

# UNLOCKING

## Post 16

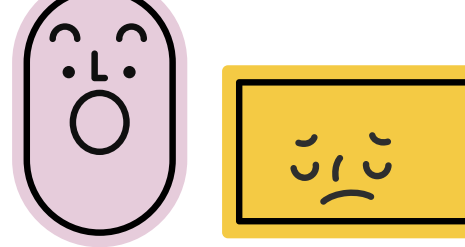
**A SHARED GUIDE TO STARTING  
COLLEGE OR APPRENTICESHIPS**

**COLLEGE**



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# PROCESS DIAGRAM

## STARTING COLLEGE



**This may look different if you are enrolling onto an Apprenticeship as you may visit your Employer or start with your employer before you begin at college.**



**Going to college is about getting the basics locked in so that you can level up in a career.**

**The "Grade 4" Mission:**

If you didn't get a Grade 4 in GCSE English or Maths, you'll be retaking them alongside your course. Don't ghost these lessons. They are the "Golden Ticket"—without them, most employers won't look at your CV.

**Skill Up:**

Level 1/2 courses are usually very practical (Construction, Hair, Health & Social Care, etc.). Treat the workshops like a workplace. If you show up on time and respect the kit, the tutors will go to bat for you when it's time for work experience.

**Non-college days:**

There may be some days or gaps within your timetable, don't think of this time as time to chill but time for revision, course work catch up or even to gain work experience.

**Ask for the "LSA":**

Most colleges have Learning Support Assistants. They aren't like school TAs; they are more like "academic coaches." If you're stuck on an assignment, grab one. No one is going to judge you for asking.

# THE PRACTICAL stuff

Focus Area	What the Student Does	What the Parent/Carer Does
<b>English &amp; Maths</b>	Show up to every retake lesson. It's the fastest way to stop doing them!	Help them find a "retake routine"—15 mins of practice a day is better than a 3-hour binge.
<b>Attendance</b>	Use the college app to track your % score. Aim for 90%+.	Set a "no-questions-asked" morning alarm. Getting there is half the battle.
<b>The Bursary</b>	Ask the Student Services desk for an application form.	Help them gather the proof of income/benefits needed for the application.
<b>Work Experience</b>	Typically a Level 2 course has a "Work Placement." Start thinking about where you want to go.	Use your network. Do you know someone in the industry who could offer them a week of shadowing?

# FOR PARENTS & CARERS: THE QUIET SUPPORT

**At Level 1 and 2, the student is often building back their confidence after a tough time at school, so how can you support their time in post-16 study?**

- 1. Celebrate the "Small" Wins:** For a student on a Level 1 course, passing a single module or getting through a full week of 100% attendance is a massive milestone. Acknowledge it.
- 2. The "Functional Skills" vs. GCSE Debate:** It is now common for students to take Functional Skills instead of GCSE retakes. These are shorter, more practical exams. If they are offered this, encourage it! It's a valid path to Level 3 and is often less stressful than a standard GCSE.
- 3. Check the "Kit List":** Vocational courses often require specific gear (steel toe boots, chef whites, salon tunics). Ensure you've applied for the College Bursary early—these funds often cover the cost of this kit so it doesn't come out of your pocket.
- 4. Induction Week:** Large group inductions can be very daunting, it may be beneficial as the parent to reach out to the college's SENDCO to arrange quiet, 1:1 campus tours before the September rush.
- 4. The "Confidence Dip":** After the first month, they might feel like they aren't "doing enough" compared to friends on higher level courses. Remind them that this is a stepping stone. Level 2 is the gateway to Level 3 (T-Levels/Apprenticeships).
- 5. The "Ask, Don't Tell" Approach:** Instead of asking "Have you done your homework?", try "What's the biggest thing on your plate this week?" or "Is there any research I can help you find?" This respects their independence while keeping you informed.



# FOR PARENTS & CARERS: RED FLAGS

## **Red Flags: When to Reach Out**

**Since Level 1/2 courses move fast, keep an eye out for these:**

**"I don't have any work to do":** At college, there is always something to do (even if it's just logging into the VLE/Teams to check notes). If they haven't touched a laptop in two weeks, check in with their Personal Tutor.

**The "I'm Failing" Spiral:** If they get a low mark on a first assignment, they may feel like they "don't belong." Remind them that Level 3 (A-Levels/T-Levels) is designed to be a challenge and that "re-submission" is a normal part of the learning process.

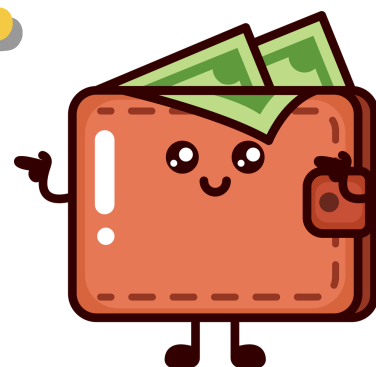
**The "Wednesday Wobble":** If they are consistently "too tired" or "sick" on the same day every week, they might be struggling with their chosen course, a specific subject, teacher, anxiety or bullying.

**The Withdrawal:** In 2026, students can "transfer" courses within the first 4 weeks. If they hate their subject, don't let them quit college—help them talk to the Careers Team about a "Course Change."

