



OSA Year 12 Handbook

2022-23

Contents

Page 3	Key people in Sixth Form at OSA
Page 4	Timings of the school day
Page 5	Attendance
Page 6	Home Study, Dress Code, ID badges
Page 7	Registration and pastoral time, Fire Drills
Page 8	Sixth Formers and Houses Sixth Form leadership, Communication, School email
Page 9	Independent Study Time, Study Space, Common Rooms and lockers
Page 10	Community Service, Paid Work, Work Experience, Bursaries
Page 11	Independent Learning
Page 12	Planning for courses
Page 13	Reporting and monitoring progress, ALPS grades
Page 14	Exams and Results Days
Page 15	Super-curricular activities and Careers
Page 16	Applying to University
Page 17	Taking a Gap Year, Non-University routes
Page 19	Sixth Form Agreement
Page 20	Work Experience information and Media consent

Key people in the Sixth Form

Head of Sixth Form – Dr J Watson

Dr Watson has overall responsibility for Sixth Form curriculum and pastoral matters. She is available informally in the Sixth Form office, and if you want to make an appointment, you can do so there. She will do UCAS references for Year 13 students, and advise on careers and university options, as well as on work experience. She will also look at reports for both year groups – putting in place support and disciplinary procedures as required if you are not achieving your best. In school more widely, she has responsibility for enrichment and careers. She also teaches Sixth Form pastoral sessions, and is the supervisor for Extended Projects. Email address: jwatson@spires.anthemtrust.uk

Deputy Head of Sixth Form and Head of Year 13 – Ms B Harry

Miss Harry can help students with most issues in the Sixth Form. She is a safeguarding first point of contact for Sixth Form students, and can make referrals to the school counsellor or other bodies. She is available informally in the Sixth Form office, and if you want to make an appointment, you can do so there. She will work with both years in the Sixth Form to ensure they succeed on courses, but has particular responsibility this year for Year 12. She is in charge of the Year 12 Pastoral Programme and will help students settle in to Sixth Form work. She will advise on careers and university options and leads Year 12 Work Experience. She will put in place support and disciplinary procedures as required if you're not achieving your best in school. Email address: bharry@spires.anthemtrust.uk

Head of Year 12 – Mr M Loftus

Mr Loftus can help with most Sixth Form issues too, and will be available in the Sixth Form Office. He will have particular responsibility for Year 13 this year, and will write UCAS references. Like Dr Watson or Ms Harry, he will put in place support and disciplinary procedures as required if you're not achieving your best in school. Email address: mloftus@spires.anthemtrust.uk

Sixth Form Office Manager – Ms Z Spittle

Ms Spittle has responsibility for Sixth Form student attendance, and she is your point of contact if you are absent. Your attendance figure is a vital one for success in your subjects, and it must be reported – both to parents, and to any future employers. Please ring her on **01865 415926** as soon as possible on the morning you are absent – or email her. She is also your daily point of contact, in the Sixth Form Office, for queries about timetables, changes in SIMS data, student bursaries and so on. Email address: zspittle@spires.anthemtrust.uk

Sixth Form, Careers and Enrichment Support – Ms M Hoosein

Ms Hoosein works in the Sixth Form Office and will also follow up on absence, as well as managing supervised study periods and organising careers appointments.

Careers Advisor – Mr D Bingham

A named careers advisor works with individual students to help plan their futures. You can make an appointment to see Mr Bingham in school by seeing Ms Hoosein, emailing him directly on DavidBingham@adviza.org.uk or ringing him on 07753 900158.

Timings of the school day

Sixth Form students arrive on site for a lesson start at 8.45am. The gates will close at 8.30, and Sixth Form arriving after that will come in through Reception. You will either register in Lesson 1, or – if you have a study period – in the Common Room.

Tutor time	8.30-9am
Period 1	9am-10am
Period 2	10am-11am
Break	11am-11.20
Period 3	11.20-12.20
Period 4	12.20-1.20
Lunch	1.20-2pm (one day each week you will have a Pastoral session/assembly in lunchtime)
Period 5	2pm-3pm
Period 6	3pm-4pm (occasionally Sixth Form lessons have to be put in p.6 to fit into the timetable)

Important things to note...

ID Badges

A reminder that every time a Sixth Form student is on site, they MUST have their lanyard and ID badge around their neck. If they do not have this, they will be asked to leave site, go home and fetch it. Replacements for lost badges must be arranged immediately (and cost £5 from Ms Spittle).

