



Richard Challoner School

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Post-16 Choices: A Guide for Parents and prospective Sixth Form students

Deciding your future pathway can seem a difficult process.

The array of courses and learning paths, colleges and institutions, to say nothing of qualifications, can seem daunting.

The purpose of these pages is to try to answer the most common questions parents and students have about post-16 choices in the Sixth Form.

They provide an overview of what we can offer students at Richard Challoner, the application procedure, and guidance in choosing courses.

If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Ms Blackburn

Director of Sixth Form Studies

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“Doing ordinary things extraordinarily well” – The Venerable Richard Challoner

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What does Richard Challoner School offer students in the Sixth Form?

A rigorous and personalised post-16 education

In partnership with the Holy Cross School, we offer a broad range of academic and vocational courses which allow students access to a full range of Higher Education courses and career paths.

See the [*2019 Sixth Form Prospectus*](#) for details of courses offered.

Through the **Academic Coaching and Mentoring scheme**, our students receive a level of personal support that is unrivalled even by some private schools.

Every student is assigned a personal mentor: a member of staff who meets with them at least once every half-term. Academic coaching and mentoring provides students with opportunities to plan, agree goals, and develop strategies, to ensure their success in the Sixth Form.

Very few Sixth Forms have an in-house academic mentoring programme, because it requires a large investment of staff time. Richard Challoner Sixth Form does because we are convinced of its worth. More importantly, we are convinced that ***your child is worth it.***

For boys who have been with us since Year 7, our knowledge of your son, and his knowledge of us, provide him with a smoother transition from GCSE to post-16 education than would be possible if he moved to another institution. It is also of crucial importance at the end of his time in the school, when it comes to supporting him with references for job and Higher Education applications.

A Christian environment which provides opportunities for personal growth and development, and challenge our students to place their talents at the service of others, especially the most needy.

Sixth Formers are part of a Christian community in which they are encouraged to be caring and supportive of each other. We gather each morning for prayers and a reflection.

There are plenty of opportunities for Sixth Form students to show concern for others and take responsibility for younger members of the school community.

Examples:

- As prefects
- As members of the School Parliament
- As student support mentors for lower school pupils
- As members of the Sixth Form Charities Committee
- Giving in-class support to younger students who require learning support
- Helping disabled students around the school between lessons and at lunchtimes
- Supporting extra-curricular activities such as the Year 7 Team-building day and Year 7 camp.

- Taking an active role in their House
- Becoming a Reading Mentor to a younger student in the school

A full range of social, cultural and sporting activities, supported by excellent facilities

Here are some of the extra-curricular activities on offer:

- Sports hall, MUGA and multi-gym facilities
- Team football, rugby, basketball and athletics
- Opportunities to take part in drama, performing arts, and musical events
- House competitions
- Ski Trips
- Theatre visits
- Museum and Art gallery trips
- Film Club
- Debating Society
- Opportunities to take part in Community Service or Vocational Work Experience

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What courses are available in the Sixth Form?

Advance Level Courses

In response to A Level reforms, and together with many other schools, students will not be entered for AS examinations. In addition, students will typically take three, rather than four subjects. The additional teaching time will allow students to more readily meet the demands of the more rigorous A Level courses now being offered in all subjects.

Level 3 Vocational Courses

BTEC Level 3 Certificate is a one year course and is equivalent to an AS level. Subject offered: Performing Arts

BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diplomas and **BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificates** are two-year courses – equivalent to A Levels - which are internally assessed and externally moderated units.

BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificates offered: Computing, Digital Media Production, Applied Science.

BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diplomas offered: Performing Arts

For more details of these courses, see [2019 Sixth Form Prospectus](#).

See the [New UCAS Tariff](#) for details of the UCAS points awarded for these qualifications.

Students need to pass Year 12 exams at grade D or above (or equivalent) in order to continue their A Level studies.

Level 2 Courses

These are one-year courses offered to a small number of students with particular learning or pastoral needs who may not achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grade 4 or above. Students who take these courses may also be retaking Maths and English, and, in certain circumstances, may be allowed to do one Level 3 course.

Sports Leader Awards

Level 2 Community Sports Leadership Award

These awards are nationally recognised qualifications which provide students with a range of practical experience in sports leadership in school and the local community. See the [New UCAS Tariff](#) for details of the UCAS points awarded for the Level 3 qualification.

See the [2019 Sixth Form Prospectus](#) for more information.

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What are the entry requirements for Sixth Form courses?

