



Careers, Understanding, Skills and Pathways (CUSP)

Years 7 – 13

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026–27

A structured, year-by-year visual pathway guiding students at Verulam School from initial workplace discovery to post-18 destination mastery.

KEY STAGE 3

Years 7 – 9

DISCOVER & EXPLORE: Building awareness of the world of work, identifying personal strengths, and making informed GCSE choices.

KEY STAGE 4

Years 10 – 11

EXPERIENCE & DECIDE: Workplace exposure, CV creation, 1-week work placement, and securing post-16 applications.

KEY STAGE 5

Years 12 – 13

APPLY & TRANSITION: In-depth post-18 research, personal statements, UCAS/Apprenticeship applications, and university transition.

Careers Progression Journey

Year 7 CUSP : Discovering the World of Work and Unifrog



THEME: EXPLORE

🎯 KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Introducing the world of work: Why do people work? What job sectors exist? Developing basic career vocabulary and understanding how school subjects link to future paths.

📅 Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

🍂 AUTUMN TERM

- UK Maths Challenge
- Unifrog 101 profile setup
- PSHE careers activities
- Morgan Sindall assembly
- **Year 7 USP:** Working Options industry insight session

🌱 SPRING TERM

- National Apprenticeships Week
- National Careers Week
- Staff careers interviews
- Interactive Careers Treasure Hunt
- **Year 7 USP:** Working Options industry insight session

⚙️ SUMMER TERM

- Barclays Life Skills lesson
- Unifrog interests profile update
- **Year 7 USP:** Working Options industry insight session

🧠 SKILLS DEVELOPED

Career vocabulary, self-awareness, exploration skills, digital literacy, questioning skills, and awareness of diverse job sectors.

🏆 GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2: Learning from LMI | **GB4:** Curriculum links | **GB5:** Employer encounters (3-4 encounters)



🚩 KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ Understand how careers connect directly to school subjects.
- ✓ Gain first-hand awareness of local employers and industries.
- ✓ Create basic Unifrog profile and identify personal interests.
- ✓ Golden Thread: *"Work exists and it's interesting" (WONDER).*

Year 8 CUSP : Exploring career interests / Learning soft skills

THEME: BUILD

KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Making clear subject-career links and identifying employer-valued skills through first-hand workplace encounters and practical observation.

Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

AUTUMN TERM

- UK Maths Challenge
- Unifrog competency quizzes
- PSHE career pathways activities
- Tilbury Douglas (construction)

SPRING TERM

- National Apprenticeships Week
- National Careers Week

SUMMER TERM

- Year 8 USP: Work Shadowing experience
- Barclays Life Skills lessons
- Royal Navy Industry Insight

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Subject-career links, professional communication, networking, observation skills, workplace culture, and confidence with adults.

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB5, GB6, GB7: Cumulative 7-9 employer encounters (PAL KS3 requirement met).

Tilbury Douglas



TILBURY DOUGLAS and the ROYAL NAVY:
Partnering in Infrastructure and Marine Services.

KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ Complete first-hand workplace shadowing experience.
- ✓ Gain practical understanding of work routines and professional expectations.
- ✓ Expand career vocabulary and record competencies on Unifrog.
- ✓ Golden Thread: *"I can connect my learning to work"* (CONNECT).

Year 9 CUSP: Connecting Choices to Future Pathways

THEME: FOCUS

KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Making informed GCSE choices with future careers in mind, exploring post-16 routes, comparing university vs apprenticeships, and setting clear goals.

Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

AUTUMN TERM

- The Scholars Programme
- Unifrog career search tools
- PSHE career planning modules

SPRING TERM

- National Careers Week and
- National Apprenticeships Week
- Year 9 USP: Career Skills Day (CSD)
- Introduction to University talk
- Pathway assembly & myth-busters
- GCSE Options Evening

SUMMER TERM

- Degree Apprenticeship talk
- Royal Navy Assembly

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Decision-making, research, long-term planning, evaluating post-16 routes, and challenging industry stereotypes.

