

YEAR 10 / YEAR 11 Entry into Sixth Form



Frequently Asked Questions

WHY ARE WE HAVING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHETHER MY YOUNG PERSON CAN STAY IN YOUR SIXTH FORM?

When students in mainstream settings finish their GCSE year, they can decide where they would like to continue their education. Some students stay in their secondary setting and continue in Sixth Form or move to another educational setting such as a College, and continue their studies there.

In the past, we have been able to offer places in our Sixth Form department to all students who wish to stay with us. We have offered a curriculum to suit our more academically able students, as well as those on an Engagement pathway.

Sadly, this arrangement of accepting all Year 11 students into Sixth Form can no longer continue. Nationally, there are not enough education places available for SEN children and young people. In Devon and the South West, there are many new housing developments being built and this has meant an influx of SEN pupils for the Local Authority to place in schools.

Over the last couple of years, the Local Authority has placed more pupils with us and our pupil numbers have grown. We now have large groups of pupils in each key stage, and these pupils move up through the school in our existing classes and buildings. By the time these students reach Sixth Form, we only have space and capacity to accommodate a set number of pupils. So this year, we have introduced an Application Form to assist with placing Year 11 students into our limited places.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CONSIDERING THE NEXT STEPS FOR OUR YOUNG PERSON?

We encourage all our Year 11's, through their Annual Reviews and discussions with CSW in the Autumn Term, to review their young person's academic needs and future wishes. The Annual Review should indicate any outcomes that have been achieved along with any needs and provision that are no longer relevant. The Review covers proposed outcomes for post-16 education and a discussion around Preparation for Adulthood beyond Post-16 education, with involvement from Health and Social Care wherever relevant.

For those students who are more academically able, discussions will already be taking place regarding possibly continuing their education at another College setting. Devon has heavily invested into FE Colleges across Devon. Exeter College, for example, has increased its capacity to meet the needs of students with SLD. In past, we have educated our more academically able students in our Sixth Form but we encourage you to consider elsewhere.

Many settings offer “open days” and we encourage families from Year 10+ to visit and ask lots of questions to ascertain if the provision aligns with your young person’s long term objectives. Other settings will have their own application process for you to complete within a timeline.

WHAT IS YOUR SIXTH FORM OFFER?

Our Sixth Form department can offer three educational pathways – Engagement, Pre-vocational and Vocational.

Pathway 1 Engagement	Pathway 2 Reaching for Independence	Pathway 3 Vocational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Intensive Interaction • Choice making • Life skills • Personal care • Community Inclusion • Specialist Programmes (e.g. VI, Physio, OT, Music Therapy) • Enrichment activities (Music, Art) • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Choice Making • Advocacy • Daily living skills • Personal safety • Self-care • Functional Literacy • Functional Numeracy • Social and emotional development • Community Inclusion • Work related learning and work experience • Enrichment (Music, Art) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Decision Making • Self-advocacy • Independent Living skills • Personal safety within wider community • Managing own health • Functional Skills in Maths Accreditation • Functional Skills in English Accreditation • Functional Skills in ICT Accreditation • Understanding Relationships • Work Experience and Vocational Learning • Travel Training • Enrichment activities (i.e. DoE, Art, Music) • BTEC Pre Vocational Skills and Vocational Skills Qualification • Transition Planning

Our curriculum offer is constantly under review to suit the needs of our students.

Unlike other settings who may offer part time places, we provide an education for 5 days a week, term time only. We believe a full time placement allows students more time to embed their learning. Also, if students are following Pathway 2 or 3, there is time across the week to participate in work related learning and/or work experience.

Once in Sixth Form, students can remain in the department as long as we continue to be the right placement for their needs. If a young person turns 19 years of age during Year 14, they will be able to continue their education with us until the end of the academic year.

Visits to our Sixth Form can be arranged. Kate Bromage at Bidwell Brook School and Monika Davis at Ellen Tinkham College will be setting dates and we’ll let you know when our “open” session will be.

WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL CRITERIA FOR ENTERING INTO SIXTH FORM?

The criteria for entering Sixth Form, for us as a school, is to meet the educational outcomes on a student's EHCP. If students are working above Entry Level 2, they will be considered too academically able and will therefore be better suited to continue their education at another setting such as an FE College. Also, if a student has identified a career route they wish to follow and wish to complete an Administration course or obtain a Mechanics qualification, we cannot facilitate this. The student will need to seek an alternative provision. It is really important that each young person has clear outcomes for their future.

Students who have PMLD or SLD could follow our Engagement Pathway. However, if the provision on their EHCP is beyond our Core Offer, we may not be able to meet their needs unless there is full funding or provision put in place by the Local Authority.

CAN I APPLY FOR A PLACE AT TWO DIFFERENT SETTINGS IE AT THIS SIXTH FORM AND ALSO A COLLEGE?

Yes, where you apply is your decision. We strongly recommend you review your young person's educational outcomes, so you are making a decision in their best interests. Think about what your young person is wishing to achieve. You will need to complete an application form/pack at whichever setting you wish to apply for.

I WANT MY YOUNG PERSON TO STAY IN YOUR SIXTH FORM. YOU KNOW MY YOUNG PERSON - WHY DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FORM?

Completion of the Application Form will help families and young people to consider their long-term objectives for employment, independent living, community inclusion and health. It helps students understand what they are hoping to achieve from their Post-16 education.

From the school's point of view, the Application Form forms part of the documentation used to help us review each student's needs, case by case, so we can be clear on an individual's educational outcomes. This information helps inform us during the consultation process and also whether we can tailor our offer to achieve the objectives.

