idea for you to do it
- You like the teacher you have now
- You didn't have time to research your options properly or to get any information, advice and guidance from your careers adviser.

CASE STUDY 6

Follow your dreams

Emily is in Year 12 and working towards her A Levels. She has always had an interest in the Armed Forces and joined the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) at school in Year 7.

'The CCF has given me many opportunities and helped develop my self-esteem, leadership and team working skills. I have made new friends and gone on many camps and courses.'

Emily was not sure which part of the Forces she wanted to enter. In Year 10, she was given the opportunity to do some work experience with the Royal Air Force (RAF).

She really enjoyed this and it greatly influenced her decision.

'The work experience was a great chance for me to find out what the RAF would be like. I am now looking at a career in the RAF. My next step is to attend an interview at the Armed Forces Careers Office to discuss what jobs are open to me.'

Emily has been really supported by her family and friends in her choice of future career.

'Don't be influenced by other people's ideas about what job might suit you. Find out for yourself. The Armed Forces offers great career opportunities and nearly all jobs are open to both men and women.'



Deciding what to do

Are you ready to start firming up your choices? Use our action points to help you organise your ideas.



✓ ACTION POINT 10

Double check that you have not overlooked any choices that might suit you

I have looked at all my options:

- ☐ GCSEs/iGCSEs
- ☐ Vocational qualifications and the Diploma
- ☐ Foundation Learning
- ☐ Others

Options that interest me:	The qualifications I will get:	What I could do post 16:

✓ ACTION POINT 11

From dream to reality

With important decisions, it is often a good idea to start by describing your ideal outcome – what your perfect solution would be and why. Then you can see how close you can get to your ideal with the choices you have. If you give way on something small, you may find that you can shrink the gap between what you want (your dream) and what is possible (reality). Try it now.

My ideal option choices are:

I would choose these because:

The courses I can actually do are:

I can bring my dream and reality closer together by:

✓ ACTION POINT 12

What I want to do at key stage 4

First choices:

Reserves in case I don't get my first choice:

The world of work



**How can you prepare for working life?
How can you get the experience and skills
that employers look for? Read on to find
out more.**

Work experience

Most people go on work experience during key stage 4. This means spending time in a real workplace, working alongside employees and learning about the tasks involved in a particular job or business. It is a great opportunity to see how work differs from school. You can learn from experts, see for yourself exactly what employers look for in job applicants, and strengthen your employability skills. You can even test your career ideas and improve your self-confidence at the same time. Ask your careers adviser about the work experience you can do.

Enterprise activities

Enterprise activities help you understand what running a successful business involves and what qualifications and attitudes employers and employees need. It can also teach you a lot about how to decide if a risk is worth taking. Most subjects include enterprise activities and many schools offer extra ones like Young Enterprise. Ask your careers adviser what you can do in your school.

Volunteering

You don't get paid, but giving up some time to help your community is a great way to find out about different work environments, to learn new skills and to develop your self-confidence. It also improves your chances of success in the future by adding to the list of things you can offer, for example, universities or employers in the future. Find out what you can do. Speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser. Alternatively, go online and visit:

- the 'Young people' pages on www.direct.gov.uk
- <http://vinspired.com>
- www.do-it.org.uk

Part-time, temporary and holiday jobs

If you are lucky enough to find one of these, it is a good way to earn some money and gain experience of work while you are still at school or college. If you get a job with a business, you must have a work permit before you start work. Speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser about this.

The law limits the hours you can work and the kind of work that you can do. You can only do 'light work', for example, if you are under 16. This is work that keeps you safe from danger and does not interfere with your school work. Local authorities sometimes add their own rules.

These are the main rules about the hours you can work.

Age	Term time	School holidays
14-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 hours on weekdays and Sundays ■ 5 hours on Saturdays ■ Maximum of 12 hours a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5 hours on weekdays and Saturdays ■ 2 hours on Sundays ■ Maximum of 25 hours a week
15-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2 hours on weekdays and Sundays ■ 8 hours on Saturdays ■ Maximum of 12 hours a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 8 hours on weekdays and Saturdays ■ 2 hours on Sundays ■ Maximum of 35 hours a week

- You may not work before 7am or after 7pm.
- You are entitled to a one-hour break after working for four hours.
- You are entitled to a break of two consecutive weeks each year that must be taken during school holidays.
- There is no national minimum wage for young people under 16.