To follow Level 3 courses, students must have gained a minimum of 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including Maths and English. However, entry to the Sixth Form is dependent on individual subject specific requirements; where most courses also require a GCSE Grade 6 or above in the subject they wish to study, or in an equivalent subject if it is one not studied at KS4.

See the [2019-20 Summary 6th Form HXRC Subject Entry Requirements](#) for specific subject entry requirements for Level 3 vocational courses offered.

We will try, wherever possible, to provide each student with a learning path appropriate to their personal needs and aptitudes.

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What factors should a student consider when deciding subject choices?

Precisely because it can be very hard to decide what to do, and a number of factors have to be considered together, we encourage students to be as methodical as possible when trying to decide subject choices.

These are the four factors to consider:

1. *Career or Higher Education*

For students with a particular career goal or higher education course in mind, it is vitally important to choose subjects or courses of study which give them the best chance to progress toward their goal. However, they must first be sure that their goal is one that they can realistically aspire to.

Click [here](#) to see a summary of the advice we would give to students who wish to apply for some of the more popular degree courses.

Click [here](#) for links to websites offering further careers and course guidance.

2. *Ability/aptitude*

For a student's choices to be realistic, they must be courses

- whose entry requirements are within reach, and
- whose style of learning is suited to the student's needs and strengths as a learner

By the time students meet with a senior teacher to discuss their application and option choices in February, we (and they) will have the following data upon which to assess their aptitude for Sixth Form study:

- national data predictions of GCSE attainment
- Year 10 examination results
- Mock GCSE results

If a student has demonstrated particular ability in a subject, or shows a clear aptitude for areas of learning related to a subject they will be taking up for the first time, then this is *objective* evidence that they are likely to do well studying it post-16.

However, from the very start of Year 11, if not earlier, students should be seeking advice and researching the full variety of post-16 pathways open to them.

3. *Interest*

Students can often have a strong interest in a subject without necessarily having any plans to pursue it in higher education or as a career. Interest – pure and simple – is a great quality that we should encourage and support, since it is a characteristic of a lively and inquisitive

mind, and of an autonomous learner. Where there is genuine interest, motivation is strongest.

4. *Enjoyment*

There are important differences between 'liking' a subject and being interested in it. If a student says they like English, what does it mean? It could indeed mean that they have a deep-rooted interest based on a love of reading, and a fascination for the use of language. Alternatively, they may really be saying that they like their current English teacher, or that they are in the same class as their best friend, or that they have liked what has been studied in English this year (or any combination of these).

Young people tend to put a lot of store by their likes and dislikes, but they don't always appreciate how quickly or easily their likes and dislikes change.

When your child says they wants to choose a subject 'because they like it', try to delve a little into what they mean by this. If there is no clear evidence of interest in the subject for its own sake, it may be a sign that their enjoyment of the subject isn't very strong.

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How can students be helped to prioritise possible subject choices?

A helpful way for your son/daughter to think through their option choices is to rank the subjects they is interested in for each of these questions:

How much do I enjoy the subject?

How useful would it be for my career/HE plans?

Have I a strong ability and aptitude for the subject?

How interested in the subject am I?

In the example below, a student has started by ranking his favourite 6 subjects (a). He wishes to study architecture at a good university, so he has had to give the subject a different ranking order (b).

Fortunately, his predicted grades and Year 10 exams were good, and he did very well in the three subjects he needs most. (c)

By the time he comes to complete column (d) the student is clear on his three option choices: Maths, DT and Art.

	a	b	C	d
Subject	How much do I enjoy the subject?	How useful would it be for my career/HE plans?	Have I a strong ability and aptitude for the subject?	How interested in the subject am I?

Art	2	2	1	1
Biology	6	6	6	6
DT	1	2	2	1
History	4	5	5	4
Maths	3	1	3	3
Physics	5	2	4	5

1 = highest ranking position, 6 = lowest ranking position

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What advice/guidance about KS5 options is available for my son at school?

Following the publication of mock exam results in January, all Year 11 students will have an interview with a senior member of staff to discuss their application to the Sixth Form or alternative pathways. Students whose Year 10 exam and mock results suggest they will not meet the entry requirements for Level 3 courses will be supported in looking for an apprenticeship or college course suited to their interests and abilities.

We encourage all Year 11 students to talk to members of staff who can advise them about post-16 option choices, but especially:

- Subject teachers
- Heads of Department
- Mr Stansbridge (Leader of Year 11)
- Mrs Verdin (Assistant Head i/c of Sixth Form, and Careers)
- Ms Blackburn (Director of Sixth Form Studies)

Further advice for high achieving students is available in '*Informed Choices*', a guide to choosing post-16 courses produced on behalf of the Russell Group Universities.

