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1st November 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

What a way to end the first half term of year 11, the sponsored walk on Friday 22nd October saw so many students entering into the community spirit, raising money for local charities and enjoying the fresh air and autumn sunshine.

In fact it was quite a week for our year 11 students. Monday saw them attending a Careers Conference with key note speakers and workshops preparing for the mock interviews which took place on Thursday 21st October. They have received a lot of information about apprenticeships, applications and selling themselves and I thought it might be useful to just highlight some of the guidance they have received for you...especially if like my children they just say 'it was all right!'

There are a number of options for students after GCSEs.

- Sixth form. Either here at Farlingaye or in one of the other schools in the area, these centres offer A' Levels and the chance to resit GCSE maths and English. The entry criteria will vary and so it is important that your child checks out the websites. It is also a good idea to visit a number of 6th forms. Obviously Farlingaye is the best – though I might be a little biased! All will have Open Evenings and most will hold Open Mornings when you can visit during the day. Some will also offer experience days so it's worth checking for these too. Everything will be on the schools websites. The closing dates for 6th form applications is usually the end of January, but again this varies and it is always possible to make a late application.
- Suffolk One is our local 6th form college. Offering a wider range of courses, One is able to meet a wider range of needs than a traditional A 'Level route. It is important to check out their website as everything you need to know from entry criteria to visiting times will be advertised there. Closing dates are often later than 6th forms and can be placed until August, although a few courses may be full by then.
- Suffolk College is our local further education institution. With several campuses around Suffolk, they specialise in vocational courses and are able to offer these at a range of levels. They regularly hold Open Days which they advertise on their websites but also in the local press. Their campuses include Suffolk Rural at Otley and Suffolk On The Coast in Leiston.
West Suffolk College is also a popular destination, offering a similar set of courses and based in Bury St Edmunds.

The closing dates are advertised but students will start applying from now so it is worth doing some research and getting an application in. Late applications can be made though.

- Apprenticeships are available in many sectors and on Monday the students received a lot of information about these, including the opportunity to have an apprenticeship mentor here in school. If your child is interested in this then please ask them to see myself or Mrs Wild and we can arrange an initial meeting with a mentor.

The place to look is www.apprenticeship.org.uk which is a central government hub, signposting all the available apprenticeships, guidance on applying and general information too. The advantage of an apprenticeship is that the young adult gets paid while they are training and that there is a clear pathway from level 2 apprenticeships (the equivalent of GCSE levels) right through to graduate apprenticeships. It is therefore possible to combine vocational and academic learning as the need dictates, for example following an A 'level route and then joining an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships will have the closing date for applications in the advert, but many will interview now with an August/September start so it's worth contacting the company if you are interested. Companies want the right person for the right post and so will have some flexibility.

- Traineeships are less common and are usually a short work based placement which prepares a young person for an apprenticeship. These are often unpaid but ideal for students who are unsure about their future aspirations.

As you can see the students have learned a lot about their post 16 options and they have all logged onto Unifrog, our careers platform. Here they can explore different industries, consider the roles of people within those sectors and learn about the career pathways. There are also quizzes to help students with no idea, often I find students find it easier to define what they don't want rather than what they do want, and again Unifrog can help here too.

The key message from this week's activities has been to make the most of every opportunity. Ask questions when you get the chance, speak to people about your interests, do some research so you are making informed choices and remember that there is a huge and exciting world just waiting for you to explore. These sentiments will be followed up in tutor time and also by Mrs Wild our Careers Advisor in her meetings with students.

As a parent your role is perhaps the most difficult. I ask that you listen to your child, hearing their thinking and encouraging them in their ideas. Help them to look and interpret the information they find, encourage them to visit the places they are interested in and make sure they are keeping things in perspective!

The biggest step for students is having the confidence to know they can achieve their goals, even if they aren't easy, and this is the first step on that journey. We all know that it takes determination, hard work and the ability to bounce back when making applications. You, me and all the staff here at Farlingaye will be there supporting them and wishing them every success. Together they'll get there.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Laird
Assistant Headteacher