



# POST-16 GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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Essential reading for parents of  
Year 11 students

**This document provides an overview of the integral process students need to undertake when applying to sixth form schools and colleges.**

## Introduction:

This guide has been compiled to address frequently asked questions about the post-16 application process for students, parents and carers. Post-16 education may mean continuing in education studying A-Levels at St Marylebone School or A-Levels or other qualifications at another school or college. Whatever qualification, range of subjects, course and centre your daughter chooses, it is important that it suits her skills, ability and ignites her interest.

Each year, there are a number of students who fail to prepare adequately for the next chapter of their lives and do not secure a place at a college or sixth form school. This often means that students can end up studying something that does not interest them at a college that they would not have otherwise chosen to attend. This guide emphasises the importance of your daughter securing a place at a sixth form or college and helps you to understand the application process so you can support your daughter over the next few months.

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## Section 1: Whose responsibility is it to find my daughter a suitable pathway post-GCSES?

It is the parental responsibility to ensure students have applied for a place next year. Students should be initiating this process early in the academic year researching looking at colleges and courses that suit their interests. Ultimately, parents must ensure that students have made applications by centre deadlines and that the courses applied for are suitable; primarily, this means your daughter's predicted grades would allow her to meet the entry requirements.

**TIP:** Please do not ignore teachers' predicted grades. Predicted grades are what the teachers believe the students will attain at GCSE. These grades are often a very accurate guide for the grades your daughter will attain in the Summer. In the past, students have ended up without a place in their chosen school or college because they have not applied for enough places or not considered their predicted grades when making applications.

## Section 2: What qualification types and pathways are available for post-16 education?

There is a huge range of courses available for students to study. Post-16 education is split into different types of courses that suit different learner's needs. Below is a rough guide based on entry requirements for the majority of courses available.

- **A-Level Courses**
- **Vocational Courses**
- **Apprenticeships**

**A-Levels** are academic qualifications. To attain C grades and higher in A-levels, students should be expected to attain a minimum of 5B grades at GCSE; including Cs in Maths, English & Science.

**Vocational Courses** focus on developing learners' practical skills and some learners just prefer this type of learning. An example of a qualification achieved within this is BTECs. BTECs have different entry levels to cater for different learners' abilities.

- **BTEC Level 3 courses** are for students who have achieved GCSEs, mainly 5 or more C grades.

**BTEC Level 2 courses** are for students who have achieved GCSEs, mainly D & E grades.

**BTEC Level 1 courses** are entry courses to further study. They are for students who have not attained GCSE qualifications or who have attained F grades or unclassified in exams.

**Apprenticeships** or work-based learning options can be found in conjunction with some courses within post-16 education colleges. Although apprenticeships receive much media coverage, the actual number of placements for 16-year olds is limited This is a competitive entry into work so if this is the post-16 pathway that interests your daughter, she should look at the below website as well as speak to Prospects, the schools careers advisor.

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

Within each of the above course types, there are a wide range of different subjects that can be studied. To look at the wide range of subjects offered by schools in Westminster only and view courses by subject area, visit the Westminster 6f website Courses information tab: <http://www.6f.org.uk/courses.asp>

All of the above pathways can lead your daughter to higher education (a university degree) in the future, but different timeframes apply to this. Please check carefully the information published by the centre to which your daughter is applying so you are aware of how your daughter can progress after taking up a qualification.



**TIP:** When helping your daughter find the right path for her education at post16 level, it is important you think about the different qualifications that exist and think about which one your daughter is most likely to succeed in and enjoy. It is also important to think about where the qualification can take your daughter.

### Section 3: Where can I find information about the courses and qualifications offered by centres and how does my daughter apply to centres?

To help students look at other options please use the following resources as guidance.

1. For colleges and schools in Westminster (qualifications and courses list) please use the following website: <http://www.6f.org.uk/>
2. For colleges and schools outside the Westminster borough, please use the following website: <http://www.ucasprogress.com>
3. Or simply: going to colleges/school individual website to look at their applications process.

The same way that courses and qualifications vary considerably between the different institutions, application deadlines also vary a great deal. Many application deadlines are around December (before the Christmas holidays), however some are as early as October, and other deadlines are as late as February 2012.

The majority of the popular colleges and sixth form schools have earlier deadlines.

To support the application process as well as having websites with a wealth of information, many colleges and schools hold open evenings and days from Sept 2011 to Feb 2012. For individual college and school information, you must check their website. However, many centres only hold one information session and opportunity to look around so if you miss it there is no second viewing.

**Please see the school guidelines regarding attending open mornings at the bottom of section4 (below).**

### Section 4: Managing the external application process Applying for a place at centres other than St Marylebone School.

1	Check the website of the college/school course for the deadline for external applications
2	Look out for any open evenings that take place inviting you to visit the college/school.
3	Most applications are online and students must research these. Applications will require students to have chosen the courses they want to study and write about why they will be suitable for that course. For Further details on application forms – see below
4	All centres will ask St Marylebone School for a student school-reference. This reference includes a statement written by the form tutor championing personal achievements and also includes students' predicted GCSE grades, attendance & punctuality data for Year 11 and details about your daughter's behaviour and organisational skills.
5	The centre will usually contact the student personally offering a conditional place (all places offered are conditional and rely on students achieving the course entry requirements).