Mobile Phones

Sixth Form are allowed to have mobile phones on site, and to use them in Sixth Form only spaces, or in lessons with staff permission. Please do not have your phone visible in school anywhere apart from these places.

We ask you to set a good example to younger years, and you will have your phone taken from you by any member of staff seeing it elsewhere.

Attendance

Sixth Form Attendance

One of the most important aspects of your success in the Sixth Form is attendance. You need to attend all your lessons to make sure you have covered all the basic elements of your course.

Authorised absence

There will be times when you cannot be in school. Acceptable reasons include school visits, illness or funerals of close family. Hospital appointments, or major dental work, are also often outside your control. Where possible please let Ms Spittle know IN ADVANCE.

You are always aiming to be in as many lessons as possible, so you should discuss anything else you would like to do (such as attending university open days or arranging work experience in the school term) with Sixth Form staff so that you can minimise any disruption. If you are ill, or something has been pre-arranged, though, you will be marked with an authorised absence mark in the registers.

In case of sudden illness, you should ring the Sixth Form Office on the morning you are away – before school starts at 8.40am – on **01865 415926** or email Ms Spittle on zspittle@spires.anthemtrust.uk. If you are going to be absent it is vital to talk to your teachers, or, in the case of an unplanned absence, to email them – so do that, please.

Unauthorised absence

If you do not agree an absence before you go, or ring in when you are ill, then the absence will be marked as unauthorised. **This could mean that we charge you for exam entry or – if it is persistent – it could put your Sixth Form place at risk.** You cannot learn if you are not in your classes and do not plan how to cope with an absence... Also unacceptable is missing school time to have a regular dentist or doctor's appointment, or a driving lesson (please make them when you do not have a lesson in school). You will not be authorised to attend paid work during the school day, and should arrange shifts around school time.

Catching up when you have missed a lesson

If you DO miss a lesson – whatever the reason – you need to email your teacher to let them know, and to catch up on missing work. The first way of doing this is to talk to a fellow student or to check any emailed work or work on Teams from the teacher. Then check with teachers directly when you're back. But **make sure you are up to date, where possible, by the next lesson.** Then you can carry on in the next lesson without falling behind...

Holidays

Please do not arrange holidays that clash with school days. These will not be authorised absences. For 2021-22 this means the following term dates (all, of course, responsive to COVID changes – please keep an eye on parent mail/student mail for any changes)

Term 1 – Tues 6 Sept to Fri 21 Oct (1/2 Sept = INSET Days; 5 Sept = Yr 12 parental interviews. All Sixth Form start lessons on Tues 6 Sept)

Term 2 – Mon 31 Oct to Tues 20 Dec

Term 3 – Wed 4 Jan to Fri 10 Feb (INSET Day Tues 3 Jan)

Term 4 – Mon 20 Feb to Fri 31 Mar

Term 5 – Mon 17 April to Fri 26 May (1 May = Bank Holiday)

Term 6 – Mon 5 June to Fri 14 July

Year 12 Level 3 students will have internal exams in the summer, which will determine whether they progress directly to Year 13, and after these they have careers provision and work experience; **they must not miss lessons before the end of the school year.**

Home Study

In Year 12, you are starting to get used to having periods on your timetable without lessons. Some people manage this really well, and work hard outside classes. Others struggle more. You will need to prioritise work in each of your subjects out of lesson time each week.

One of the changes we have made due to COVID is that Year 12 will have home study from the start of the year, and this means that fewer students will be on site at any time. You do not have to work at home – you have a common room to work in if you are in school – but you may come in for lessons and any pastoral time only if you wish. If you struggle to manage your time out of school, and staff report that you are not handing in work as required, then we reserve the right to allocate you supervised study periods in school.

You will be registered on site if you come in for a lesson. But if you are in school for private study, just make sure you sign in on the sheet in your Common Room. You should sign out on these sheets too when you leave. This enables us to monitor who is on and who is off site if there is an emergency, such as a fire.

Home study is a privilege which will be taken away, though, if your work slips – and then you will be asked to stay in school for your study time.

Dress Code

By being part of the Sixth Form at Oxford Spires Academy, you agree to abide by its rules on dress. These are few, and simple. Please make sure you don't dress inappropriately – Sixth Form staff will ask you to go home and change, and you can't afford to miss lessons (see previous page!).

