

— Autumn 2026 | Year 11 —
Made by Mrs Richards, careers lead.

Meole Brace School

YEAR 11 POST-16 PATHWAYS – *Your guide to the next steps after GCSEs*

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Your Guide to Life After GCSEs

For Year 11 Parents & Carers | Autumn 2026

As Year 11 gets underway, many students are beginning to think about what they would like to do after their GCSEs. For some, the answer will be A levels. For others, a vocational or technical qualification, an apprenticeship, or a combination of different subjects may be the right route.

With so many options available, it can be difficult to know where to start – and that is exactly what this guide is here to help with.

The most important message is that there is no single 'right' route for everyone.

The right choice will depend on your child's interests, strengths, career ideas, preferred way of learning and what they might want to do next. Inside this guide you will find information on A levels, T Levels, BTECs, CTECs, apprenticeships, local providers, open events and much more.

What are the options after Year 11?

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There are three broad routes available to students after Year 11. Understanding each one is the first step to making the right choice.

1. FULL-TIME EDUCATION

Students can continue at a sixth form or further education college, studying:

- A levels – academic qualifications in individual subjects, mainly assessed by examination
- T Levels – two-year technical qualifications combining classroom learning with a substantial industry placement
- BTECs and CTECs – vocational qualifications with a focus on applied and practical learning
- Other technical and vocational courses depending on provider and subject

2. AN APPRENTICESHIP

An apprenticeship combines paid employment with training and study. An apprentice:

- Has an employer
- Receives a salary
- Spends time working
- Completes training
- Works towards a recognised qualification

Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of sectors including engineering, construction, business, finance, digital, health, hospitality, sport and many others.

3. WORK ALONGSIDE EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Young people who do not take an apprenticeship or enter full-time education must remain in education or training until the age of 18. There are different ways of meeting this requirement. Students should discuss their individual circumstances with a careers adviser or post-16 provider to find the route that works best for them.

Understanding the Qualifications

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Qualification names can be confusing. Here is a simple guide to the main types of post-16 qualifications you will come across.

WHAT ARE T LEVELS?

T-Levels are two year Level 3 technical qualifications designed with employers.

T-Levels combine classroom based learning with a substantial industry placement, giving students both technical knowledge and real workplace experience. They are suitable for students who have a clear interest in a particular industry; enjoy practical and applied learning; want significant experience with an employer; are considering university, a higher apprenticeship or skilled employment; and want an alternative to A levels.

Subject areas include: *Digital · Health · Education & Early Years · Engineering · Business · Construction*

T Levels are focused on particular occupational areas – students should look carefully at the content and entry requirements of each individual course.

WHAT ARE BTECs?

"BTECs are vocational qualifications designed to develop practical, applied and work-related skills."

BTECs are available at different levels and cover a wide range of subjects. At post-16, students may study a Level 3 BTEC either as a larger standalone qualification or alongside other subjects, depending on the course. Assessment can include assignments, projects, practical work, coursework and examinations. BTECs are well suited to students who enjoy practical activities, projects and real-world examples. They can lead to university, apprenticeships, employment or further study.

WHAT ARE CTECs?

"Cambridge Technicals (often called CTECs) are vocational qualifications developed by OCR."

Like BTECs, CTECs focus on practical, applied learning across a range of subjects including: *Business · IT · Health & Social Care · Sport · Media · Engineering · Performing Arts*. Assessment is through a combination of coursework, practical tasks and examinations. A Level 3 CTEC can support progression to university, apprenticeships, employment or further study.

BTEC OR CTEC – DOES IT MATTER?

Both are examples of vocational qualifications. The most important thing is to look at the specific course rather than choosing simply because it is called a BTEC or CTEC. Ask: What will I study? How is it assessed? What qualification will I receive? What are the entry requirements? Where could it lead after Year 13? Does it suit the way I like to learn?

Apprenticeships – An Alternative Route

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What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a real job with training. It allows a young person to earn a salary while gaining genuine workplace experience and working towards a recognised qualification. Opportunities exist across a wide range of industries – not just traditional trades.

Sectors include: *Engineering · Construction · Business · Finance · Digital · Health · Hospitality · Sport · and many others.*

How do you apply? A five-step process:

1. SEARCH

Search vacancies by job role, sector and location at gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship.

2. CREATE AN ACCOUNT

Create an account to apply for vacancies and manage your applications in one place.

