



PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER 16

Education - colleges

Introduction

The options that may be open to your son or daughter include:

- › Sixth Form College
- › FE College
- › Specialist College for people with disabilities

Sixth form colleges

As these are often larger than school sixth forms, they may offer a wider range of courses, including the more traditional ones, and cater for adults as well as teenagers. It is important to note that they are classed as colleges rather than schools, so students are not entitled to statements. For information about how the support system works in colleges, see the factsheet Special Needs Support in Colleges.

FE Colleges

FE Colleges do vary in the courses they offer, but the range of options might include:

- › Academic courses such as GCSEs and 'A' levels
- › More practically based courses, such as Art and Design
- › Vocational courses such as Motor Mechanics or Child Care

Many of these courses can be studied at a number of different levels, allowing students to progress to more advanced qualifications if appropriate.

Most FE Colleges also offer specific courses for students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. These are, however, pitched at a very low level – too low for most young people with speech and language impairments.

For more information about how colleges support students with special needs or disabilities, see the factsheet Special Needs Support in Colleges.

Why go to college?

In some areas, you may not have much of a choice, and FE College may be the only option available if your son or daughter wishes to continue in education. Do bear in mind that colleges do not have catchment areas in the way that some schools do, and your son or daughter can apply to any college he or she is able to get to.

Those young people who choose to go to college rather than stay at school often give the following reasons:

- › The practical focus of many courses
- › There is a much more adult atmosphere, with students and tutors often on first name terms.
- › Vocational courses can provide a useful stepping stone into employment.

Specialist Colleges

Specialist colleges educate students whose special needs cannot be met in FE Colleges. They vary in the type(s) of needs and disabilities they cater for. However, there are no specialist colleges specifically for students with speech and language impairments.

There are usually quite long waiting lists for a place and provision is mostly residential. For both these reasons, perhaps, students at specialist colleges tend to be 18+ and often go there after leaving special schools at around 19.

If you or your son or daughter feel that a specialist college is the best option for them, you will need to apply to your local authority who, in turn, will have to secure funding from the YPLA. Local authorities will generally only agree to a placement in a specialist college if you can demonstrate that your son or daughter's needs could not be met in an FE college, which usually means obtaining written confirmation from two local colleges saying that they cannot provide the required support. It is also necessary to apply for a place well in advance, ideally at least a year ahead. Your Connexions advisor can help you with this.

For more information on any of these issues, see the factsheet *Education: Sources of Further Information* or contact the **Afasic Helpline on 0300 666 9410 or 0207 490 9420.**