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Would my son be better off moving to a college rather than staying on in the Sixth Form?

It may be advisable for your son to go to a college

- If we do not offer the course(s) he needs to progress along a career path, such as a specialist course not taught in our Sixth Form, or an apprenticeship.

You may feel that a move would provide your son with a fresh start, or he may feel he no longer wishes to remain in a school environment.

- In some cases this may indeed be a good idea. A new start in a new environment may be just the thing to help a young son develop and mature.
- On the other hand, we find that most students who leave us with no pressing academic or social reason to do so often regret it.

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My son/daughter is aspiring to a top university; wouldn't they stand a better chance going to a grammar school or private school?

Competition for places at universities like Oxford and Cambridge, and for courses like Medicine is extremely strong. It is very understandable that parents of gifted children try their very best to maximize their son's chances of success. *In addition to achieving A*AA at A level, many courses also expect high achievement at GCSE.*

In the last 10-15 years, some of those who left Challoner for this reason were successful. Unfortunately, there have been more who have soon regretted leaving the school, and belatedly came to appreciate just how much the staff at Richard Challoner had taken an interest in them.

There are, besides, a number of very practical reasons why it is unnecessary, and even counter-productive, for very able students to move schools now:

- Oxford and Cambridge, and some medical schools, have mechanisms in place for identifying high achieving applicants at non-selective state schools. The use of contextual data (which may highlight exceptional individual achievement where this notably exceeds average achievement in the school or local area) can now be used by all universities, but Oxford and other institutions pioneered its use in an effort to widen the pool of those invited for interview. Clearly, the student must meet the same entry requirements as other applicants, but their chance of being interviewed may be higher attending a non-selective state school. All our Oxbridge applicants in recent years have been called for interview.
- We are able to support students' applications with advice and interview practice, drawing on the experience of three members of staff who have studied at Oxford and Cambridge.

- Working in partnership with the other local Catholic Sixth Forms, we can offer our students an effective range of pre-medical and pre-Oxbridge preparation sessions and mock interviews.

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What happens after my child's application is submitted?

Application forms will be processed on receipt and particular attention will be given to whether his option choices are logical and realistic.

If, for any reason, we have a concern regarding your child's application to the Sixth Form, we will inform you.

Should your son's behaviour or attitude cast a doubt on his suitability for the Sixth Form, we will contact you to agree a set of improvement targets for your son to attain prior to being accepted into the Sixth Form.

Parents of internal applicants will have the opportunity to discuss subject teachers' feedback on your son's option choices at Year 11 Parents' evening. Where a subject teacher advises against a student taking up a subject at A Level, we will encourage them to select an alternative option.

Your son/daughter will be invited for an interview with a senior member of staff in **February**. They will have the chance to change their initial option choices at this time. Parents are welcome to attend.

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Is there financial assistance available to support my child during post-16 education?

Please see the [Richard Challoner Sixth Form webpage: 16-19 bursary fund](#) for a more detailed information sheet and application form.

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Higher Education courses and Sixth Form Options

Art foundation

Although Level 3 qualifications are not a requirement, A Level Art & Design is a recommended way to develop skills and experience.

Architecture

The best schools of Architecture require grade A at A Level Maths. Some architecture courses do accept students without Maths. A level Art and/or DT are desirable.

Business/Accounting/Finance/Economics

It is not necessary to have an A level in one of these subjects to study it at degree level. A level Maths would be expected at top universities.

Dentistry

Top GCSE and A level grades are required. Most dentistry schools require A level Chemistry and Biology. Some schools ask students to sit the UKCAT or BMAT tests in addition to gaining top results. These aptitude tests need careful preparation.

Engineering

Maths and Physics strongly recommended. There are courses that require only one or the other, but courses in top institutions expect students to have both to a high standard. Where students are applying for an engineering course which has a particular creative, design-orientated focus, DT or Art may be very useful.

Computer Science

There are a large number of Computer related degree courses dealing with all aspects of the industry, from computer games programming to network management. Many of the best Computer Science degree courses require Maths or even Further Maths.

Law

It is not necessary to study Law at university to enter the profession. A Level Law is not a requirement either. Law schools like to see students have studied a range of subjects, but are especially keen to see evidence that a student has strong analytical skills and is highly literate. Some top Law schools require an aptitude test (LNAT) plus top A level grades.