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB3, GB4, GB5, GB7: Cumulative 11-14 employer encounters (PAL KS3 requirement exceeded).

Verulam School **GCSE to Post-16 and Beyond**
Your Guide to Making Informed Choices for Your Future

There are many routes, opportunities and options. This guide will help you understand your choices, explore what's right for you, and take the next steps with confidence.

1. THE GCSE FOUNDATION
Your GCSE results open the door to a range of post-16 options. Don't just think about grades - think about your interests, strengths and goals too.
Key things to consider:
• Your predicted grades (and actual results)
• Subjects you enjoy and are good at
• Your long-term goals and career interests
• What kind of learner you are (e.g. practical, academic, creative)

2. POST-16 ROUTES
There isn't just one route. Here are the main options:
A Levels
• 2-3 subjects
• Deeper subject knowledge
• Best for traditional university routes
• Other requires grades 5-9 (or 6-9)
T Levels
• Vocational + academic
• Industry placement (around 45 days)
• Available in a range of subjects
• Requires grades 4-7 (or 5-9)
Apprenticeships
• Earn while you learn
• Gain real work experience
• Available from Level 2 and above
• Can lead to university or further training
Further Education (College)
• Vocational courses (e.g. BTECs, NCEAs)
• A Levels
• Other specialist courses (e.g. creative, sport, IT)

3. HIGHER EDUCATION
University isn't the only option, but it's a popular choice for many. You could also consider degree apprenticeships or higher-level qualifications.
Things to think about:
• Courses, content and structure
• Entry requirements (e.g. A Levels, BTECs, T Levels, apprenticeships)
• Location (home or away)
• Tuition fees and living costs
• Career prospects and earning potential

4. OTHER PATHWAYS & OPPORTUNITIES
There are more ways to reach your goals than you might think. Consider these too:
Work Experience
Build your skills, gain confidence and make valuable connections.
Volunteering & Part Time Work
Show initiative, develop key skills and explore interests.
Supported Pathways
Includes SEND support, alternative provision and personalised learning plans.
Gap Years / Travel
Can build independence, confidence and new skills. Be realistic, enough volunteering or working allowed!

5. KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER
The right choice is the one that works for you. Think about:
Your Interests
What do you enjoy? What gets you excited?
Your Skills
What comes naturally to you? What are you good at?
Your Goals
Where do you see yourself in 5, 10 or 20 years?
Financial Considerations
What are the costs? Are there bursaries or support available?
Locations
Do you want to stay local, move away or study online?
Future Opportunities
What careers or industries are growing? What does the labour market look like?

6. USEFUL TOOLS & RESOURCES
Make the most of the support available to you:
Unifrog
Explore careers, university courses, apprenticeships and more.
Careers Leader
Talk to your PSHE and Careers Coordinator or form tutor.
National Careers Service
Independent advice and useful information (www.nationalcareersservice.gov.uk)
Open Steps & Taster Events
Visit colleges, universities and workplaces to get a feel for different options.

Explore | Plan | Take Action *The right path is the one that's right for you.*

KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ GCSE options selected with career interests in mind (March deadline).
- ✓ Clear understanding of university and degree apprenticeship routes.
- ✓ Emerging Plan A and Plan B post-16 aspirations established.
- ✓ Golden Thread: "My choices matter for my future" (CHOOSE).

Year 10 CUSP: Exploration & Workplace Experience

THEME: EXPERIENCE

KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Experiencing the workplace first-hand, developing professional employability skills and exploring post-16 routes

Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

AUTUMN TERM

- Unifrog post-16 matching
- HPQ project opportunity
- Employability skills audit
- Career Based Skills in PSHE

SPRING TERM

- National Careers Week
- Apprenticeship assemblies
- National Apprenticeship Week

SUMMER TERM

- 1-Week Work Experience placement
- College & University campus visits
- Interview preparation workshops

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Work readiness, professional CV writing, time management, independence, networking, and interview techniques.

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB3, GB5, GB6, GB7, GB8: Cumulative 18-22 encounters (PAL KS4 requirement met).



KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ Complete 1-Week professional Work Experience placement.
- ✓ Draft professional CV created and saved on Unifrog.
- ✓ Impartial 1-to-1 careers guidance session completed.
- ✓ Golden Thread: "I can experience and succeed in workplaces".

Year 11 CUSP: Post-16 Decisions & Applications

THEME: DECIDE

KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Finalising post-16 destinations (Sixth Form, FE College, or Apprenticeships), completing applications, understanding entry requirements and securing contingency plans.

Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

AUTUMN TERM

- Unifrog Application tracker
- 1-to-1 IAG guidance interviews
- FE College assemblies
- Sixth Form & College applications
- Apprenticeship Evening at Verulam
- Oaklands College School Explorer Day

SPRING TERM

- National Apprenticeships Week
- National Careers Week
- 1-to-1 IAG Interviews
- Post-mock meetings with SLT
- Application deadline follow-ups

SUMMER TERM

- GCSE Examinations
- Results Day support
- Next-step transition guidance

SKILLS DEVELOPED

Application writing, formal interview skills, resilience, goal-setting, contingency planning, and self-advocacy.

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB3, GB5, GB7, GB8: Cumulative 23-28 encounters (All KS4 benchmarks met/exceeded).



KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ Post-16 applications submitted by Feb/March deadline.
- ✓ Firm Plan A and backup Plan B post-16 offers secured.
- ✓ Clear understanding of post-16 transition requirements.
- ✓ Golden Thread: "I know where I'm going next and how to get there".

Year 12 CUSP: Researching Post-18 Options

THEME: APPLY & PREPARE

KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Exploring university, degree apprenticeships, and employment routes. Shortlisting target courses/sectors, creating UCAS accounts, and building strong personal statements.

Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

AUTUMN TERM

- Post-18 pathway support & interviews
- FE event & guest lectures
- University Open Days & UCAS launch

SPRING TERM

- PSHE UCAS research modules
- Personal statement drafting
- MOOCs & academic super-curriculars
- Apprenticeship research

SUMMER TERM

- Year 12 Work Experience placement
 - University workshops
 - Draft personal statement completion
 - Degree apprenticeship talks
- Future Careers Week and Work Experience

SKILLS DEVELOPED

In-depth research, personal statement writing, UCAS navigation, university visit etiquette, and critical comparison.

GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB3, GB5, GB6, GB7, GB8: Cumulative 29-36 encounters (Post-18 research underway).



KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ UCAS account created and university shortlist established.
- ✓ Draft personal statement completed before summer break.
- ✓ Relevant work placement completed to strengthen applications.
- ✓ Golden Thread: "I'm researching and preparing my post-18 future".

Year 13 CUSP: Finalising & Adult Transition

📌 **THEME: TRANSITION & LAUNCH**

🎯 KEY FOCUS & MAIN OBJECTIVE

Securing destinations, completing UCAS and degree apprenticeship applications, managing offers, preparing for independent adult living, and transition planning.

📅 Activities & Experiences Throughout the Year

🍂 AUTUMN TERM

- UCAS & Apprenticeship submission
- Formal Mock Interviews
- Offer management guidance
- Oxbridge / MDV early deadlines

🌱 SPRING TERM

- Firm & Insurance choices confirmation
- Student Finance application setup
- Accommodation research
- Clearing/Adjustment contingency prep

⚙️ SUMMER TERM

- A-Level Examinations
- Results Day support & Clearing team
- Final destination confirmation

💡 SKILLS DEVELOPED

Independence, financial literacy, transition planning, adult decision-making, resilience, and final interview mastery.

🏆 GATSBY BENCHMARKS

GB2, GB3, GB5, GB7, GB8: Cumulative 33-42+ encounters (Post-18 destination secured).



🚩 KEY OUTCOMES & DECISIONS

- ✓ Post-18 destination secured (University, Apprenticeship, Employment).
- ✓ Student Finance and accommodation arranged.
- ✓ Confident, smooth transition into adult workforce or higher education.
- ✓ Golden Thread: *"I'm ready for my next step as an adult"* (LAUNCH).