PLEASE AVOID: ripped jeans, cropped tops or anything too revealing, hats indoors

YOU MUST WEAR: an ID badge on a lanyard

As a Sixth Former at OSA, you are often called upon to represent the school – taking tours, talking to guests, prospective students and their parents, and presenting your work to outside visitors. You need to present a smart and professional image, therefore, at all times.

ID Badges

As you don't wear uniform, and a lot of Sixth Form students are not known to many staff, you need to follow the same rules as other adults on site. **This means that you need to wear an ID badge on a lanyard around your neck every day** – and need to send Ms Spittle a photo for a free card when you enrol.

You will need these badges to enter and leave school at Reception – important as you will have study time off-site and will need to be able to arrive later or leave earlier. As it's a vital part of school safeguarding, **you will not be allowed on site without one**. They also allow entry to the Sixth Form Common Room.

If you lose or break your card, so that it no longer works, then you need to pay for a replacement. This is available from Ms Spittle in the Sixth Form Office, but will cost you £5 – so keep your original one safe! (NB. If you wear it on the lanyard, then you will have less problem with breakage...)

Registration and pastoral sessions

Your percentage attendance is assessed on your lesson attendance, and attendance at pastoral/tutor times.

Sixth Form students still need to maintain links with their House, as they are leaders of the lower school, and act as House Captains etc.

You still need to undertake pastoral work in the Sixth Form and this session will be weekly. Ms Harry will update you by email each week on topics to be covered, but this will include careers work, academic mentoring, social and health issues and study skills.

The Sixth Form tutors for each House are as follows:

Bannister = Ms Mason

Earhart = Ms Abbot

Seacole = Ms Morris

Tolkien = Ms Bartlett and Mr Holmes

They will help lead weekly Sixth Form pastoral sessions and will review your progress with you. They are a good first person to talk to about pressures which are getting in the way of your learning – from managing your time to worries at home.

Sixth Form staff (the tutors, Dr Watson, Ms Harry and Mr Loftus) will help you prepare for your applications after Sixth Form – encouraging you to undertake extra-curricular and super-curricular activities and helping you prepare personal statements and CVs. In Year 13, they help you put together your UCAS application, and give advice on interviews.

House Tutors will help House Captains sort out competitions, and will encourage Sixth Form students to get involved in House events. This will all help other students – and you, as you build your personal statement.

It is important that you register in school as requested as this forms your basic attendance figure for future references.

Fire Drills

If there is a fire alarm, you need to line up at the front of school, in your House line, in alphabetical order, making sure that the two year groups keep separate.

Sixth Formers and Houses

You are put in a tutor group in the Sixth Form to make sure you are part of a House. The Houses are your opportunity to gain important leadership experience, and to widen your profile for applications. They enable anyone who wishes to, to take part in House competitions. It is – of course – also an opportunity to give something back to younger students, through mentoring, rehearsing or training them. As you were given chances and support by older students when you were in earlier years, then you can – in turn – support and be a role model for those who follow you... You may be asked to lead younger year assemblies, and these allow Sixth Form students to appear as leaders of the school.

Sixth Form Leadership

You should aim to be a leader, as this suggests, in the Sixth Form. You lead younger students in everything you do – every day. But more particularly, in House terms, that might mean applying to be a House Captain – and leading on a specific aspect of House activity. It might also mean applying to be a Lead Student – or to be in the school's Student Leadership Team. Applications for these posts will be from 24 April 2023, for the following academic year.

Communication

It's really important in the Sixth Form to find out what is available and to take up opportunities as they arise. This might mean participating in school and House events; it might mean taking part in extra-curricular events in or out of school; and it might mean 'super-curricular' activity, such as extra courses or university visits, which add to your academic profile.

The key thing is that you need to know how to find out what is available! Information for Sixth Formers comes:

- **by email (so you need to check your school email regularly...)**
- on noticeboards in the Common Room (so, even if you spend study periods elsewhere, try to call in there regularly)
- in tutor, pastoral sessions or assemblies
- on the website. There are links on there to suggested super-curricular sites and ideas for further study or for careers and university research here. There are ideas here too for independent learning and how to widen your profile, as you prepare yourself for university or job applications...