3. COMPLETE APPLICATIONS

Applications may ask about: Education · Skills · Experience · Interests · Achievements · Why you are interested in the role.

4. ATTEND INTERVIEWS OR ASSESSMENTS

Employers may use interviews, tests, assessment centres or other recruitment activities to select candidates.

5. KEEP APPLYING

Students can apply for multiple apprenticeship vacancies at the same time – don't stop at one.

A message for parents & carers:

An apprenticeship is not an easier alternative to college. Apprentices must balance the responsibilities of employment with qualification requirements and training. This means adapting to a working routine, meeting employer expectations, developing independent learning habits and balancing work and study simultaneously.

For the right student, however, an apprenticeship is an outstanding opportunity to develop real skills, gain valuable experience and work towards a qualification – all at the same time.

Our Local Post-16 Providers

Many Meole Brace students continue their education with providers in Shrewsbury and wider Shropshire. Here is an overview of the main local options to explore.



PROVIDERS IN THIS SECTION:

Shrewsbury
Colleges Group
Thomas Adams
Sixth Form
Telford College
Thomas Telford
School
Shrewsbury Town
Foundation College

Shrewsbury Colleges Group

Shrewsbury Colleges Group is one of the main local further education providers, offering a broad range of academic, vocational and technical courses, as well as apprenticeships. For many Meole Brace students, SCG is one of the first options to explore.

Find out more: <https://www.scg.ac.uk>

Thomas Adams Sixth Form

Based in Wem, Thomas Adams Sixth Form offers A levels and vocational qualifications. Open Evening: Wednesday 30 September 2026, 5.30pm–8.00pm – no booking required.

Find out more: <https://thomasadams.net>

Thomas Telford School

Thomas Telford School provides sixth-form provision alongside its wider school curriculum. Please check the school's current website for admissions information, available courses and entry requirements.

Shrewsbury Town Foundation College

The Shrewsbury Town Foundation College combines post-16 education with football training – an option for students who wish to develop both their academic studies and their game. 2026/27 Open Days: 15 October 2026 | 12 November 2026 | 14 January 2027. Booking required.

Find out more: <https://www.shrewsburytown.com/foundation>

OPEN EVENTS - Autumn 2026

Save the Dates – Post-16 Provider Open Evenings & Open Days

Open events are one of the best ways to get a feel for a college or sixth form. Students should attend, ask questions and compare their options before making a final decision.

 WED 30 SEPT 2026

Thomas Adams Sixth Form

5.30pm – 8.00pm

Meet staff and students, explore the Sixth Form and find out about post-16 courses. No booking required.

 THU 15 OCT 2026

Shrewsbury Town Foundation College

Explore football training, facilities, qualifications and career opportunities. Booking required.

 THU 15 OCT 2026

Shrewsbury Colleges Group – Welsh Bridge and English Bridge Campus

Explore both campus' and find out about A levels and post-16 opportunities.

 SAT 17 OCT 2026

Walford College

For those who are interested in any land based training, equestrian, animal care, motor vehicle and more.

 TUE 20 OCT 2026

Shrewsbury Colleges Group – Welsh Bridge and English Bridge Campus

Another opportunity to explore both campus' and find out about A levels and post-16 opportunities.

 THUR 22 OCT 2026

Shrewsbury Colleges Group – London Road Camous

Explore the wide range of vocational courses, BTECs, CTECs, T-Levels and more.

 SAT 7 NOV 2026

North Shropshire College

NSC offer a wider range of learning opportunities including apprenticeships and full-time a-level and vocational programmes.

What Should Students Be Doing Now?

Year 11 Action Plan | September – October 2026

September and October are the most important months for getting post-16 decisions underway. Use this checklist to make sure your child is taking the right steps at the right time.

1. EXPLORE

Research different courses and providers. Look at what is available locally – sixth forms, further education colleges, T Levels, BTECs, CTECs and apprenticeships.

2. VISIT

Attend open evenings, open days and taster sessions. This is the single best way to get a feel for a college or sixth form. Encourage your child to visit more than one provider and more than one type of course if possible. See the Open Events page for dates.

3. COMPARE

Look carefully at the courses, entry requirements, assessment methods and progression routes. Do not just compare providers – compare the specific courses. Two providers may both offer a BTEC in Sport, but the content, assessment style and progression outcomes may differ significantly.