✓ ACTION POINT 13

Think about how you can get the experience and skills that employers look for

Go through the information you received in careers education lessons. Look at your school options information, your school prospectus and your school website. Then write down:

What work experience you can do at key stage 4:

What enterprise activities you can do at key stage 4:

	What interests you?	Who could help you find a suitable opportunity?
Volunteering		
Part-time, temporary and holiday work		



CHARLIE

CASE STUDY 7

The value of work experience

Work experience is a valuable opportunity that can help you decide whether a career area could be right for you. Charlie found his work experience in Year 10 with his local newspaper extremely worthwhile.

'I have always been interested in the media and have already started building up a portfolio of work to show future employers. This includes examples of work I did on my work placement. The week's work experience was really useful in helping me research my chosen

career as I could see what the job is like and meet and talk to the people doing it.'

Charlie has decided that he would like to be a journalist and is working on his writing skills all the time. He believes that work experience can be a real opportunity to learn about a job and should be taken very seriously. He plans next year to study A Levels in English, media studies, business studies and ICT.

Doing work experience is a great way to test a career idea. It will help you find out if it's something you really want to do, and if not, give you time to research other ideas.



Make a portfolio and collect evidence of your experiences and achievements to help you with applications and interviews later on.

The labour market

When you start looking for a job, you are joining the labour market – the place where workers compete for jobs, and employers compete for workers. Do you know how to use labour market information to help you with your career planning? If not, find out here.

What is labour market information?

Labour market information is data, statistics and research about the world of work and the job market. Some covers what is happening in the labour market now. Some looks at the long-term trends – what is likely to happen in the labour market in the future.

Where can you find labour market information?

Ask your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser for labour market information. Browse online prospectuses. Look up jobs that interest you in a careers database.

How can you use labour market information?

You can use labour market information to see if your career ideas and plans are realistic. This is because it tells you:

- if the job or career that interests you is likely to exist in the future – so you can change your plans if necessary
- what employers are looking for – so you can work towards gaining the attitudes and qualifications that will put you ahead of the competition
- where the jobs are – so you know where to look for work.

What is likely to happen to the labour market in the future?

Economic problems around the world have put pressure on the labour market. There is more unemployment and part-time working. Job prospects are uncertain. But labour market information suggests that there is little change in the long-term trends. So when you are planning for the future, you need to think about these long-term trends. They show that:

- there are very few 'jobs for life' – you will change jobs many times in your working life
- new jobs are emerging all the time – because of technological, economic, social and political changes
- all industries will recruit some new workers to replace people who retire, change jobs or change career
- the number of jobs for unskilled, poorly qualified workers will continue to fall
- the number of jobs for skilled, well qualified workers will continue to grow
- the number of jobs requiring science, technology, engineering, mathematics and modern foreign language skills will continue to grow
- the workplace is changing fast so employers will continue to need people who are willing and able to learn.

What can you do to prepare for joining the labour market?

Think ahead! Employers want qualified people so make your education and training count – do your best whatever options you choose. And spend some time planning how to get the knowledge, attitudes, skills and experience that employers look for (see **pages 22 and 23**).



Employers want people with science, technology, engineering and mathematical (STEM) skills. Find out about the jobs and careers that use these skills at www.futuremorph.org



IRAJ

CASE STUDY 8

Have a back-up plan

Iraj is in Year 9 and really into sport. He particularly enjoys rugby which he has played for a long time now and hopes one day to play professionally.

'I love rugby and have done well at it so far. Ideally I would love to do this as my full-time job when I am older but I realise that this is a competitive area of work.'

Iraj is aware that playing sport professionally could be a difficult area to pursue so he has a back-up plan in case his first option doesn't work out.

'I am a physical person and like to be active. But, if I am not successful in achieving my goal of being a rugby player I would like to be a police officer as I would like to help out people in the community and help cut down on crime.'

Iraj is aware of the importance of a back-up plan, particularly if you want to get into a competitive career area. He plans to continue his studies after Year 11 and is considering a BTEC National Diploma in Public Services. He chose his Year 9 subjects after considering what would be useful for many career areas.