Media

This is a very popular A level and degree course. It is important for students to be realistic about their future expectations: the proportion of media students who gain media-based employment is low. On the other hand, the style of work and assessment can suit some students well.

Medicine

Only students with the very best GCSE and A level results should consider studying medicine, such are the demands of the course and the competition for places. Almost all medical schools require A level Chemistry and Biology, with either Physics or Maths. Further Maths may be taken, but some schools will not include it as one of the three A levels when they make students a conditional offer of a place on the course. Many medical schools ask

students to sit either the UKCAT or BMAT tests in addition to gaining top results. These aptitude tests need careful preparation.

Politics, Psychology & Sociology

These are popular A level and degree subjects. An A level in one of these subjects is not necessary for degree studies. The opportunities for directly-related graduate employment in these subject areas are fairly low, so students need to be realistic about their expectations for the future.

Veterinary Medicine/Science

As with medicine, students need to have top GCSE and A level grades. A level Biology and Chemistry are required. Physics or Maths is required by some schools.

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Useful links: [post-16 education, FE Colleges & Open Days, & higher education information](#)

General

<https://www.ucas.com/further-education>

This is now the main site for searching, exploring and comparing post-16 courses at schools academies, colleges and work-based learning providers

Open Evenings at local colleges of Further Education

[Kingston College](#)

Open Evenings

Saturday 29 September 2018 10am-2pm (last entry 1.30pm)

Saturday 3 November 2018 10am-1pm (last entry 12.30pm)

Wednesday 21 November 2018 4.30pm-7pm (last entry 6.30pm)

Tuesday 29 January 2019 4.30pm-7pm (last entry 6.30pm)

Thursday 7 March 2019 4.30pm-6.30pm (last entry 6.00pm)

Friday 28 June 2019 11am-2pm (last entry 1.30pm)

[Carshalton College](#)

Open Evenings

Saturday 6 October 10am-2pm (last entry 1.30pm)

Wednesday 7 November 4.30pm-7pm (last entry 6.30pm)

Tuesday 22 January 4.30pm-7pm (last entry 6.30pm)

Wednesday 6 March 4.30pm- 6.30pm (last entry 6pm)

Thursday 20 June 11am-2pm (last entry 1.30pm)

[Richmond College](#)

Open Evenings

Saturday 13 October 2018, 10.00am-2.00pm (last entry 1.30pm)

Wednesday 17 October 2018, 5.00pm-8.00pm (last entry 7.30pm)
Thursday 8 November 2018, 5.00pm-8.00pm (last entry 7.30pm)
Tuesday 26 February 2019, 5.00pm-8.00pm (last entry 7.30pm)
Tuesday 26 March 2019, 5.00pm-8.00pm (last entry 7.30pm)
Tuesday 25 June 2019, 5.00pm-8.00pm (last entry 7.30pm)

[South Thames College](#)

Open Evenings

Saturday 13th October 2018 10pm
Wednesday 5th December 2018 16.30pm
Tuesday 15th January 2019 16.30pm
Tuesday 12th March 2019 16.30pm

[Nescot College](#)

Open Evenings

26th September 2018 4.30-7.30pm
13th October 2018 11am – 2pm
21st November 2018 4.30 – 7.30pm
16th January 2019 4.30-7.30pm
9th March 2019 11am-2pm

(See website for dates/times of Open Days in May and June)

Support for post-16 Education

[16-19 Bursary](#) 16-19 Bursary Fund.

[Disability Rights UK](#)

National bureau for students with disabilities. It is a national charity promoting opportunities for young people and adults with any kind of disability in post-16 education, training and employment across the UK.

Careers and vocational training

[Apprenticeships](#)

This site provides useful information on apprenticeships, for example, training given for a formal qualification by both learning providers and employers.

Examination Boards

[AQA](#) The website of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

[Edexcel](#) The website of Edexcel, with information on BTEC qualifications.

[OCR](#) The website of Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations

Higher Education

[UCAS](#)

Information on higher education courses and entry requirements for specific courses.

[Unistats](#)

The official website for comparing UK higher education course data, including the National Student Survey. The survey offers a detailed indication of student satisfaction on degree courses.

The Times, The Guardian, The Independent and The Daily Telegraph each have very helpful guides to Higher Education.

[The Complete University Guide](#) Another helpful source of information about universities, degree courses and careers.

[Student Finance](#) is the website that gives full information about student fees, grants and bursaries in higher education.

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