4. APPLY

Start applications as providers open them. Many colleges and sixth forms open applications in the autumn term. Check individual provider websites for deadlines and application processes. Do not leave it until after Christmas.

5. KEEP OPTIONS OPEN

If your child is interested in apprenticeships, encourage them to apply for college or sixth form as well. Apprenticeships are competitive and vacancies become available at different times of year – having a college or sixth form place confirmed means your child always has a strong option in place.

Remember: it is fine not to have everything decided yet. The aim at this stage is to explore, ask questions and gather information.



Key Reminder for Apprenticeship Applicants

If your child is considering an apprenticeship, they should also apply to a college or sixth form as a backup. Apprenticeships are competitive and vacancies appear at different times – a confirmed college place means they always have a strong option available.

DON'T JUST LOOK AROUND — ASK QUESTIONS!

About the course:

- What exactly will I study?
- How is the course assessed?
- How much independent study is expected?
- What are the entry requirements?
- What equipment or resources will I need?

About progression:

- What do students typically progress to?
- Can this course lead to university?
- Can it lead to an apprenticeship?
- What careers could it support?

About student life:

- What is a typical week like?
- What enrichment activities are available?
- What support is available?
- How much freedom and independence will students have?

- What are the travel options?

And finally: "What makes this course or provider different?"

"Visiting a college or sixth form is your chance to find out whether it really is the right place for your child — come prepared with questions and make the most of it."

A simple course comparison

Do I enjoy the subject? | | |

Do I meet the entry requirements? | | |

Do I understand what I will study? | | |

Do I like the assessment style? | | |

Does it fit my career ideas? | | |

Where could it lead? | | |

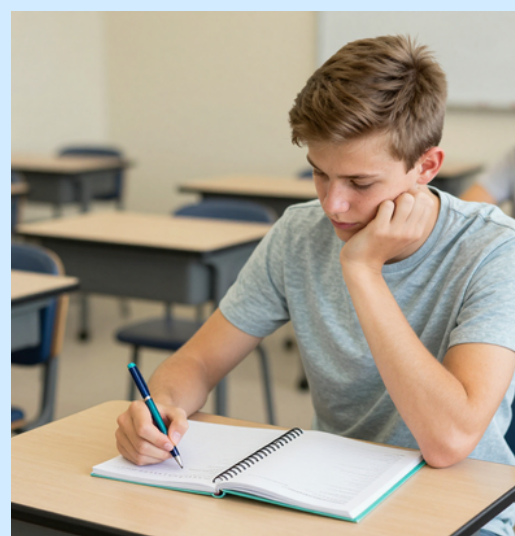
Have I visited? | | |

Do I like the environment? | | |

How will I travel there? | | |

Is there a backup option? | | |

Tip: Print this page or save it to your phone and fill it in as you visit each provider. There are no right or wrong answers — it is about finding the best fit for your child.



Support & Next Steps

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Many Year 11 students do not have a clear career plan yet – and that is completely normal. Choosing post-16 options is not about having the entire future mapped out at 15 or 16.

The aim is to find a path that:

- ✓ Suits their interests
- ✓ Plays to their strengths
- ✓ Develops useful knowledge and skills
- ✓ Keeps future opportunities open
- ✓ Feels like the right environment for them

A FINAL MESSAGE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

The post-16 landscape can seem complicated, but your child has more options than ever. Whether it is A levels, a T Level, a BTEC, a CTEC, another vocational qualification, an apprenticeship or another training route – what matters is understanding the choice and where it can take them.

Encourage them to explore.

Encourage them to ask questions.

Encourage them to visit.

And encourage them to keep their options open.

"Your child's next step doesn't have to be their final destination.

A NOTE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

You do not need to have all the answers. The most helpful thing you can do right now is encourage your child to be curious and proactive.

Try asking:

"What have you found out so far?"

"Which providers are you thinking about visiting?"

"What type of course appeals to you?"

"What other options could you keep open?"

Help them to research, visit providers and keep track of deadlines – but encourage them to take ownership of the process.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Meole Brace Careers – Post-16 resources for Year 11:

<https://www.meolebrace.com/ParentsCareers/>

Shrewsbury Colleges Group:

<https://www.scg.ac.uk/>

Telford College – A levels, T Levels, vocational & apprenticeships:

<https://telfordcollege.ac.uk/>

GOV.UK – Find an Apprenticeship:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

National Careers Service:

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

T Levels – Technical education information:

<https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>

Don't panic if they don't know what they want to do!