School email

Your email address will be a number for your year group (Year 12 is 16; Year 13 is 15) then your first initial, your surname in full and it ends @spires.anthemtrust.uk. So it will be in the format 16hpotter@spires.anthemtrust.uk. The bit before the domain name is your username when you log on to the school system. If you are new into the Sixth Form, then you first log on to a school PC, your password will be Spires followed by your birthday (6 digits) – please change it immediately. Support on this will be given if needed when you enrol.

Independent Study time

Student timetables are created to help you succeed! As well as your subject lessons with teachers, you also have study time. Don't waste time in rooms which are too crowded to work effectively. Plan your work, in school and at home, so that you cover all the work teachers set – and have extra time for each subject each week to:

- consolidate what you've learnt, by going over material yourself that you've done in classes,
- start to prepare for revision,
- add to your notes and look more widely at issues and topics covered in class,
- and look ahead to topics which are coming up, so classes go more smoothly

Look ahead to the section on Independent Learning (p. 11) to see what is expected of you academically OUTSIDE the classroom...

Study space, Common Rooms and Lockers

There are two Sixth Form Common Rooms. Year 12 will only be able to use the space at the top of Reuben, and Year 13 will also have space in the Conference Centre.

Sixth Form students in school during study periods can work in the Common Room, if they are studying privately, or in the Sixth Form part of the Library. Access to Willows is available during the day too, and food can be purchased and eaten there, or in the Common Room. If you bring food into the Common Rooms, please make sure you tidy up after yourself; put litter in the bin and any cutlery or crockery in the dishwasher. This is how you should behave in any communal space.

By student request, we have increased the number of lockers in both common rooms. They are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Just bring a padlock in and claim a locker – but make sure it is cleared at the end of the summer term, when any remaining padlocks will be cut off and lockers emptied.

Students can bring in their own devices to work on and laptops are available for student use from the Sixth Form Office in the Reuben Common Room. You need to leave a mobile phone or a bank card there to take a laptop, and can claim that back when you return it.

There are also spare copies of textbooks for most subjects available in the Sixth Form Office in Reuben.

Community Service

We ask our Year 12 students who are not doing 4 A level subjects to volunteer at least one period each week in community service. Some will choose to volunteer outside school, with a local charity, perhaps, or with a local primary school or care home to build up work experience. But most will help out in younger classes, run clubs or rehearsals, or mentor individuals.

Giving something back to the school is important to many students who leave Year 11. For all students, previously at OSA or from other schools, it is important to build skills that help you gain jobs and university places. Communication, organisation, leadership, problem-solving, resilience – all of these vital skills can be developed and shown through this volunteering.

You will be given a range of options within school in the first few days of term, or you can opt to arrange your own placement outside school – but you will need to record your community service at your first Sixth Form review with your tutor.

Paid Work

One of the great things about getting older is that you have a social life, learn to drive and so on – for most of which you need money! It might help you prepare for university too... Paid work is a good thing, as you gain all sorts of new skills and can prove your commitment in another way than through school. However, too much of it is a bad thing as it takes away the time you should be using to work independently on your subjects.

University of Durham research shows that up to and including 10 hours paid work each week improves students' performance at A level. **Every hour over 10 hours a week knocks half a grade off your final results...** So a 16-hour contract means a loss of 3 grades overall – one grade less on each of a three A level programme. That means, potentially, the difference between the university you want, and one you don't... So be careful!

Work Experience

Everyone in Year 12 now has to be offered a Work Experience placement – it is the law! There is a calendared Work Experience week in the week beginning 10 July, and every student will either arrange their own at that time or have a placement arranged for them then, or arrange their own at another time in the year that suits the institution they plan to visit. You should negotiate the latter with Ms Harry.

There is a sheet at the end of this Handbook that allows the Educational Business Partnership – the company we have employed to arrange the placements – to begin work on your behalf. The helpfulness of the placement will depend on your giving them accurate information, so that they can arrange a placement you will benefit from. After the information you give in October work will begin in earnest contacting businesses and institutions to find a suitable placement for you.

Bursaries

Students from families where the **family income is less than £25,000** per year can apply for a bursary to study in the Sixth Form. This means the total income for the household in which the student lives should be £25,000 or less. You need to ask Ms Spittle for an application form, and, if you qualify, you will receive payment for authorised spending on items needed for school, including books, travel, clothing, stationery etc. You will need to keep receipts and you need a bank account to receive this money.

Being a successful Sixth Form student means...