The future

The future is closer than you think! In a couple of years' time, you will be finishing your key stage 4 courses and deciding what to do post 16. Find out more here.

A Levels

Study these at school or college – you'll need four or five GCSEs at grades C and above for this.

Foundation Learning

Flexible options that could help you go on to a higher level of learning, get a job or move into supported employment or independent living.

Apprenticeships

Earn while you learn. Work for an employer and get job-related qualifications, skills and experience that employers and universities value. This suits people who know what they want to do for a living.

Vocational qualifications and the Diploma

These give you the inside story on the world of work and are also great preparation for higher education.

Other sorts of work with accredited training

Work for an employer and train for one day a week to gain nationally-recognised qualifications.

Your post-16 options



Money, money, money

If you think you will find it difficult to continue your education and training post 16 without some financial help, look at www.direct.gov.uk. You may be able to get support from the enhanced Discretionary Learner Support Fund. Your school or college will decide whether you are entitled to support from the fund. Speak to the Student Support Officer in your school or college for more information.



HOT TIP

Learning pays! Getting higher level qualifications could be worth a couple of thousand pounds a year to you. That is the average pay gap between people with higher level qualifications and those with lower level ones.

Help to decide what to do

You don't have to make any choices by yourself. There are plenty of people to help you. Speak to your parents or carers, subject teachers, careers co-ordinator and careers adviser. Use online prospectuses. Browse the 'Young people' pages on www.direct.gov.uk.



Frequently asked questions

Q How do I know if I have chosen the right options?

A Have you researched and thought carefully about your choices? Have you chosen options that interest you and match your abilities? Have you chosen options that you think you will enjoy, that link to a career idea or that give you plenty of choice in the future? If so you can be confident that you have chosen well.

Q Can I study something relevant to work that will help me to explore my career ideas?

A Yes. Most schools offer a range of practical, work-related courses. Some offer the Diploma, which is a qualification based around work. Remember though that you will still have to study compulsory subjects such as English, mathematics and science.

Q I like sports/creative subjects best – can I do just these?

A No. You must study compulsory subjects such as English and mathematics and most schools will give you option blocks to choose from. For example, you may have to choose one technology, one creative/sport and one language subject, as well as having one free choice.

Q I have a career in mind, but my friends say I won't be able to do it because of my gender. How can I find out who is right?

A It is never a good idea to choose a career simply because of your gender. Speak to your subject teachers or make an appointment with your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser to discuss your concerns. They will help you think through your ideas and how well they match your interests and abilities. They may also be able to put you in touch with someone of your gender who is already doing the career that interests you.

Q I have a definite idea about the career I wish to follow and it is strongly linked to mathematics and science. Can I take more than one science?

A Yes. In most schools you can take single, double or triple science GCSEs. Talk to your science teachers, careers co-ordinator and/or careers adviser to find out which option would be best for the career you have in mind.

Q The entry requirements for one of the post-16 courses that interests me are four GCSEs at grade C or above or equivalent. Does my Higher Diploma count?

A Yes, your Higher Diploma counts, so it should meet the entry requirements. If you are still a bit worried, speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser. You could also contact the course provider and ask exactly what qualifications they will accept.

Your action plan

Use this plan to help you finalise your key stage 4 option choices.

✓ ACTION PLAN

WHERE I AM NOW:

(e.g. thinking about my options; speaking to family and teachers; almost ready to choose)

WHO CAN HELP ME AND HOW:

(e.g. parents or carers; teachers; careers co-ordinator; careers adviser)

WHAT I NEED TO DO AND WHEN:

(e.g. read my school's options booklet; look at online prospectuses; talk to my parents or carers, teachers and careers adviser; go to options events; complete and return my options form)

Actions	By what date	Completed (Y/N)?

CHECKLIST

I have now

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looked at the school's options information | <input type="checkbox"/> Done my research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Been to the options events | <input type="checkbox"/> Asked people for advice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studied the options form | <input type="checkbox"/> Made my choices |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Returned the options form |

Congratulations! Now you can concentrate on enjoying key stage 4!

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those young people who agreed to be case studies for **Which way now?** For reasons of confidentiality some names may have been changed.