If a young person's EHCP shows their future direction and wishes, whether this is to remain in our Sixth Form or move to another setting, we can work with the student and their family to achieve a smooth transition in their next steps. In the past, parents of those students heading in the direction of Social Care said that leaving education "can feel like dropping off a cliff". Transitions to wherever the next setting may be is really important, and we will work with other services to ensure any moves are made as smooth as possible.

Families need to ensure the next setting, whether this is our Sixth Form or elsewhere, has been recorded on the EHCP.

I HAVE COMPLETED THE APPLICATION FORM. WHAT NEXT?

The move from Year 11 to the next setting is called a “Phased Transfer”. Through the Annual Review process, the EHCP and parental choice, the Local Authority will know whether your young person intends moving away from our school to continue their education elsewhere or has requested to stay in our Sixth Form.

In the Spring Term, our Senior Leaders receive official “Phased Transfer” consultation paperwork from the Local Authority containing your young person’s request. If your young person wishes to remain with us, we are formally asked to respond to the Local Authority whether our Sixth Form can meet their needs.

Senior Leaders review the consultation documentation provided to us and also take into consideration the information within your Application Form. The Application Form is only viewed by ourselves and not shared with the Local Authority. We have a statutory obligation to advise the Local Authority if we can meet a student’s needs and can offer a Sixth Form provision as outlined in the plan.

As part of our consultation review, we closely check the current EHCP identifying any areas where we might need additional support from the Local Authority before we say “yes” eg 1-1 funding or securing bespoke OT or SALT provision. From a statutory point of view, as part of the consultation we also have to review the “efficient educational needs of others”. This means considering a student’s age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs. And reviewing whether allowing a student to continue their education with us would negatively impact the education of others, and whether this impact would be incompatible with providing an efficient education.

Once the consultation has been thoroughly reviewed by Senior Leaders, our response is submitted back to the Local Authority on whether we can meet a student’s needs. It is the Local Authority who then have the ultimate decision whether to place a student with us.

WHEN WILL I KNOW WHERE MY YOUNG PERSON WILL BE FROM SEPTEMBER 2025?

The Local Authority has to advise families of their young person’s next setting by 31st March.

If you are unhappy with their decision, there is a process through which you can submit an appeal. This will be through the SEN 0-25 Team at Devon County Council and details will be available to you once the placement has been confirmed.

IS THE 31ST OF MARCH NOTIFICATION DATE FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY REALISTIC? WILL THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BE IN A POSITION OR ABLE TO MAKE A DECISION BY THIS TIME?

The 31st of March date has been provided to us by the Local Authority and is part of their timeframes.

DOES SCHOOL TRANSPORT CHANGE WHEN STUDENTS GO INTO SIXTH FORM?

Yes, School Transport is not provided free of charge by Devon County Council to any student in our Sixth Form department. In the Spring Term of Year 11, you will receive a letter and a form from Transport, asking if you wish to apply for a “vacant seat”. Once the form has been returned and checked, Transport will then review the routes and capacity on their vehicles to see if they can offer you a “vacant seat” for the new academic year. If a seat is available, there is a charge to book this £720. Costs can be paid termly or for the full year. At school, we have limited discretionary bursary funding available to help support families with this charge (financial eligibility conditions apply). Further details about our bursary funding and how to apply, can be found on our website.

HOW DOES THE EDUCATION A YOUNG PERSON RECEIVES IN SIXTH FORM INFLUENCE THEIR NEXT STEPS?

Before a student enters Sixth Form, we review their educational progress and personal achievements to date. This can either be through their education at our school or from another setting. Taking into account the completed Application Form, Teachers plan how each student will reach their aims and long-term objectives and set their educational outcomes to achieve this. We appreciate students have the prerogative to change their minds and direction, but by carefully planning their education we can work towards achieving their aspirations and the outcomes needed to succeed in their goals.

We monitor a student’s work across the year and undertake an annual review to ensure that each students’ educational needs are continuing to be met by ourselves and they are making good progress towards their outcomes. The outcomes must remain relevant to the individual and as a department, we need to be offering the challenge and provision they need to ensure they will be “the best that they can be”.

If for example, a student is exceeding their educational outcomes, it may be in their best interests to leave our Sixth Form either during the year or at the end of that academic year to continue their studies elsewhere. For other students, part of the review process might identify the need to request input and engagement from other services such as Health and Social Care.

In our Sixth Form departments, we continue to offer a person-centred curriculum and provide support where needed to ensure our young people are as fully prepared as possible for adulthood and life beyond Year 14.

IS THERE ANY CERTAINTY OF WHERE MY YOUNG PERSON WILL BE AFTER YEAR 14? ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE MUCH LESS ABLE? MY YOUNG PERSON'S EHCP MIGHT STATE A NAMED ONWARD SETTING BUT HOW CERTAIN IS IT THAT THIS WILL BE WHERE THEY TRANSITION?

Part of the process for families completing the Application Form and applying to our Sixth Form now is that we can plot out the chosen pathway for our young people and support them to achieve their long-term goals. Ultimately, it is the Local Authority's decision where to place your young person post Year 14 but we will ensure they are as prepared as possible for their next chosen step.

WHERE DOES THE RESPONSIBILITY LIE FOR ENGAGING WITH OTHER SERVICES IE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE? DOES IT SIT WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR THE SCHOOL OR THE SERVICES THEMSELVES?

Historically, involvement with Adult Services has been sporadic but we wish to change this. Families should not feel they are "falling off a cliff" when they leave us. Knowledge needs to be passed on and Adult Services should be fully engaged to help ensure a seamless transition.

WILL MY YOUNG PERSON STILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM OTHER SERVICES WHILST IN SIXTH FORM?

Yes. Students are still seen and come under Devon County Council services such as the MSI team for Visual Impairment Support; Occupational Therapists etc.