**Pro Tip:** Make sure you both have the Personal Tutor's email address. This person is your main point of contact for everything—from mental health to "lost my bus pass."



# FINANCIAL SUPPORT



The hidden costs of college—travel, specialised equipment, and food can add up quickly, but there is support in place which you can apply for.

Support Type	What to Check
<b>16-19 Bursary Fund</b>	For students struggling with costs like books, kits, or transport. Apply via the college.
<b>Travel Passes</b>	Many local authorities offer discounted "Scholar" or student bus/train passes. Check your local council website or ask the college how to apply.
<b>Placement Expenses</b>	ask the college about "Placement Expenses"—some colleges provide extra funds for travel or smart clothes for their 45-day industry placement.
<b>Care to Learn</b>	If the student is a young parent (under 20), this can help pay for childcare while they study.
<b>Child Benefits</b>	You can continue to get Child Benefit until your child turns 20 if they are in certain types of education or training. You must tell HRMC about their education or training. Check if your child's education or training qualifies: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19">https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19</a>

# WELLBEING

## The "First Term" Check-In

**The first six weeks are the most critical for retention.**

**Social Anxiety:** In a large FE (Further Education) college, a student might go from a class of 30 friends to a campus of 3,000 strangers. Encourage them to join a Student Union club or society in the first fortnight.

**The "October Dip":** Expect a slump in late October. The workload increases, the weather turns, and the initial excitement fades. This is when most "drop-out" thoughts occur—it's usually a sign they need help with time management, not that they've chosen the wrong course.

**Mental Health Access:** Every UK college has a Wellbeing Team. Unlike GPs, these teams can often be accessed via "drop-in" sessions without a long waiting list. Most colleges now offer 24/7 Student Support & Wellbeing Services.

Reminder that these aren't just for crises—they are for managing stress, exam anxiety, or even just navigating new friendships.



# SEND & SUPPORT PLANS

**If you have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or received Access Arrangements (like 25% extra time) for GCSEs, this support does not automatically transfer.**

**Contact the SENDCO: You must ensure the college has received the EHCP from the local authority.**

**Self-Disclosure: Encourage the student to disclose any neurodiversity (Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism) during enrollment.**

**Helpful tip: Share the specific de-escalation or self-regulation strategies that worked well for you at Springwell with the college's Learning Support Assistants to aid your time in College.**

**Colleges have massive support budgets and resources, but they can't help if they don't know.**



# OWNING YOUR FREEDOM TO BUILD YOUR FUTURE

College is the first time you get to treat "learning" like a job you actually chose.

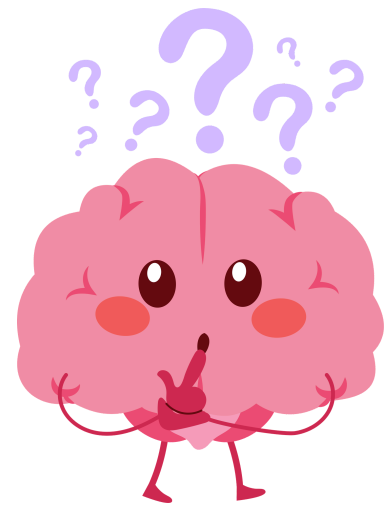
**The "Double-Study" Habit:** Don't wait for homework to be set. For every hour you are in a classroom, spend an hour on your own—reading ahead, organizing notes, or watching a tutorial.

**The 48-Hour Inbox Rule:** In college, important info (like room changes or placement details) comes via email or the college portal (e.g., MS Teams). Check it daily. If you ignore it for 48 hours, you'll likely miss something critical.

**Social Bravery:** Everyone is as nervous as you are in the first week. Join a society or a sports team immediately. It is much easier to make friends over a shared interest (like gaming, football, or debating) than just sitting next to someone in a lecture.

**Master the "Gap":** If you have a 3-hour gap between lessons, do not go home or sit in the canteen scrolling. Go to the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). Getting your work done during the college day means your evenings and weekends are actually yours.

# FAQ Sheet



Do I have to go to every lesson?

Yeah, especially for Level 1 and 2. Missing one vocational workshop is like missing three days of school because you can't "catch up" on hands-on skills via a textbook.

Is there a uniform?

Usually no, but for Level 1/2 vocational courses (like Construction, Catering, or Hair), you'll have "Personal Protective Equipment" (PPE) or a kit. You must wear it in the workshop or you'll be sent home for safety.

Is there any 1:1 support?

Support at college looks different. You won't have someone sat next to you in every lesson, but you can book time with a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) or use the "Drop-in" study zones. Make sure to share your EHCP or SEN Support Plan if you have one so that the correct support can be given.

What happens if I fail my English and Maths Again?

It's not the end of the world. You'll be put into a "Retake" or "Functional Skills" group. You keep going until you get that Grade 4/Pass. It's a drag, but it's the key to your next level.

Who do I talk to if I am struggling or hate my course?

Find your Personal Tutor or the Student Hub. You usually have a "grace period" (the first 4 weeks) where you might be able to swap courses if there's space.

What do I do if I cannot afford transport or Lunch?

Most colleges have travel schemes. Go to the "Student Support" desk and ask about travel passes or bursary support. Don't just stop coming because you're broke.