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Some aspects of the curriculum and qualifications are currently under review. The Department for Education has made every effort to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate and up to date. It is correct as of December 2010.

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Feedback

This publication has been produced on behalf of the Department for Education by Babcock International Group.

We welcome feedback on **Which way now?** and **Parents & Carers**. If you have any thoughts on the content of this booklet, or how it's presented please contact Babcock International Group at email:

careers.publications@babcock.co.uk



This pdf is available online. To download please visit **www.cegnet.co.uk** or **www.education.gov.uk**



Parents & carers

Helping your children with their subject and career choices

This guide offers some practical tips to help you support them with their decision-making.

Supplement to **Which way now?** and **It's your choice**

Preparing for the future

Learning pays

Knowledge, skills and qualifications are increasingly important in today's workplace. The law has changed so that teenagers can continue their education and training for longer, helping them to gain the knowledge, qualifications and confidence to get a job they enjoy or to go to university. Research shows us that young people with level 3 qualifications (e.g. A Levels) earn on average 25 per cent more over their lifetime than those without level 3 qualifications.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 raises the participation age in learning to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. This means that the current students in Year 9 will continue learning to 17, and those in Years 7 and 8 to 18. Continuing in learning after the age of 16 **does not** necessarily mean staying on at school. Your child can choose to learn at school, at college, or with a training provider or employer. Teenagers choosing their key stage 4 options are among the first to benefit from these changes.

Options to suit everyone

There is more choice after the age of 16 because at key stage 4 some subjects remain compulsory – everyone has to do English, mathematics and science for example. Some post-16 courses take a year to complete and others take two, so your child may be making further choices when they are 17.

» The options include

- **GCSEs/IGCSEs and A Levels** involve studying several subjects in depth, preparing teenagers for higher-level learning and for work.
- **Vocational qualifications and the Diploma** offer teenagers insights into the world of work. They are also good preparation for further and higher education.
- **Apprenticeships** allow teenagers to learn skills and gain qualifications whilst earning money. They are open to all suitably qualified 16 year olds who know what they want to do for a living. Apprenticeships are now available in over 80 industry sectors, not just the traditional sectors such as engineering and hairdressing.
- **Foundation Learning** provides options for teenagers who need more time to build their confidence and skills. They can go on to take more qualifications, apply for an Apprenticeship or prepare for supported employment and independent living.

After 16, teenagers can also choose to get a job with training.



To find out more about the options look at your child's booklet: pages 12-17 in **Which way now?** or pages 8-13 in **It's your choice**

Getting support



Support for your child

Making subject and career choices is an important part of growing up. It can be a challenge, so your child will receive a lot of support to help them choose well – support that includes careers education, information and advice.

Careers education lessons will encourage your child to think about and set goals for the future. They will learn how to find and use careers information to research their ideas and explore different options. They will also learn how to make decisions and present themselves well in applications and interviews.

The **careers information** they will receive includes options information from school and access to online prospectuses. These give details of courses and qualifications that young people aged 14 to 19 can do locally, with information on other useful topics such as transport. They may also have a common application process (CAP) for post-16 courses, making it easy for your child to apply for those that interest them.

Your child will receive **careers advice** and guidance from many different people. Their subject teachers may discuss the career opportunities that studying their subject can open up. The careers co-ordinator or careers adviser will help them to think through their ideas and weigh up the pros and cons of different options.

If your child is disabled or has a statement of special educational needs, there may be extra help with decision-making and transition planning. Ask the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in school, the careers adviser or their key worker.

Support for you

You will also receive support to help your child make choices that work for them. As decision time approaches, you will receive options information from school and invitations to attend events to help you understand these options. If you have any queries or concerns, you should contact your child's form tutor. If they cannot help, they will put you in touch with someone who can – often a subject teacher or a careers adviser.

Outside school, many organisations can offer you help and support. Most parents start with the organisations below but there are many others.

Directgov at www.direct.gov.uk

Browse the 'Parents' and 'Young people' pages to find all the information you need on young people's choices, financial support for learning and sources of help.

National Parent Partnership Network at www.parentpartnership.org.uk

This site provides details of local services which provide neutral advice and information to parents of children with special educational needs about processes and support to help meet their needs.