Sixth Form students have to be good independent learners if they are going to do well after GCSEs – and if they plan to make a successful transition to university. The following diagram shows the kind of behaviour in and out of the classroom that will make you successful...



Sixth Form Learning

Planning for success: exams and assessed work

As soon as you start Sixth Form courses at OSA, make a note of the following information to make sure you are prepared.

OSA Centre Number 62337

Your exam Candidate Number _____

Subject				
Level (GCSE, AS level, A level or BTEC Level 3)	Length of course (1 year or 2 years)	Exam board	When are any exams? (eg. June 2023 internal exams)	When is internal assessment due for completion?
Subject				
Level (GCSE, AS level, A level or BTEC Level 3)	Length of course (1 year or 2 years)	Exam board	When are any exams? (eg. June 2023 internal exams)	When is internal assessment due for completion?
Subject				
Level (GCSE, AS level, A level or BTEC Level 3)	Length of course (1 year or 2 years)	Exam board	When are any exams? (eg. June 2023 internal exams)	When is internal assessment due for completion?
Subject				
Level (GCSE, AS level, A level or BTEC Level 3)	Length of course (1 year or 2 years)	Exam board	When are any exams? (eg. June 2023 internal exams)	When is internal assessment due for completion?

Make sure you know your exam board website addresses and how to access information about courses – specifications and past or sample papers/mark schemes.

Reporting and monitoring your progress

The first assessment of Sixth Form students is made after the first few weeks of courses. Provided you work hard in these first weeks, and your test results and homeworks show that you are able to cope with the level of work, there will be no problem. Lack of work or difficulty with the level might mean a change of course – and if it is over more than one subject, you may have to consider a change of school. This is VERY rare, but do your best from the start – and use your study time effectively...

Students in the Sixth Form have Assessment Points during the year, and **reports from these are available through Go 4 Schools (for students and parents)** at the following ends of terms:

Year 12:

AP1 – December 2022

AP2 – March 2023

Mock results data – July 2023

Students from OSA Year 11 and their parents will already have Go4Schools access, but students will need to request a password setting link to their new school email address. Students who are joining us from other schools, and their parents, will be able to set up Go4Schools access by visiting <https://www.go4schools.com/> and setting up their access. (Go to the Student or Parent tab on the top left. Parents need to use the email address registered with school, and students need to use their school email address – ending @spires.anthemtrust.uk) If there are any problems setting this up, please email Ms Spittle, or ring the Sixth Form Office.

Assessment, reviewing progress and target-setting goes on between these points, of course, and some students are particularly closely mentored if Sixth Form staff feel they need that extra support. In addition to these reports, parents and guardians are invited to come to a **Consultation Meeting** in the year. For Year 12 this will be on Thursday 23 March 2023. It really helps students focus if they have parents attend these meetings with them – so please try to come to them together.

If you have any concerns, and would like to meet online or in person before that time, please contact the Sixth Form staff to arrange this.

ALPS Target Minimum Grades

In order to monitor how successfully a student is achieving, Level 3 courses will use **ALPS grades** – which are on Go 4 Schools reports, alongside current and target grades. These are the minimum a Level 3 student should be aiming to achieve, based on their GCSE results. Their target grade – set by teachers, based on a student's work in class, homework and tests, should be higher than this (sometimes considerably higher!).

The ALPS grades come into play especially at the end of Year 12. If a student is NOT reaching their minimum grade in Year 12 exams or in BTEC coursework, then they are not necessarily able to continue directly into the second year of courses.

Exams

A level courses are now linear courses. There is now very little coursework or practical assessment, and all A level exams take place at the end of Year 13. At OSA all A level students will, from this year, have internal exams at the end of Year 12. Students can be entered for external AS exams at the end of Year 12 if they or their teachers feel this is useful – particularly, for example, if a student wishes to finish a subject at the end of Year 12. The need for this needs to be established before exam entries are made in February 2023 and students or parents should consult Dr Watson.

In addition we offer BTEC courses at Level 3. These students will work on coursework units through the 2 years, and will also have exams. There are internal deadlines for BTEC and students need to fill in an agreement for Sport or Business before they begin the course.

The process...

You will be contacted around March of Year 13 by our Exams Officer, Ms Clark, with a list of the exams you have been entered for in the summer. You need to check this carefully, and contact her if you have clashes or there are any problems. Her email address is sclark@spires.anthemtrust.uk and you are able to find her in the Exams Office behind Reception.

