

## CAREERS

Focusing on careers and written by our independent Careers Guidance Adviser, Mr Chris Targett.

As we race ahead into spring, with the early daffodils providing us with welcome colour and bluebells on the horizon, most of Year 11 will have their applications for 6<sup>th</sup> Forms, Colleges and Training Providers completed; some may have found Apprenticeships. Many will be having their interviews and be receiving offers for their courses, as well as preparing for exams.

Decisions will have to be made which, can be a difficult thing for some as you will be making choices which, may affect the rest of your lives.

We know that making random decisions is dangerous but, there are other not so obvious risks and pit falls. Potentially the most dangerous of these is misinformation and hearsay, where opinions stand in for an informed view point.

Here are some common myths I have heard recently...

**If the building looks great, the courses must be as well.**

False: How good the teaching is, cannot be judged by the surroundings of a school or college alone.

**BTECs are inferior qualifications to A-Levels.**

False: Both are offered at Level 3 by exam boards, with different courses suiting different assessment and learning styles.

**If I go to University I must do A-Levels.**

False: There are over 35,000 different University courses, only a tiny proportion of these prefer A-Levels only.

**A bad A-level grade is better than a high BTEC grade.**

False: The higher your grades the more choice you will have for applying to University, College or an Apprenticeship, School Leaver Programme or Higher Apprenticeship later.

Statistics become a useful "objective" tool to check how a school or college is performing. Yet, as with all statistics we must check how they have been collected, for what purposes and by whom.

For example, some places advertise very high pass rates, as these rates only reflect the students they put in for their exams (not all the students). In some 6<sup>th</sup> Forms or colleges, you are "dropped" at the end of Year 12 if you are not achieving.

With progression data, a trade course may advertise 98% progression to employment, this does not always include the area you are training for (so ask for that data).

It is also important to gain the statistics which, match your own situation (so they are accurate). If you are moving to another school or college, do the statistics you find match your situation or are they representative of the students who have been there since Year 7 and already know the teachers, institution, study styles?

Consider...

- What is their pass rate?
- What is their drop-out rate for each year?
- Where do students progress to?
- Do all students sit their exams in Year 13?

Finally statistics aren't always enough, the human dimension can affect our choice. A culture of a school or college can determine how well we do. Ask yourself, what do I need in my environment to achieve? Is it the pastoral services, strong working relationships with teachers, extra support when you need it, study sessions, extra-curricular activities...? Institutions don't offer these in the same way, what you take for granted at one maybe completely missing or different at another.

Ultimately, look to find a place you will thrive at. As the higher the grades you can achieve, the greater the choices you will have later.

I wish you all the very best of luck with your research and if you need support with your decision making, please speak to your tutors and if necessary, arrange an appointment to see me in school.

Best wishes,

Mr Chris Targett  
CXK Careers Adviser, March, 2015