### **Important information about school-written student references:**

- Predicated grades will not be changed by teachers. They are a realistic expectation of what your daughter will achieve. Inflating grades at the request of students or parents to meet course entry requirements is counterproductive, as students are likely to be rejected when not attaining the grades.
- Students are not given a copy of the reference (paper or electronic). The school will send the reference to the centre in question directly.

### **How do I request a school-written reference?**

- On application to another centre, students should inform their Head of Year (HOY) and always put their Head of Year's name on the application as their point of contact for the reference.
- If a student has a paper application, it should be completed fully by the student and handed to her Head of Year to send off (as they will also add the student's school reference which will be required).
- If a student has an electronic application, it should be completed fully by the student, and she should inform her Head of Year that they have applied to this centre. The Head of Year should be listed as a reference (name & e-mail required) as the HOY will be contacted by the centre for the student reference separately.

### **What are the school rules when attending external college open days/evenings**

Most schools and colleges have open evenings, mornings or afternoons where students can visit to see what the centre is like and gain more information about the types of courses offered. Students are strongly encouraged to visit colleges in the open evenings to avoid missing any school lessons. However, it is recognised that some schools/colleges only offer open mornings. Therefore, students are permitted to have one morning or afternoon sixth form visit as an authorised absence by the school. However, an authorised absence is only permitted if students are accompanied by a parent and the parent has written a letter to the HOY requesting this permission at least 1 week prior to the date in question.

### **What are the admissions policies of most of the centres?**

To gain a conditional offer from most centres, students have to meet the admissions criteria published by the centre to which they apply. This will include predicted GCSEs, but may also include punctuality, attendance, and a positive approach to learning. This is why in Year 11, students are urged to:

- Work hard throughout the year to ensure predicted grades are reflective of student ability
  - Achieve 95% or above for school attendance and punctuality
- Participate in the school community in a positive way and have a positive approach to learning

## **Section 5: Managing the internal application processes. How does my daughter apply for a place at St Marylebone School?**

Most students who want to pursue A-Levels choose to come to the St Marylebone Sixth Form. The school welcomes this, however **all students** must have a back up placement for post-16 education in case their actual GCSE grades do not meet the centre entry requirements. Internal students who meet entry requirements and apply by the application deadline are given priority places over external students. The St Marylebone School Sixth Form Open Afternoon for internal applicants is Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November. Full information is provided in this afternoon about the internal application process.

Briefly, this includes:

- Online application submitted by the deadline –Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December
- Two interviews with a member of the school Senior Management Team. These take place in November and January.



### **The St Marylebone Sixth Form school entry requirements are:**

A minimum of 5 or more B grades at GCSE in any range of subjects;

A minimum of C GCSE grades in English Language Maths and Science.

*Additionally, individual courses have different entry requirements so students should ensure that their predicted grades meet these subject requirements when applying for individual courses.*

**ALL applicants will be informed about the outcome of their applications by the end of March.**

## **Section 6: How many places should my daughter apply to?**

All students are encouraged to make **three applications to different centres**. This is because it gives them choice in August upon receiving their results. In August, students can then accept their first-choice offer.

Students should be realistic when applying for colleges and schools and ensure they are likely to meet the centres entry requirements. Many students like to apply for an aspirational college/school where the entry requirements are above what their teachers have predicted. This is only acceptable if the student also has other realistic applications, whereby it is likely they will meet the centre entry requirements.

One of the applications students make should be a “back-up option” as there are a few students who do not meet their predicted grades and are not accepted into the school/college to which they applied. This means students are left in September applying for colleges/subject courses that are often unsuitable for their needs.

## **Section 7: What support does St Marylebone School offer?**

- CV & personal statement guidance in directed time
- A business morning where students are encouraged to show case their CVs and talk about careers
- Prospects is an external organisation which operates in the school 2 days a week, advising students on careers and pathways for formal career advice and helps them plan a pathway for post-16 education. Each student has a 30-minute appointment with the Prospects advisor and can students can use the drop-in centre any Thursday or Tuesday at lunch time.
- Student references are completed accurately by form tutors and are a positive and accurate representation of your daughter’s character and ability
- Predicted grades are updated by subject teachers in November (meeting most external/college application deadlines.)
  - Student references are sent to centres promptly by the Head of Year 11.
- A letter will be sent home regarding the internal application St Marylebone Sixth Form Open Afternoon notifying parents. Additionally, this afternoon is compulsory for all students.
- Reminder letters will be sent out in January to parents/guardians of all students who have not made applications to other centres.

## **Section 8: Summary of key information**

1. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure students find a suitable place at a centre for post-16 education.
2. Entry requirements vary between centres in regard to course types and subjects.
3. Use teacher predicted grades as the realistic measure to see if your child will attain the entry requirements.
4. Ensure your daughter applies to a minimum of three centres and that one of these has lower entry requirements than your daughter’s predicted grades (just in case).