If you feel there is a problem with your mark, asking for exam scripts back, challenging marks and making appeals need to be done quickly in August and incur a cost. You will need to see Dr Watson or Ms Clark around exam results day, and fill in a form to accept that you realise exam results that are challenged can go up or – in the worst case – down.

Dr Watson is happy to discuss with parents and students any queries they have about exams in the Sixth Form.

Results Days

Most students will receive internal exam results in July and, depending on the results of those, enrol directly on to Year 13 before the year ends.

You should receive the results of any external AS level exams on Thursday 17 August 2023. Year 12 students should come in from 12pm to collect their results.

GCSE results day is planned for Thursday 24 August. If you are doing a resit course in English or Maths, then these results are available then.

Please make sure you are not on holiday on your Results Day if you have exam results to collect. It makes it very difficult for staff to advise on you the next steps if you are not there – and any challenges to results can only be made for a short period afterwards. Sixth Form staff, remember, do not promise to be available in the summer EXCEPT on Results Days.

Widening your learning – ‘super-curricular’ activities

Universities are keen to see that you have gone beyond the bare minimum in subjects. That is, you have not just ‘turned up to lessons and done what the teacher has said’ – anyone can do that! Instead, they want to see that you have read things (perhaps not even on the syllabus) because you were interested, or have taken courses or been to lectures or watched podcasts because you *could* (not because you had to!).

There are lots of opportunities advertised during the year for these kind of things – as well as what you find out yourself... The kind of activities that students have done in recent years include:

- going to the library and asking the librarian for suggestions (!)
- reading the paper – a broadsheet one – and picking up on what is new in the area you’re interested in... (legal, scientific, politics, the review section for literature and theatre etc.)
- watching university podcasts in the subjects they wanted to study (search ‘Oxford University podcasts’ for instance, and see the huge range available...)
- browsing through BBC iPlayer and especially the Radio 4 part of that. Programmes such as Law in Action are excellent preparation for potential lawyers, there are loads of science programmes giving you ideas of new advances in all the sciences, and (Dr Watson’s favourite), *In Our Time* – the academic discussion programme which covers topics from literature, history, languages, sciences and so on in 45 minute episodes. Go to the archive to see hundreds of programmes to choose from!
- going to lectures in Oxford! There are lots, they’re mainly free, and you don’t need a member of staff to go along with you...
- finding a free online course through MOOCS (provided by UK universities such as Southampton) – the full list is available to browse via Futurelearn (ask Dr Watson for the link if you can’t find it...)
- finding courses offered by US universities, such as MIT – which have been running successfully for years and can really enhance your understanding of subjects beyond A level
- doing an Extended Project – a 5,000-word research essay on any topic you choose, which counts as an AS level, and impresses competitive universities...
- undertaking more than the compulsory work experience... If you plan to apply for a course in medicine, teaching, social work, physiotherapy, dentistry or veterinary medicine this will be a vital part of your application, and staff can advise you.

Ask Dr Watson for help planning these things if you’d like – you don’t want to take on too much too soon, but you need to have done enough before a UCAS application to impress a university if you plan on applying for competitive courses... You should have a super-curricular advice booklet from Induction. If you don’t have this, please ask at the Sixth Form Office or email Dr Watson.

Careers and UCAS

OSA has a careers advisor to help Sixth Form students, as well as Sixth Form staff with lots of careers experience... All you need to do is ask! Year 12 students have individual interviews in the summer term, but if you would like an interview before that, just contact Mr Bingham (see p.3) yourself, or ask one of the staff in the Sixth Form Office to do it for you.

Students doing Level 3 courses (higher level BTEC and A levels) apply for employment and (higher level) apprenticeships too, but most apply to university through UCAS. Sessions preparing students for this take place through assemblies, tutor time and pastoral sessions during Year 12 – especially in the summer term. This includes advice on student finance. Applications through UCAS are usually made in the Autumn Term of Year 13.

A good all-purpose starting point for careers work is <https://kudos.cascaid.co.uk> – using the licence code ‘ideanews52’. OSA pay for their students to use this site – and it can help you get started choosing careers.

Applying to university

Mid-way through Year 12, most students begin to make decisions about their future. If you wish to apply for highly competitive courses (such as Medicine or Veterinary Medicine), you will have had to start planning much earlier, so that you have built up work experience, but most students decide in the Spring of Year 12 whether they are going to apply to university, for an apprenticeship or for employments (often with training) once they finish Sixth Form courses. Sometimes they apply for more than one of these initially, and then decide later on.