The Apprenticeships website at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Browse the 'Parents' section which focuses on the different questions you may have about Apprenticeships and why they could be right for your child.



Tips on how to help your child choose well



» Help your child to find out as much as possible about the courses and qualifications they can do

Read the school's options information and browse your online prospectuses. Encourage your child to go to options events and sign up for taster activities. Go with them if you can. Help them to make a list of questions about the options that interest them, where they lead and any financial help available. Check application deadlines, especially post 16, as popular options can fill up quickly.

» Help your child to identify their interests and abilities

Your child is more likely to succeed if their choices fit their interests and abilities. Help them to identify these by encouraging them to discuss how they feel about different lessons, spare time activities, tests, exams and practical projects. You could also work with them on the activities in **Which way now?** that covers key stage 4 choices or **It's your choice** that looks at post-16 options.

» Help your child to consider the consequences of their choices

If your child has no clear plans at this stage, encourage them to opt for a broad range of courses that will give them plenty of choice in the future. If they have a particular career in mind, they may need specific experience, subjects, qualifications and grades to do it. Encourage them to find out. Help them to find out about careers that interest them. Look at course entry requirements in online prospectuses and, for higher education courses that interest them, on www.ucas.com and <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>

» Remind your child that learning pays

In these uncertain times, education and training count. Better qualifications bring better job prospects, higher earnings and more job satisfaction. There is still a big pay gap between people with qualifications and those without. If your child starts their working life in a low skilled, low paid job without training, they may find it very hard to move on to something better. If your child is choosing their post-16 options, encourage them to choose one that involves further learning. Apprenticeships, for example, combine high-quality training with a paid job.

Remind them that no route is closed to them, whatever their background or their achievements at school so far. They can speak to their careers adviser to find an education or training opportunity that suits them.

» Gently challenge any choices that concern you

For example, you might want to challenge a choice because you feel that your child has not done enough research. Or you may feel they have over or underestimated their ability in a subject. Or that they have been too heavily influenced by whom they think will teach the course, what their friends say or fear of being the only boy or girl in a group.

» Support your child's decision

Try to give in gracefully if you disagree with your child's choices. Show them that you want the best for them by accepting that it is their choice. If they realise later on that they made the wrong decision, they will need your support to deal with the consequences.

» Encourage your child to make a back-up plan

Practical reasons may prevent your child from doing the combination of things they want to do. Having a back-up plan will make them feel as though they still have some control over what happens.

» Be ready to help them deal with personal problems

At some point, most children have concerns that make it hard for them to cope with other parts of their life. You can help them to tackle these concerns by:

- offering your support as soon as you spot a problem – it is always better to get involved earlier rather than later
- listening to what they say and trying to see the problem from their point of view
- working on a solution with them, involving others if needed.

Boost their confidence by helping them to recognise their successes and new achievements. Encourage them to make the most of opportunities like mentoring, coaching, work experience, volunteering and schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Money matters

Learning is vital to your child's future success, and money worries should not stop them from continuing their education or training. If they are over 16, they may be able to get some financial help. The main sources of help are given below. You can find out more at the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section at www.direct.gov.uk and www.direct.gov.uk/studentsupport

- The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is being replaced by an enhanced **Discretionary Learner Support Fund**. This fund will be managed by schools, colleges and training providers who will offer the fund to those students they assess as being in the greatest need, in order to help them continue in education and training post 16. Speak to the Student Support Officer in your child's school or college for more information.
- If your teenager is a parent, **Care to Learn** might be able to help them with their childcare costs. Find out more at www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn
- There is a wide range of support available to help young people with **specific needs arising from a disability or learning difficulty**. Your child's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or careers adviser can help you identify the support your child may be able to get.
- Young people going on to university can access a mix of **grants and repayable loans to help with the costs of higher education**. The amount they get generally depends on household income.



Feedback

This publication has been produced on behalf of the Department for Education by Babcock International Group. We welcome feedback on **Parents & Carers**. If you have any thoughts on the content of this booklet, or how it's presented please contact Babcock International Group at
email: careers.publications@babcock.co.uk

Some aspects of the curriculum and qualifications are currently under review. The Department for Education has made every effort to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate and up to date. It is correct as of December 2010.

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