Useful websites and books when considering University:

- www.ucas.com – the main source of information on university courses. You apply through UCAS at the beginning of Year 13, and the website gives you information on, and entry requirements for, all courses run by UK universities.
- Newspapers put together university guides every year to allow you to compare information about subjects and courses – eg. <http://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide>.
- Other publications, such as the Push Guide, allow you to compare institutions and courses - <http://www.push.co.uk/>.
- There are books in the Sixth Form Office, *Degree Course Offers* and *Choosing Your Degree Course and University* (both by Brian Heap) that you can consult.
- Prospectuses and information from universities online is helpful to browse through – and remember to look at Alternative Prospectuses (written by students) where they exist too.

Remember there is a careers section on the OSA website. It has some resources for university applicants too, including information on GAP Years and NHS careers. Please consult www.opendays.com or individual university websites to plan ahead for these. You often need to book into them, and they begin to come online in January of Year 12.

When making choices about applications to competitive Russell Group universities (including Oxbridge) have a look at their websites for advice on super-curricular activities that will enhance your personal statement. The Russell Group’s own website is helpful. Please consider Summer Schools and taster days in the summer term of Year 12 (though you often have to apply for these around Christmas time).

- Sutton Trust (www.suttontrust.com) and Oxford University’s UNIQ (www.uniq.ox.ac.uk) summer schools are competitive, but very good if you are academically able and fulfil their criteria.
- London University Taster Days are very helpful, have no entry requirements and are free – see www.london.ac.uk/tasters.
- Most universities offer them now – look on university websites.
- Year 12 students also make the most of Oxford Brookes’ Higher Education days, and many apply to take part in Brookes Engage (a useful scheme to prepare local Sixth Formers for university). See www.brookes.ac.uk/brookesengage for more information.

If you are interested in developing your knowledge of a particular subject, have a look at MOOCS (see <https://www.futurelearn.com/>) or consider taking an Extended Project at the end of Year 12 to develop you academically. Please see one of the Sixth Form staff to talk through the options.

Taking a Gap Year

Students sometimes opt to take a year out between Level 3 courses and university, and this can be a good thing to do. Discuss it with Sixth Form staff (if you are likely to opt out of university study after it, then it might not be good for you!). But students can gain independence, confidence and lots of skills through working for a year, or travelling. Work experience can be part of that year, if you would like to apply for a subject such as Medicine which requires a lot of this.

Have a look on websites such as www.gap-year.com and www.gapyear.com (they are different!) for information about the different schemes available. Travel, work experience abroad, further courses and so on can be exciting, and useful – but can also cost. There are speciality gap year programmes such as the opportunity to spend a year working on your acting in Stratford-upon-Avon (www.yearoutdrama.co.uk) and these can help develop your skills prior to a university application.

You can also apply for jobs abroad – such as working in ski resorts or helping out with children’s camps. These can help you raise the money to cover your travel, as well as developing useful skills. Look at www.bunac.org/uk or at www.campamerica.co.uk.

Remember, talk through the options if you’re thinking of taking this kind of year. It can be an amazing experience – and, except for Maths students, it’s unlikely that a gap year will prevent you gaining a university offer. The key thing for universities is that you have planned how you are going to spend the year, and it will not simply be a ‘rest’.... However, if you don’t go through a proper company, there can be risks – and it can turn out expensive, unless you plan for it.

Non-University Routes

The school provides a variety of opportunities to find out more about local employment and training opportunities, and about apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are becoming more readily available and there are more degree-level apprenticeships, where you can earn a salary alongside a university degree.

There are talks during National Careers Week (week beginning 6 March 2023), and there will be sessions with ASK apprenticeships and local providers (such as BMW, Oxford University, Oxfordshire County Council and so on). There are NHS apprenticeships and opportunities to work through major accounting firms to gain degrees and ‘earn as you learn’. A good starting point is to have a look at www.getingofar.gov.uk.

Sixth Form staff pass on adverts each year for opportunities in a variety of areas, from working with Southern Electric to starting a Law career.

A talk with Dr Watson, Ms Harry, Mr Loftus or Mr Bingham might be a good place to start, or searching through links on the OSA Portal to find out what is available. **Keep an eye on your school email**, though, as a lot of the notification of what is available comes through that route...